DRAFT

Supplemental Environmental Impact Statement for the Land Port of Entry Modernization and Expansion Project International Falls, MN

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U.S. General Services Administration
Public Buildings Service
Great Lakes Region (Region 5)
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ACRONYMS

Acronym	Definition
AADT	Annual Average Daily Traffic
ACHP	Advisory Council on Historic Preservation
ACM	asbestos-containing material
AIRS	U.S. Aerometric Information Retrieval System
APE	area of potential effect
AST	aboveground storage tank
BGEPA	Bald and Golden Eagle Protection Act
BGHE	bored geothermal heat exchanger
BIL	Bipartisan Infrastructure Law
BMP	best management practices
C	capacity
CAA	Clean Air Act
CBP	Customs and Border Protection
CEQ	Council on Environmental Quality
CFR	Code of Federal Regulations
CH_4	methane
CR-155	County Route 155
CR-332	County Route 332
CSGP	Construction Stormwater General Permit
CO_2	carbon dioxide
COV	commercially owned vehicle
CWA	Clean Water Act
CST	Central Standard Time
dB	decibels
dBA	decibels on an A-weighted scale
DW&P	Duluth, Winnipeg & Pacific
EIS	Environmental Impact Statement
EISA	Energy Independence and Security Act
EO	Executive Order
ESA	Environmental Site Assessment
FEMA	Federal Emergency Management Agency
FIRM	Flood Insurance Rate Map
FIS	Federal Inspection Services
FRA	Federal Rail Administration
GHG	greenhouse gas
GRIT	gamma-ray inspection technology
GSA	U.S. General Services Administration
GWP	global warming potential
HAP	hazardous air pollutant
IIJA	Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act
IJC	International Joint Commission
IPaC	Information for Planning and Consultation
IRLWWB	International Rainy – Lake of the Woods Watershed Board
L_{10}	decibels over 10 percent
L_{50}	decibels over 50 percent
LBP	lead-based paint

Acronym	Definition
LEED	Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design
LiDAR	Light Detection and Ranging
LOS	Level of Service
LPOE	Land Port of Entry
MDH	Minnesota Department of Health
MANDO	Minnesota and Ontario (Paper Company)
MD&W	Minnesota, Dakota, & Western
M&I	Minnesota & International
MNDNR	Minnesota Department of Natural Resources
MnDOT	Minnesota Department of Transportation
MnHPO	Minnesota Historic Preservation Officer
MPCA	Minnesota Pollution Control Agency
MPDF	Multiple Property Documentation Form
MS4	Municipal Separate Storm Sewer Systems
N_2O	nitrous oxide
NAAQS	National Ambient Air Quality Standards
NAC	noise area classification
NAGPRA	Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act
NAICS	North American Industry Classification System
NEPA	National Environmental Policy Act
NESHAP	National Emission Standards for Hazardous Air Pollutants
NHPA	National Historic Preservation Act
NKASD	North Koochiching Area Sanitary District
NO_x	nitrogen oxides
NOI	Notice of Intent
NPDES	National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System
NRHP	National Register of Historic Places
NSPS	New Source Performance Standard
NWI	National Wetlands Inventory
O_3	ozone
OSHA	Occupational Health and Safety Act
PBS	Public Buildings Service
PCA	Packaging Corporation of America
PCB	non-polychlorinated biphenyl
PCPI	per capita personal income
$PM_{2.5}$	very fine particulate matter 2.5 micrometers or smaller
PM_{10}	fine particulate matter 10 micrometers or smaller
POR	Program of Requirements
POV	privately owned vehicle
PPE	personal protective equipment
PSD	Prevention of Significant Deterioration
PV	photovoltaic
PVC	polyvinyl chloride
RCRA	Resources Conservation and Recovery Act of 1976
RLD	Recreational Land Development, LLC
ROD	Record of Decision
ROI	region of influence
ROW	right of way
RWC	river water cooling
SC-GHG	social cost of greenhouse gasses

Acronym	Definition
SDS	State Disposal System
SDWA	Safe Drinking Water Act
SEIS	Supplemental Environmental Impact Statement
SHPO	State Historic Preservation Officer
SIP	State Implementation Plan
SITES	Sustainable Sites Initiative
SO_2	sulfur dioxide
SPCC	spill prevention, control, and countermeasures
SR	State Route
SWPPP	stormwater pollution prevention plan
TH	trunk highway
THPO	Tribal Historic Preservation Officer
TMDL	Total Maximum Daily Load
US-53	U.S. Highway 53
US-71	U.S. Highway 71
USACE	U.S. Army Corps of Engineers
U.S.C	U.S. Code
USDA-APHIS-PPQ	U.S. Department of Agriculture/Animal Plant Health Inspection Services-Plant Protection and Quarantine
USEPA	U.S. Environmental Protection Agency
USFWS	U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
USGS	U.S. Geological Survey
UST	underground storage tank
V	volume
WOTUS	waters of the U.S.
WSS	Web Soil Survey

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SUMMARY

The United States (U.S.) General Services Administration (GSA) proposes to expand and modernize the Land Port of Entry (LPOE) in International Falls, Koochiching County, Minnesota. The LPOE is a port of entry for vehicles and pedestrians crossing the U.S.-Canada border between International Falls and the town of Fort Frances, Ontario, Canada. The port is operated by the U.S. Department of Homeland Security's Customs and Border Protection (CBP) and is a full-service, multi-modal facility where CBP officers inspect commercially owned vehicles, privately owned vehicles (POVs), and pedestrians. The International Falls LPOE is the busiest port of entry in Minnesota and currently processes more traffic than originally designed to accommodate. GSA completed a draft Feasibility Study in 2009 that evaluated the existing conditions of the International Falls LPOE and the existing and future needs of the CBP and other inspection agencies. The results of the draft Feasibility Study confirmed that the existing building, although well maintained, did not meet GSA's minimum requirements for LPOEs and provided only a small percentage of the total building area and land required to meet the needs of the CBP and other agencies (GSA 2011). GSA completed a second Feasibility Study for the LPOE in 2011 that investigated 10 conceptual Build alternatives and a No-Build Alternative to address space and facility needs (GSA 2011). In the 2011 Study, GSA considered and dismissed five Build alternatives because they did not meet the needs and requirements of the Federal Inspection Services and GSA.

Concurrent with the 2011 Feasibility Study, GSA published a Final Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) in accordance with National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) in September 2011. The 2011 Final EIS analyzed the five remaining viable conceptual Build alternatives and a No-Build Alternative identified in the Feasibility Study. GSA selected Alternative 10 as its Preferred Alternative (herein referred to as the 2011 Preferred Alternative) because this alternative would best meet the purpose and need for the project with the least overall adverse impacts to the natural, social, and economic environment of the city and region. Alternative 10 included expansion of the LPOE footprint onto adjacent land previously held by Boise, Inc. (currently Packaging Corporation of America [PCA]) and an entity known as Recreational Land Development, LLC (RLD). GSA signed a Record of Decision (ROD) that identified GSA's Preferred Alternative, which was published in the *Federal Register* on January 12, 2012. Since the issuance of GSA's 2012 ROD, project changes have occurred, including an updated 2018 Feasibility Study.

ENVIRONMENTAL REVIEW PROCESS

GSA has prepared this Draft Supplemental Environmental Impact Statement (SEIS) for the purpose of analyzing potential environmental impacts from the project updates that have been identified since the release of the 2011 Final EIS and 2012 ROD. GSA has prepared this Draft SEIS in accordance with NEPA (42 United States Code U.S.C] 4321 *et seq.*), the Council on Environmental Quality (CEQ) regulations implementing NEPA (40 Code of Federal Regulations [CFR] 1500-1508), GSA Order ADM 1095.1F (*Environmental Consideration in Decision Making*), the GSA Public Buildings Service's *NEPA Desk Guide*, and other relevant laws, regulations, and Executive Orders, including the National Historic Preservation Act.

GSA published a Notice of Intent (NOI) to prepare a Draft SEIS in the *Federal Register* on December 9, 2022. After issuing the NOI, GSA conducted a scoping process that included hosting a hybrid virtual and in-person public scoping meeting and consultation with various interested governmental agencies and stakeholders. An advertisement was published in the *Rainy Lake Gazette* on December 9, 2022. Announcements were posted on GSA's social media accounts on December 9 and 12, 2022. A virtual public meeting was held on December 13, 2022, from 4:00 p.m. to 6:00 p.m. Central Standard Time (CST) via Zoom. The public also had the opportunity to attend the meeting in-person at the Koochiching County Court Administration building, International Falls, MN. GSA accepted public scoping comments through January 13, 2023.

INTRODUCTION

The International Falls LPOE is located in International Falls, Koochiching County, Minnesota on the south bank of the Rainy River. The existing LPOE site occupies approximately 1.6 acres and is surrounded by the industrial buildings of the PCA paper mill facilities (formerly owned by Boise, Inc.) to the west and south; International Bridge to the north; the Rainy River to the east; and the Minnesota, Dakota, & Western (MD&W) Railway (wholly owned by PCA) to the east. The LPOE is crisscrossed by railroad tracks and utility easements, which traverse in an east-west direction, between the LPOE and the bridge. Although railcars actively cross the LPOE, railcars no longer cross the bridge because of the closing of the Resolute paper mill, just across the border in Fort Frances, Ontario, Canada. The existing LPOE site is spatially constrained as it is landlocked on all sides.

The LPOE was originally constructed in 1993 and since has had minor alterations, including an exterior façade replacement in 2005. The existing facilities at the LPOE consist of 10,000 square foot main operations building; two primary and two secondary passenger vehicle inspection lanes; one primary commercial vehicle inspection lane; a mobile gamma-ray inspection technology shed; public restrooms; a secure storage shed; a toll booth; and a visitor parking lot.

Since the publication of the 2011 Final EIS and 2012 ROD, the space and facility requirements (also referred to as Program of Requirements [POR]) for CBP have changed, resulting in a need to revise the 2011 Feasibility Study and to reflect the GSA's current needs at the LPOE. Additionally, project updates have occurred that were documented in a 2018 Feasibility Study or have otherwise been identified by GSA since the completion of the 2012 ROD. As such, GSA is preparing this Draft SEIS to assess the potential impacts of the project updates that were not assessed in the 2011 Final EIS.

PURPOSE AND NEED

The purpose and need for the Proposed Action remain similar to that identified in the 2011 Final EIS. The purpose of the Proposed Action is for GSA to support the mission of CBP and other tenant agencies by bringing the International Falls LPOE operations in line with current land port design standards and operational requirements while addressing existing deficiencies identified with the ongoing port operations. Generally, the deficiencies outlined in Section 1.5.1 of the 2011 Final EIS remain at the LPOE. The deficiencies fall into two broad categories: deficiencies in the overall site layout and substandard building conditions.

Therefore, to bring the International Falls LPOE operations in line with design standards and operational requirements, the Proposed Action is needed to:

- Improve the capacity and functionality of the International Falls LPOE to meet future demand, while maintaining the capability to meet border security initiatives;
- Address spatial and layout constraints that lead to traffic congestion and safety issues for the employees and users of the LPOE;
- Provide adequate space and facilities for the federal agencies to accomplish their missions; and
- Address the project updates that have occurred since the 2011 Final EIS.

SUMMARY OF THE PROPOSED ACTION AND ALTERNATIVES

The 2011 Preferred Alternative considered relocation of the majority of the LPOE improvements and operations to a 20.5-acre site southeast of the existing site between State Route 11 (SR-11) (also referred to as 4th Street) and Rainy River (herein referred to as the proposed expansion area). Analysis of the 2011 Preferred Alternative in the 2011 Final EIS included development of a paved trailer parking area for Boise,

Inc. (now PCA) south of SR-11 and east of 3rd Avenue E. This parking area was sited on Boise-owned land, but construction was to be done by GSA.

Since 2011, changes to the project have occurred, and GSA developed a 2018 Feasibility Study update (GSA 2019a). The 2011 Preferred Alternative is the starting basis for the refinement of the action alternative for the 2018 study. The Proposed Action considered in this SEIS is structured such that the overall organization of the functions and circulation would remain similar to the 2011 Preferred Alternative. However, in the interim years, the following project changes have occurred:

- CBP POR has increased greatly in terms of building size for the Main Building, non-commercial inspection and commercial inspection, as well as the inclusion of new tenants requiring additional usable square footage (USF) of facility space.
- PCA has acquired Boise, Inc. and the new ownership has new requirements and operations that would require changes to existing utilities and may require modification to its site plan for areas surrounding the proposed expansion area.
- New renewable energy technologies are being considered for implementation at the expanded and modernized LPOE.
- A section of First Creek between SR-11 and the Rainy River that was previously contained in a culvert has been daylighted and requires analysis. Stormwater management would also be redesigned along First Creek due to a new culvert being installed, and two new areas that will be potentially paved crossing the creek.

Based on the new CBP and tenant requirements, as well as changes to PCA operations, modifications were incorporated into the project site plan. Accordingly, GSA has identified one action alternative that is analyzed in this Draft SEIS:

- Alternative 1: Full Build – Construct the facilities as described for the 2011 Preferred Alternative assessed in the 2011 Final EIS (see Section 2.2.1 of the Draft SEIS) and modified by project updates.

In addition to Alternative 1, GSA also evaluated the No Action Alternative in this SEIS. Under the No Action Alternative, GSA would not move forward with the Proposed Action. The No Action Alternative is included and analyzed to provide a baseline for comparison with impacts from the Proposed Action and to satisfy federal requirements for analyzing the "no action" scenario under NEPA (40 CFR 1502.14(d)).

Alternative 1 – Full Build

Principle Components

Alternative 1 for this Draft SEIS is defined as the acquisition of property, demolition of existing facilities, and construction of the new facilities, as identified under GSA's 2011 Preferred Alternative in the 2011 Final EIS (see Section 2.1.2.2 of this Draft SEIS), but with modifications based on project updates, as summarized in Table S-1.

Table S-1. Summary of Changes from 2011 Final EIS compared to Alternative 1

Criteria	2011 Final EIS	Alternative 1
Facility Square Footage	42,282	80,611, plus additional parking
Impacts to First Creek, north of SR-11	Not considered as the creek was previously contained within a culvert	To be considered because the creek has been daylighted. Analysis to include associated stormwater management due to creek crossings or installation of new culvert.
Renewable Energy Technologies	Not considered.	Solar and geothermal technologies considered.
PCA Land Preparation	Trailer parking to be located east of First Creek.	Trailer parking to be located either east or west of First Creek, as well as other building, railroad, and utility relocations and road widening actions.

SR-11 = State Route 11

The project site plan was modified to locate each of the LPOE's facilities and supporting inspection areas, parking, and other miscellaneous facilities. Other changes include changes in tenants proposed to occupy the LPOE and the cessation of rail traffic crossing the bridge due to the closure of the Resolute paper mill in Fort Frances, Ontario, Canada. Under Alternative 1, it is expected that the overall organization of the functions and circulation would remain similar to the 2011 Preferred Alternative.

Alternative 1 is based on acquisition of additional acreage to expand the current LPOE site. The proposed expansion area encompasses a 20.5-acre area that stretches east from the LPOE along the Rainy River shoreline to an area just west of a U.S. Border Patrol Station and primarily bordered by SR-11 on the south. This is the same expansion area as previously considered under the 2011 Preferred Alternative. Approximately 16.4 and 4.1 acres are owned by PCA and RLD, respectively. The proposed expansion area is zoned as "Manufacturing" and consists of several buildings, a parking lot for PCA trailer parking, and greenspace, including a manmade stormwater feature that drains into the Rainy River. Most of the LPOE functions would be relocated in the expanded portion of the parcel between the Rainy River and SR-11.

The main facilities of the LPOE would consist of the following:

- Main Administration Building – Two-story building, which may include Trusted Traveler operations
- Non-Commercial Inspection Facilities (Primary and Secondary) – Includes 5 primary and 10 secondary passenger canopied lanes and parking spaces, and one passenger vehicle bay
- Commercial Inspection Facilities – Includes one canopied lane and booth, one bus lane, Non-Intrusive Inspection Building, Commercial Building, Commercial Dock, Secure Parking Enclosure, Indoor Firing Range, Commercial Impound Lot, and Truck Inspection Staging, and two commercial bays
- Kennel
- Outbound Inspection Facilities – Includes a canopied non-commercial booth and Outbound Inspection Building
- Pedestrian Inspection Satellite Building
- Toll Booth

The expanded and modernized LPOE would also accommodate a new toll plaza and other non-government on-site functions.

Under Alternative 1, all commercial traffic would enter and exit the LPOE from SR-11, east of downtown International Falls. All non-commercial traffic would enter and exit the LPOE downtown at the terminus of U.S. Route 53 (US-53). Proposed new circulation patterns would eliminate any vehicular/railway crossings within the LPOE. However, the POV entry and exit drives would cross the MD&W Railway rail lines west of the LPOE parcel. The proposed new LPOE site would include a new pedestrian inspection satellite facility and toll booth for Canadian bound traffic. Pedestrians would be processed in a satellite building, a short walk from the bridge, exiting directly into International Falls without crossing any of the vehicular lanes in the LPOE.

GSA would upgrade utilities by increasing utility capacity for electrical; plumbing, water supply, and sanitary waste; stormwater detention; mechanical; and fire protection to accommodate the site reconfiguration. A culvert may be installed in the portion of First Creek within the proposed expansion area; alternatively, crossings may be constructed. Coordination with the city or county may be required to establish drainage easements associated with a new culvert.

Alternative 1 would incorporate sustainable, climate-resilient, cyber-secure, and operationally efficient design. GSA would seek to meet or exceed energy and sustainability goals established by federal guidelines and policies, along with industry standard building codes and best practices. Sustainability elements may include, but are not limited to:

- Implementation of the Facilities Standards for the GSA Public Buildings Service (P100) in facilities design (GSA 2021a), which:
    - Establishes standards and criteria for GSA-owned inventory and lease construction facilities; and
    - Includes mandatory standards for energy and sustainable design, historic preservation, accessibility, and other codes and standards.
- Diversion of at least 50 percent of nonhazardous construction and demolition waste from a landfill.
- Consideration of renewable energy sources for viability and feasibility.

All new construction and modernization would seek to achieve Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED) certification at the highest feasible level within reasonable cost, with Gold level standards at a minimum. The new facilities would comply with the Energy Independence and Security Act (EISA) of 2007. Between EISA 2007 and LEED, the project would adhere to whichever requirements are higher. Furthermore, the project would adhere to the CEQ's Guiding Principles for Sustainable Federal Buildings. The design team would utilize GSA's 2022 Sustainable Design Checklist for New Construction and Major Modernization Projects (see Appendix D) to pursue LEED credits, which align with CEQ's Guiding Principles for Sustainable Federal Buildings.

A construction phasing plan would be developed during design and implemented during demolition and construction to ensure continuity of operations of the LPOE, as well as minimize disruptions to PCA and other neighboring operations. If determined necessary during the design stage, Alternative 1 may include the installation of temporary facilities, roadways, and other circulation routes within the LPOE footprint to allow for the LPOE to remain operational 24 hours per day, 7 days per week.

At the time of this report, demolition and construction activities are estimated to begin in 2025, with substantial completion anticipated in 2029. Due to weather conditions, it is anticipated that peak construction would occur during the months of April through October. From November through March, it is anticipated construction activities would primarily consist of interior building work and/or within temporary enclosures to protect work conditions from cold weather. Based on similar, recent GSA LPOE projects, peak construction is estimated to require a potential maximum of 100 construction workers and 150 trucks per day for deliveries and waste removal. During non-peak construction, it is estimated there would be approximately 50 workers onsite and approximately 75 trucks per day for deliveries and waste

removal. Demolition and construction would take place primarily during normal business hours; however, some nighttime construction may be required during the months of April through October depending on construction phasing.

Connected Actions

To prepare the proposed expansion area for development, some existing utilities and PCA infrastructure would need to be accommodated in a new way, either within the LPOE via easements or moved off site to the west or south on PCA-owned land. The initial assumptions that were followed in the 2011 Final EIS for the relocation of a new site are no longer valid due to a change in operations by PCA. These changes have also triggered the reconfiguration of some of the existing PCA operations on PCA lands. The following infrastructure may require relocation: chip line booster building, PCA storage building, leachate line, MD&W Railway rail lines, PCA private truck road and trailer parking, natural gas line, and power lines. Additionally, PCA is considering replacing the existing elevated pneumatic chip line system with a new elevated belt conveyor system, which would require demolition of the existing pneumatic chip line and construction of two new elevated structures consisting of conveyor belts. Relocation and site work outside of the proposed expansion area would primarily occur on land both west of the LPOE and south of SR-11. Relocation of utilities and infrastructure may be conducted by either GSA or PCA, depending on final acquisition negotiations. If GSA does not directly perform the relocation of the infrastructure, PCA would be fairly compensated to conduct such actions. Actions taken by PCA are still included within the scope of this SEIS analysis, because they would be considered "connected actions" per 40 CFR 1501.9(e)(1), as they "are interdependent parts of a larger action and depend on the larger action for their justification."

The PCA plant typically shuts down for 5 to 7 days approximately every 18 months to perform maintenance, upgrades, and/or renovation projects per their ongoing operations. GSA would coordinate with PCA to conduct activities during shutdown periods to limit impacts to PCA operations. Site preparation would be coordinated as needed with PCA, MD&W Railway, and utility providers to minimize disruption to operations to the extent practicable. GSA would also coordinate with the other landowner in the proposed expansion area, RLD, as appropriate.

Renewable Energy Technologies

Alternative 1 would consider the implementation of renewable energy technologies within the expanded and modernized LPOE. These technologies were not considered in the 2011 Final EIS but have since been proposed for inclusion in future site plans. Renewable technologies that may be incorporated into the facility design include solar (photovoltaic [PV] or solar collectors) and certain types of geothermal heat pumps, including river water cooling technology that would include placement of passive heat exchangers within the Rainy River. Selection of each technology, to include final sizing, is dependent on final design. It is possible a combination of these technologies could be selected during final design. Apart from the geothermal technology that would utilize the Rainy River, all associated infrastructure would be constructed within the newly expanded and modernized LPOE footprint.

Previously Identified Mitigation

The 2012 ROD established a Program of Mitigation, Monitoring, or Enforcement that identified all practicable means of avoiding or minimizing adverse environmental impacts from the 2011 Preferred Alternative. These mitigation measures are considered and incorporated into this Draft SEIS as applicable.

Additionally, in the 2012 ROD, GSA committed to addressing specific comments on the EIS as design and site engineering occurred, acknowledging that such compliance is required by several permitting and reviewing agencies. The comments included the following items, which are considered in the Draft SEIS:

- Bridging First Creek and wetlands/floodplain;
- Use of native species vegetative buffers between manmade project components and the Rainy River and First Creek floodplains; and

- Redirection and pre-treatment of stormwater runoff before being discharged into natural watercourses.

No Action Alternative

Under the No Action Alternative, there would be no construction of a new LPOE to replace the existing LPOE. Any type of modification to the existing port would be limited to minor repairs and maintenance, as needed. The operation of the International Falls LPOE would generally remain similar to current conditions, but the capacity and efficiency of the port would likely degrade over time due to potential increased traffic demand. Deficiencies in port operations would remain or worsen over time. This alternative would not meet the purpose and need for the Proposed Action.

IMPACT COMPARISON MATRIX

This SEIS evaluates the potential impact on the environmental conditions from implementing the Proposed Action (Alternative 1) and the No Action Alternative. For each resource area analyzed in this SEIS, the expected consequences of the alternatives and impact reduction measures are summarized in Table S-1.

PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT

Internal scoping for the SEIS began with GSA and CBP staff identifying the purpose and need for the project, defining the proposed action, determining the environmental issues potentially required for detailed analysis, eliminating issues that are out of scope of the project, listing data needs, identifying cumulative actions, and confirming the appropriate NEPA path. External scoping began when the public and all interested stakeholders were notified about the proposed action and comments on the project and potential environmental issues were solicited.

To formally initiate the NEPA process for this Draft SEIS, GSA published a Notice of Intent (NOI) to prepare a Draft SEIS in the *Federal Register* on December 9, 2022. After issuing the NOI, GSA conducted a scoping process that included hosting a hybrid virtual and in-person public scoping meeting on December 13, 2022 and consultation with various interested governmental agencies and stakeholders. Outside of the public scoping meeting, GSA invited written comments to be submitted via mail or email throughout the scoping period.

GSA used the results of the scoping efforts to further define the scope and areas of emphasis (or focus) of this SEIS. A Public Comments Summary Report was prepared for this SEIS and includes a detailed description of comments received, location addressed in this SEIS, as well as details on the Public Scoping Meeting (see Appendix A).

After considering the issues identified during internal and external scoping, GSA prepared this Draft SEIS, which is available for public review and comment for 45 days, from October 27, 2023 through December 11, 2023. The Draft SEIS is available at:

https://www.gsa.gov/about-us/regions/region-5-great-lakes/buildings-and-facilities/minnesota/international-falls-land-port-of-entry

The public is encouraged to provide comments on this Draft SEIS. Written comments may be sent to:

Attention: Michael Gonczar
International Falls LPOE SEIS
U.S. General Services Administration, Region 5
230 S. Dearborn Street, Suite 3600
Chicago, IL 60604

Comments may also be submitted electronically to michael.gonczar@gsa.gov. Please include "International Falls LPOE SEIS" in the subject line. All comments must be postmarked or submitted electronically by 11:59 PM CST on December 11, 2023.

GSA will host a hybrid virtual public meeting for the project on November 8, 2023, from 6 p.m. to 8 p.m., CST via Zoom and in-person at the Koochiching County Court Administration Building at 715 4th Street, 3rd floor, International Falls, MN 56649. Please follow this hyperlink to access the meeting: https://us06web.zoom.us/j/84727622357.

During this meeting, GSA will present information on the proposed project and impacts related to the alternatives. Opportunities for the public to comment on the project will be provided at the meeting.

Upon closure of the public comment period for this Draft SEIS, GSA will ensure that the Final SEIS adequately addresses any substantive concerns identified by the public and stakeholders and that the impact analysis considers all available information and data.

Table S-1. Summary Comparison of Alternatives

Alternative 1 – Full Build	No Action Alternative	Impact Reduction Measures
Geology, Topography, and Soils		
Construction: Direct, long-term, minor, adverse, site-specific impacts on geology and soils during demolition, clearing, and excavation for construction of new buildings and infrastructure. Total maximum disturbance of 20.5 acres of expansion area and approximately 60 acres in the connected action footprint. Direct, long-term, negligible, adverse, site-specific impacts on topography. **Operation**: No impacts to geology or topography. Direct, long-term, minor, adverse local impacts to soils. Maximum increase in impervious surface area of 13.3 acres in the proposed expansion area and 3.5 acres in the connected action footprint.	No ground or subsurface disturbance from new facility or infrastructure construction would occur; therefore, there would be no impacts on existing geology, topography, and soils.	Measures to reduce construction impacts from soil erosion, loss, and instability, would be addressed in the project design plans, as well as through erosion and sedimentation controls and site stabilization measures necessary for the Minnesota CSGP. Such measures would include earth walls, soil nails, riprap, turbidity barriers and other BMPs to reduce impacts to soils or from soil erosion.
Water Resources		
Construction: Direct, short-term, minor to moderate, adverse local and regional impacts on water resources from land disturbance activities involving 20.5 acres of expansion area and approximately 60 acres for connected actions. Direct, long-term, minor to moderate, adverse impacts locally to wetlands associated with Rainy River and First Creek. Direct, short-term, minor, adverse impacts locally on floodplains. Direct, short-term, negligible, adverse, regional impacts to the regional water supply. Indirect, short-term, minor adverse impacts to groundwater. **Operation**: Direct, long-term, negligible to minor, adverse impacts by an increase in surface runoff from an additional 13.3 acres of impervious surface in the proposed expansion area and up to 3.5 acres in the connected action footprint. Long-term, minor, direct and indirect adverse impacts to floodplains due to construction within a 1-percent annual-chance and 0.2-percent-annual-chance floodplain. A long-term beneficial local and regional impact from relocation of the leachate pipeline. Indirect long-	No ground or subsurface disturbance from new facility or infrastructure construction would occur; therefore, adverse impacts on existing water resources would mainly be limited to maintenance activities at the LPOE. The existing leachate line would not be relocated and its current location above the existing structures crossing First Creek would continue to pose a contamination risk to First Creek, Rainy River, and other downstream waters. Flooding risks would remain along SR-11 near the existing PCA woodyard and near 3rd Avenue E, because the First Creek daylighted segment would not be improved.	LEED Gold certification for the project would include objectives for reducing adverse impacts to water quality and minimizing risks from flooding hazards. In addition, GSA requires a minimum SITES silver rating. GSA would follow the impact reduction measures and BMPs outlined within the Minnesota CSGP and follow additional BMPs listed in the Minnesota Stormwater Manual and MNDNR's Best Practices for Meeting DNR General Public Waters Work Permit GP2004-0001. GSA would coordinate with the USACE, MPCA, and MNDNR during design to determine what types of permits are required for potential construction work in the Rainy River and First Creek, to include for potential use of a geothermal energy system. GSA would also coordinate with the City of International Falls regarding development standards for a Shoreland Overlay District as provided in the city's zoning ordinance and any additional permits required for potential impacts to wetlands and floodplains. As stated in the 2012 ROD, GSA would also commit to: • Developing in compliance with Section 438 of the 2007 EISA with the objective of restoring the hydrology to pre-development conditions;

Alternative 1 – Full Build	No Action Alternative	Impact Reduction Measures
term, negligible, adverse impact on groundwater if geothermal wells are drilled.		• Considering green infrastructure and low impact development practices, such as reducing impervious surfaces, using vegetated swales and revegetation, protection and restoration of the riparian shoreline of Rainy River, and using porous pavements; • Developing an SPCC plan; and • Further analyzing opportunities to protect and restore the natural shoreline of the Rainy River during the final design of the project.
Biological Resources		
Construction: Direct, short- and long-term, minor adverse impacts by removal of up to 13.3 acres of vegetation in the proposed expansion area and up to 3.5 acres of vegetation for connected actions. Direct, short-term, minor adverse impacts on local wildlife in the areas cleared. No adverse impacts on special status species. **Operation**: No additional impacts to vegetation or terrestrial wildlife. Long-term, minor adverse impacts to aquatic habitat from de-icing salt usage and a potential geothermal RWC system.	No ground disturbance from new facility or infrastructure construction would occur; therefore, there would be no impacts on existing biological resources.	General measures to reduce or avoid impacts on biological resources would include: • Only approved, native species would be used for revegetation. When possible, pollinator-friendly plant species would be used. These plant species would not be invasive or noxious species, and disturbed areas would be promptly restored or revegetated to the extent practicable following construction. • Construction equipment would be washed before and after coming to the site to the extent practicable to limit the transport of invasive species. If non-native invasive species are present in the project area, these plants would be eradicated and removed from the site before earthmoving activities begin. • If construction activities occur within the chimney swift nesting period (March 15 - August 25), existing structures would be inspected for nests prior to demolition. Any further requirements would be determined in coordination with applicable state and federal resource agencies pending survey results. • If milkweed plants are observed within the proposed expansion area, they would be avoided as practicable to reduce potential impacts to the federal candidate monarch butterfly. If avoidance is not practicable, milkweed plants would be transplanted outside of the proposed project area. When transplanting milkweed plants, care would be taken to take as much of the tap root as possible. Digging 4 inches away from each side of the plant would help avoid cutting the tap root. Transplanting in early spring or in late summer/late fall may also increase success. • Turbidity curtains and appropriate engineering controls would be used to reduce potential noise impacts to aquatic wildlife species

Alternative 1 – Full Build	No Action Alternative	Impact Reduction Measures

		within the Rainy River. Engineering controls may include the use of vibratory hammers instead of impact hammering and use of "bubble curtains" to attenuate noise.
		• Landscaping would consider Minnesota's insect pollinators by:
		  o Planting a variety of native flowers that bloom in the spring, summer, and fall;
		  o Providing nesting sites by allowing dead branches, stems, and logs to remain and leaving bare earth for ground-nesting insects;
		  o Reducing the use of pesticides; and
		  o Allowing native flowering plants to grow along roadsides and drainage ditches.
		• Species-specific measures that would be implemented to reduce or avoid potential impacts to the federally endangered northern long-eared bat and the federally proposed endangered tricolored bat include:
		  o No tree removal within 0.25 mile of a known occupied hibernaculum.
		  o No tree removal within 150 feet of a known occupied maternity roost tree during the pup season (June 1 to July 31).
		  o Pre-construction presence/absence surveys would be completed if there is a need to remove potentially suitable habitat within the project area during the pup season (June 1 to July 31). If required, surveys would be conducted pursuant to local USFWS field office and state resource agency requirements and the need for any additional tree clearing restrictions, if any, would be determined in coordination with applicable state and federal resource agencies pending survey results.
		• Pre-construction presence/absence surveys for bald eagles would be completed to determine if there is a need to remove potentially suitable habitat within the proposed project area. Bald eagle surveys would be conducted pursuant to local USFWS field office and state resource agency requirements. The need for any restrictions around tree clearing, if any, will be determined in coordination with applicable state and federal resource agencies pending survey results.

Alternative 1 – Full Build	No Action Alternative	Impact Reduction Measures
		• If the project is determined to have potential to disturb or kill eagles, a permit under the BGEPA would be obtained.
Air Quality and Climate Change		
Construction: Direct, short-term, minor adverse impacts to local air quality from construction emissions and activities. Construction activities would comply with all applicable federal, state, and local regulations relating to air quality, including any permitting and registration requirements. Negligible, incremental contribution to GHG emissions and global climate change. **Operation**: Beneficial long-term impact on air quality from increased energy efficiency features despite an increase in energy demand by expanded facilities. Anticipated beneficial impacts on air quality from a reduction in the wait time for POVs to be processed by a CBP officer. Negligible, incremental contribution to GHG emissions and global climate change.	No construction or changes to onsite operations would occur; therefore, there would be no changes to air quality and GHG emissions.	Precautions to prevent particulate matter from becoming airborne during construction could include: • Using water for dust control when grading roads or clearing land; • Stabilizing open storage piles and disturbed areas by covering and/or applying water or organic dust palliative where appropriate. • Paving roadways and maintaining them in a clean condition; • Covering open equipment when conveying or transporting material likely to create objectionable air pollution when airborne; • Promptly removing spilled or tracked dirt or other materials from paved streets. • Installing wind fencing and phasing grading operations where appropriate and operating water trucks for stabilization of surfaces under windy conditions. • When hauling material and operating non-earthmoving equipment, prevent spillage and limit speeds to 15 miles per hour (mph). Limit speed of earth-moving equipment to 10 mph. The following source-specific controls could be considered to minimize emissions during construction activities: • Reduce unnecessary idling from heavy equipment. • Prohibit engine tampering to increase horsepower, except when meeting manufacturer's recommendations. • Lease or buy newer, cleaner equipment using the best available emissions control technologies. • Use lower-emitting engines and fuels, including electric, liquified gas, hydrogen fuel cells, and/or alternative diesel formulations, if feasible. • On-highway vehicles would meet, or exceed, the USEPA exhaust emissions standards for model year 2010 and newer heavy-duty on-highway compression-ignition engines (e.g., drayage trucks, long haul trucks, refuse haulers, shuttle buses, etc.).

Alternative 1 – Full Build	No Action Alternative	Impact Reduction Measures
		• Nonroad vehicles and equipment would meet, or exceed, the USEPA Tier 4 exhaust emissions standards for heavy-duty nonroad compression-ignition engines (e.g., nonroad trucks, construction equipment, cargo handlers, etc.). The following administrative controls could be considered during construction: • Coordinate with appropriate air quality agencies to identify a construction schedule that minimizes cumulative impacts from other planned projects in the region, if feasible. • Locate diesel engines, motors, and equipment staging areas as far as possible from residential areas and other sensitive receptors (e.g., schools, daycare centers, hospitals, senior centers, etc.). • Avoid routing truck traffic near sensitive land uses to the fullest extent feasible. • Prepare an inventory of all equipment prior to construction and identify the suitability of add-on emission controls for each piece of equipment before groundbreaking. • Reduce construction-related trips of workers and equipment, including trucks. • Develop a construction traffic and parking management plan that minimizes traffic interference and maintains traffic flow. • To minimize operational emissions, GSA would consider the addition of electrical connections to power commercial vehicles such as refrigeration trucks, to prevent spoilage while discouraging engine idling during secondary inspections of commercially owned vehicles. • GSA would also consider implementing measures to minimize idling emissions from cars waiting to cross the border, such as anti-idling policies. Many of the mitigation measures for air quality identified above would also serve to reduce GHG emissions. GSA would take the following additional steps to minimize GHGs: • Design the LPOE to be energy efficient, including achieving a minimum of LEED Gold certification, which would reduce energy use and the associated GHG emissions.

Alternative 1 – Full Build	No Action Alternative	Impact Reduction Measures
		• Implement on-site renewable energy generation including solar PV, solar collectors, and geothermal. • Use cement blended with the maximum feasible amount of fly ash or other materials that reduce GHG emissions from cement production. • Recycle construction debris to the maximum extent feasible. GSA would also consider implementation of various climate change adaptation measures. Refer to Section 3.5.2.6 of the SEIS for more information.
Noise		
Construction: Direct, short-term, minor, adverse local noise impacts from construction activity on the closest sensitive noise receptors. The estimated indoor noise level from the combined construction equipment could be reduced to approximately 54.9 dBA (at 500 feet) and 50.2 dBA (at 860 feet) indoors, which is considered tolerable and below the NAC-1 daytime thresholds and below or near nighttime thresholds for residential areas. Direct and indirect, short-term, minor adverse, local and regional impacts on sensitive noise receptors along major roadway corridors. **Operation**: Direct, long-term, negligible to minor, local adverse noise impact from expanded operations and traffic. Long-term, minor beneficial impact within city's central business district from reduced congestion and relocation of COV entry point. Users of the Rainy Lake Bike Trail would experience increases in noise levels from COVs accessing/exiting the new LPOE and the new trailer parking area for PCA vehicles. Long-term, minor, beneficial impacts on LPOE inspection employees and patrons from relocation away from PCA facilities.	No construction or changes to onsite operations would occur; therefore, there would be no new increases in noise levels, and impacts to the noise environment.	Noise impacts would be minimized to the extent feasible through various measures, including: • Implementation of noise control measures, such as project scheduling, noise barriers, and using noise controls on equipment (e.g., mufflers). • Conducting construction activities within hours that are in accordance with local noise regulations and per discussions with adjacent landowners. • Coordination with the City of International Falls if nighttime construction is required, and consideration of recommendations set forth by the local planning conditions should such activity be considered a "conditional" use.
Traffic and Transportation		
Construction: Direct and indirect, short-term, minor, local adverse impacts to roadway traffic from	Traffic volumes and distribution of traffic on the	Measures that would mitigate the impacts associated with transportation during construction and operations include:

Alternative 1 – Full Build	No Action Alternative	Impact Reduction Measures
construction-related traffic. Despite some degradation to operating conditions on major roadways in the city, service is expected to remain at LOS A, and operating conditions of the roadways are expected to handle the additional traffic demand from the construction activities. Direct, short-term, minor, local adverse impacts would occur on pedestrian facilities and the Rainy Lake Bike Trail. **Operation**: Direct and indirect, long-term, negligible, local adverse impacts on traffic from workers at the expanded LPOE. Volume-to-capacity ratios are expected to return to pre-construction levels and all the roadway segments would remain at LOS A. Direct and indirect, long-term, minor, local adverse impacts to traffic flows on SR-11 and users on the Rainy Lake Bike Trail from COV traffic. Indirect, long-term, beneficial impact to portions of the city's downtown by relocating the COV access point. Indirect, long-term, negligible to minor, beneficial local impacts by increasing queuing space and removing vehicles from city streets.	local and regional roadways would remain unchanged from baseline conditions. Direct and indirect, long-term, minor, adverse impacts on traffic would remain, as congestion and queueing issues would continue and result in traffic safety issues, with the continued railway conflicts exacerbating such issues.	• Minimizing construction truck movement during peak traffic hours; • Placing construction staging areas where they would least interfere with local traffic and parking; • Minimizing impacts to pedestrians during construction activities by providing appropriate information and signage to pedestrians, bicyclists, and motorists who are traveling throughout the area; • Developing a construction traffic and parking management plan that minimizes traffic interference and maintains traffic flow and safety; • Developing and implementing Transportation Demand Management strategies to reduce single occupancy vehicles (e.g., encourage carpooling); • Coordinating with the utility providers, MD&W Railway, and PCA on the phased construction plans to minimize traffic safety issues and potential disruptions; • Coordinating with local, county, and state transportation authorities when planning access to the International Falls LPOE site; and • Following all local, state, and federal planning guidelines and regulations when maintaining or upgrading roadway infrastructure.
Land Use and Visual Resources		
Construction: Direct, short-term, minor, adverse impacts on PCA operations, adjacent land uses, and recreational uses. GSA would acquire approximately 20.5 acres of land from PCA and RLD, and would convert these parcels to buildings, paved surfaces, and landscaped areas, which would not conflict with local land use planning or zoning. Because the project area and surrounding areas are mainly industrial in nature, construction activities would result in long-term, negligible adverse impact on surrounding viewshed. **Operation**: Because the land use of newly acquired property, a relocated trailer parking location, and a relocated chip line conveyor system would retain	No changes in land use would occur. Current facilities and infrastructure at the existing LPOE would remain, and long-term minor local and regional adverse impacts to visual resources would be expected as existing structures would continue to deteriorate and degrade the aesthetic quality of the LPOE. Long term increases in idling time could contribute to regional haze. PCA trailer	GSA would consider local zoning laws for construction and operation of the proposed LPOE and all design requirements of state and local governments to the extent practicable. This would include both the incorporation of exterior design elements to reflect the unique character of the area and the emphasis on pedestrian circulation and amenities, such as landscaped plazas and walkways, to the extent practicable and consistent with GSA design standards. To ensure minimal conflicts with land use, GSA would continue coordination efforts during the design process with city and county governments, MnDOT, and other relevant stakeholders including PCA, MD&W Railway, Aazhogan, CentraGas and other utility providers. GSA would implement the following measures to minimize impacts to visual resources:

Alternative 1 – Full Build	No Action Alternative	Impact Reduction Measures
similar or better qualities than those of a typical manufacturing land use, the project would not conflict with its current zoning designation of M-2A (Manufacturing). Direct, long-term, minor, adverse, local impacts to users of the Bike Trail and SR-11 at new COV access. Long-term, negligible adverse and long-term, minor, beneficial, local impact to the overall visual quality. Indirect, long-term, negligible to minor, beneficial, impacts to regional haze conditions are expected as the new LPOE facility would operate more efficiently and reduce idling times.	storage on the parking lot adjacent to the Rainy Lake Bike Trail and SR-11 would likely remain.	• Consult with local officials, consider local requirements for new building construction, and comply with state and local building codes to the maximum extent practicable. • Integrate its programs of design/architecture and construction excellence into the new facility to optimize building performance and aesthetics, including adherence to P100 Standard which establishes design criteria and standards for new government buildings. • Design exterior lighting to meet physical security requirements but controlled to minimize light trespass and glare. • Incorporate landscaping and screening (trees and vegetation) into the exterior design to provide aesthetic benefits to the surrounding community consistent with GSA's Urban Development/Good Neighbor Program.
Infrastructure and Utilities		
Construction: Direct, short-term, moderate, adverse, site-specific impacts on facilities. To prepare the proposed expansion area for development, some existing PCA facilities and other utilities would need to be accommodated in a new way within the LPOE via easements or moved off site to the west or south. The potential relocation and reconnection of utilities, including connection of any renewable energy utilities, could require temporary or intermittent shut offs resulting in direct, short-term, minor, adverse, local impacts to services. Direct, short-term, minor, adverse, local impacts on public utility providers would occur from increasing demands on service to support construction activities. Regional water and wastewater treatment plants have available capacity to support these demands. **Operation**: Direct, long-term, major, beneficial, site-specific impact on facilities and infrastructure for CBP. Direct, long-term, negligible to minor, local, adverse impacts to water, wastewater, electricity, natural gas, and telecommunication services from increased demand. Direct, long-term, minor, local, adverse impacts to stormwater management	Current facilities and infrastructure at the existing LPOE would remain. LPOE would not benefit from updated facilities and infrastructure with LEED certification that would be designed to accommodate renewable energy sources and achieve sustainable standards.	Impacts on infrastructure and utilities would be reduced through the following: • Adherence to GSA P100 Standards, including new parking and road networks using low-embodied carbon concrete and environmentally preferable asphalt. • Coordinating with utility providers in advance to determine the best courses of action to avoid or minimize impacts, either by implementing measures to protect utility lines or by arranging for their temporary or permanent relocation. The expanded and modernized LPOE would utilize energy- and water-efficient technologies, which would further reduce demands on utility providers. GSA would also seek a minimum of a LEED Gold certification for construction of new facilities, and steps to achieve this would likely include measures that would reduce demand for energy and water.

Alternative 1 – Full Build	No Action Alternative	Impact Reduction Measures
systems. The increased demand on most utility services would be offset by a more efficient, sustainable facility design meeting P100 Standards and attaining LEED Gold certification at a minimum. GSA is also considering the use of renewable energy technology, including solar technology and geothermal systems, which would further reduce the LPOE's energy demand.		
Socioeconomics		
Construction: Direct, short-term, negligible to minor, adverse impact on local and regional population and housing. Direct, short-term, minor, beneficial impact on unemployment and income locally. Peak construction would require a potential maximum of 100 workers locally; non-peak construction would require approximately 50 workers. GSA anticipates that the number of workers who would temporarily relocate would be smaller percentages of non-peak and peak employment estimates. Short-term, indirect, moderate, beneficial socioeconomic impacts from construction spending multipliers and job creation. Direct, short-term, minor to moderate, adverse impacts on the operations of PCA, MD&W Railway, and utility providers. Direct, short-term, minor, adverse impacts associated with decreased quality of life for the closest residents. Residents adjacent to the LPOE may be delayed in reaching emergency and urgent care facilities during construction activities due to traffic detours or delays. The response time of ambulances, fire trucks, and police may similarly increase slightly when attempting to access areas surrounding the project area. **Operation**: A maximum of 30 workers for future tenants at the LPOE may relocate to International Falls and the surrounding communities, which would have a direct, long-term, negligible to minor, adverse impact on population and housing locally. Long-term, negligible to minor, beneficial impact on labor and earnings locally. Direct, minor to	Current staffing at the existing LPOE would remain essentially unchanged. No new facility or infrastructure construction would occur; therefore, there would be no impacts on existing population and housing, labor and income, the local economy, and public services in International Falls.	Measures to reduce construction impacts described for other resource topics would also reduce adverse impacts on quality of life. GSA intends to coordinate with Koochiching County Public Works during site planning to accommodate snow storage associated with maintenance for the Rainy Lake Bike Trail along SR-11.

Alternative 1 – Full Build	No Action Alternative	Impact Reduction Measures
moderate, beneficial effects on personal travel expenditures by redirection of COV traffic. Long-term, minor to moderate, beneficial, direct and indirect impacts on unemployment. Direct and indirect, long-term, minor to moderate, beneficial, impacts to quality of life. The reduced congestion and improvements are expected to result in safer roads for residents and tourists, improve access of emergency services, and indirectly improve access to the Rainy River and Rainy Lake by expanding more opportunity for pedestrian and bicycle infrastructure. Negligible adverse impact on the school system.		
Cultural Resources		
Construction: Adverse effects under NHPA and major impacts could occur under NEPA if archaeological resources are encountered during ground-disturbing activities. GSA is moving forward with surveys of archaeological sensitivity zones within the project area as well as with a maritime survey. No adverse effects to aboveground historic-age resources are expected from the Proposed Action. GSA is continuing consultation under Section 106 with regards to the proposed effect determinations and the results of this consultation process, as well as any applicable impact reduction measures, will be included in the Final SEIS. **Operation**: Operation of the Proposed Action would not result in additional subsurface disturbance, other than for occasional repair and maintenance activities; therefore, there would be limited potential for the disturbance of archaeological resources. No adverse effects under NHPA and less-than-significant impacts under NEPA to archaeological resources would be anticipated during operations. No additional effects under NHPA or impacts under NEPA would occur to aboveground historic-age resources beyond those described above under Construction.	No adverse effects under NHPA and no adverse impacts under NEPA to cultural resources would be expected.	If archaeological resources are identified, GSA would develop measures in coordination with the MnHPO and appropriate THPOs to mitigate any potential adverse effects under NHPA, which would reduce impacts to less-than-significant under NEPA. Impact reduction measures, including inadvertent discovery procedures, would be implemented as necessary during maintenance activities.

Alternative 1 – Full Build	No Action Alternative	Impact Reduction Measures
Human Health and Safety		
Construction: Direct, short-term, negligible to minor, adverse impacts on human health and safety locally. The average probability of a fatal injury during construction would be less than 1 in 10,000; no fatalities would be anticipated over the 5-year construction period. Risks to health and safety of personnel and patrons would increase slightly during the construction phase. Direct and indirect, short-term, negligible to minor, adverse impacts locally and regionally from hazardous materials use and waste handling. **Operation**: Direct, long-term, negligible to minor, adverse effects on human health and safety locally during operations. The relocations of tracks and the improvements in at-grade crossings would have direct and indirect, long-term, minor to moderate, beneficial impacts on public safety locally by improving traffic patterns and minimizing risks of vehicular and pedestrian accidents near the LPOE. Direct and indirect, long-term, negligible to minor, adverse impacts related to hazardous materials and waste handling. The new facility would not include any ACM or LBP that would result in occupant exposure, use any PCB-containing electrical equipment, and prior site contamination would be remediated. There may be petroleum storage tanks associated with the new facility; these would be installed and operated in accordance with all applicable regulations and current industry standards including leak-detection systems and secondary containment.	Current facilities and infrastructure at the existing LPOE would remain essentially unchanged. Therefore, negligible impacts would occur as there would be no change in risks to human safety, hazardous materials usage, or waste generation. Ongoing maintenance to the LPOE would continue, which would require negligible amounts of hazardous materials usage and generate negligible amounts of hazardous waste. Risks to health and safety associated with existing conditions and operations at the LPOE would remain unchanged from current conditions.	Measures that would limit impacts related to human health and safety during building construction and operations include: • Prior to demolition, an inspection of the buildings to be demolished would be performed by a licensed asbestos inspector and a “Notification of Intent to Perform a Demolition” form would need to be completed and filed with the MPCA. • GSA would require diversion of at least 50 percent of nonhazardous construction and demolition waste from the landfill per EO 14057 Section 207. • All spills or releases of petroleum, oils, and lubricants; hazardous materials; pollutants; or contaminants would be handled in accordance with measures outlined in a Spill Prevention and Response Plan prepared for construction. • GSA would develop a SPCC plan during final design for operations of the facility, assuming the facility meetings the requirements to prepare a plan per 40 CFR 112. • As a BMP, a Soil Management Plan may be prepared to address the potential for encountering areas of environmental concern (e.g., contaminated soil) during grading, excavation, or other subsurface disturbance. The Soil Management Plan would identify specific measures to address hazardous waste and materials cleanup efforts, including monitoring, handling, stockpiling, characterization, on-site reuse, export, and disposal protocols for excavated soil. • All personnel would follow federal regulations and standard handling procedures as specified in product Safety Data Sheets for hazardous materials. • All potentially hazardous wastes generated would be properly characterized, segregated, and managed onsite prior to offsite disposal. • If PCB-containing materials are identified onsite, appropriate abatement actions for their disposal would be implemented in accordance with regulatory requirements, and soils beneath transformers would be evaluated for evidence of releases. If present in underlying soils, appropriate actions for removal and

Alternative 1 – Full Build	No Action Alternative	Impact Reduction Measures
		disposal would be implemented in accordance with applicable regulatory requirements. • Any existing municipal (household) trash, construction debris, and other waste materials would be removed from all project areas and disposed of in accordance with applicable regulations. • Potentially hazardous wastes generated during project-related construction activities would be disposed of or recycled at appropriate facilities in accordance with associated regulatory requirements. • Construction workers would adhere to safety standards promulgated in 29 CFR 17 to protect against workplace hazards. To minimize potential exposure or safety concerns to workers, appropriate PPE would be worn. • Signs, barriers, and traffic cones would be installed to direct vehicles and non-construction personnel away from the construction area.
Environmental Justice and Protection of Children's Health and Safety		
Construction: No disproportionately high and adverse impact on environmental justice during construction. Although minority and low-income populations living and working within 1 mile of the project area may be disproportionately affected by activities during construction, none of the impacts described in this SEIS are expected to be high and adverse. Furthermore, the most-affected populations are physically separated from the proposed construction areas by commercial and industrial properties such that impacts would be diminished. Beneficial impacts may have a disproportionately favorable effect for minority and low-income populations locally. Direct, minor to moderate, adverse impacts to children's health and safety during construction. Because the most-affected populations and facilities used regularly by children are distant and are physically separated from the proposed construction areas by commercial and industrial properties, the extent of	Current facilities and infrastructure at the existing LPOE would remain. No creation of direct or indirect jobs would occur; therefore, there would be no potential beneficial impacts for existing environmental justice populations. Otherwise, there would be no change in conditions relating to minority and low-income populations or children's health and safety.	Impact reduction measures described for most resource topics in this table would also reduce potential impacts on environmental justice populations and children's health and safety. Construction contractors would be required to submit work plans which detail impact reduction measures to be followed during construction. GSA would distribute this information to the local community as appropriate.

Alternative 1 – Full Build	No Action Alternative	Impact Reduction Measures
any adverse impacts during construction would be diminished. **Operation**: No disproportionately high and adverse impact on environmental justice during operations. Although minority and low-income populations living and working within 1 mile of the project area may be disproportionately affected by activities during operations, none of the impacts described in this SEIS are expected to be high and adverse. Furthermore, the most-affected populations are physically separated from the LPOE by commercial and industrial properties such that impacts would be diminished. Because operations for Alternative 1 would generally remain comparable to current operations of the LPOE, and the most-affected child populations and facilities used regularly by children are distant and are physically separated by commercial and industrial properties, high and adverse impacts for children's health and safety are not anticipated.		

ACM = asbestos containing materials; BGEPA = Bald and Golden Eagle Protection Act; BMPs = best management practices; CBP = Customs and Border Patrol; CFR = Code of Federal Regulations; COV = commercially owned vehicles; CSGP = Construction Stormwater General Permit; dBA = A-weighted decibel; DNR = Department of Natural Resources; EISA = Energy Independence and Security Act; EO = Executive Order; GHG = greenhouse gas; GSA = General Services Administration; LBP = lead based paint; LEED = Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design; LOS A = level of service, free flow; LPOE = Land Port of Entry; MD&W = Minnesota, Dakota, & Western; MNDNR = Minnesota Department of Natural Resources; MnDOT = Minnesota Department of Transportation; MPCA = Minnesota Pollution Control Agency; NAC = Noise Abatement Criteria; PCA = Packaging Corporation of America; PCB = polychlorinated biphenyls; POV = privately owned vehicle; PPE = Personal Protection Equipment; PV = photovoltaic; RLD = Recreational Land Development, LLC; ROD = Record of Decision; RWC = river water cooling; SEIS = Supplemental Environmental Impact Statement; SITES = Sustainable Sites Initiative; SPCC = Spill Prevention, Control, and Countermeasure; SR-11 = State Route 11; USACE = U.S. Army Corps of Engineers; USEPA = U.S. Environmental Protection Agency; USFWS = U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service

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CHAPTER 1 PURPOSE AND NEED

This chapter introduces the U.S. General Services Administration's (GSA) proposed International Falls Land Port of Entry (LPOE) Modernization and Expansion project and describes the purpose and need for agency action and the scope of this Draft Supplemental Environmental Impact Statement (SEIS). This chapter also summarizes the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) of 1969 process and relevant regulations, project background and objectives, and the public involvement process undertaken for this Draft SEIS.

1.1 INTRODUCTION

GSA's mission includes the design, construction, management, maintenance, custody, and control of federal buildings, including the International Falls LPOE and 121 of the other 167 U.S. LPOEs. The International Falls LPOE is a port of entry for vehicles and pedestrians crossing the U.S.-Canada border between International Falls, Minnesota and Fort Frances, Ontario in Canada. The port is operated by the U.S. Department of Homeland Security's Customs and Border Protection (CBP) and is a full-service, multi-modal facility where CBP officers inspect commercially owned vehicles (COVs), privately owned vehicles (POVs), and pedestrians.

In 2009, GSA issued a draft Feasibility Study that evaluated the existing conditions of the International Falls LPOE and the existing and future needs of the CBP and other inspection agencies. The results of this draft Feasibility Study confirmed that the existing building, although well maintained, did not meet GSA's minimum requirements for LPOEs and provided only a small percentage of the total building area and land required to meet the needs of the CBP and other agencies (GSA 2011).

Subsequently, GSA completed another Feasibility Study for the LPOE in 2011, which investigated 10 conceptual Build alternatives and a No-Build Alternative to address space and facility needs (GSA 2011). During the course of the 2011 Study, GSA considered and dismissed five Build alternatives because they did not meet the needs and requirements of the Federal Inspection Services (FIS) and GSA.

Concurrent with the 2011 Feasibility Study, GSA prepared a Final Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) in accordance with NEPA, which was published in September 2011. The 2011 Final EIS analyzed the five remaining viable conceptual Build alternatives and a No-Build Alternative that were identified in the Feasibility Study. A Record of Decision (ROD) that identified GSA's Preferred Alternative was signed by GSA on January 12, 2012 and published in the *Federal Register*. GSA selected Alternative 10 as its Preferred Alternative after detailed consideration and analysis as this alternative would best meet the purpose and need of the project with the least overall adverse impacts to the natural, social, and economic environment of the area and region. Alternative 10 included expansion of the LPOE footprint onto adjacent land previously held by Boise, Inc. (currently Packaging Corporation of America [PCA]) and an entity known as the Recreational Land Development, LLC (RLD). Since the issuance of GSA's 2012 ROD, project changes have occurred, including an updated 2018 Feasibility Study. Section 1.1.2 summarizes GSA's project updates.

GSA has prepared this Draft SEIS for the purpose of analyzing potential environmental impacts from the project updates that have been identified since the release of the 2011 Final EIS and 2012 ROD. GSA has prepared this Draft SEIS in accordance with NEPA (42 United States Code [U.S.C.] 4321 *et seq.*), the Council on Environmental Quality (CEQ) regulations implementing NEPA (40 Code of Federal Regulations [CFR] 1500-1508), GSA Order ADM 1095.1F (*Environmental Consideration in Decision Making*), the GSA Public Buildings Service's (PBS) *NEPA Desk Guide*, and other relevant laws, regulations, and Executive Orders (EOs), including the National Historic Preservation Act (NHPA).

1.1.1 Project Location and Background

The International Falls LPOE is located in International Falls, Koochiching County, Minnesota on the south bank of the Rainy River (see Figure 1-1). The LPOE serves as the port of entry to people and vehicles crossing the International Bridge that connects International Falls, MN to the town of Fort Frances, Ontario, Canada. The LPOE is situated on the northern terminus of U.S. Highway 53 (US-53), at the foot of the bridge and at the edge of downtown International Falls, on the west side of US-53. The primary U.S. highways that serve the project area include U.S. Highway 71 (US-71), State Route 11 (SR-11) and US-53 and the primary Canadian highway connector to the project area is Provincial Route 11.

The LPOE is operated 24 hours per day, 7 days per week, by the U.S. Department of Homeland Security's CBP. CBP officers inspect all types of commercial and non-commercial traffic, including pedestrians at the LPOE. The LPOE is the busiest port of entry in Minnesota and currently processes more traffic than originally designed to accommodate.

The existing LPOE site is approximately 1.6 acres and is surrounded by the industrial buildings of the PCA paper mill facilities (formerly owned by Boise, Inc.) to the west and south; International Bridge to the north; the Rainy River to the east; and the Minnesota, Dakota, & Western (MD&W) Railway (wholly owned by PCA) to the east (see Figure 1-2). The site layout aligns non-commercial primary and secondary inspections and the main building along US-53 in a north-to-south configuration. The LPOE is crisscrossed by railroad tracks and utility easements, which traverse in an east-west direction, between the LPOE and the bridge. Although railcars actively cross the LPOE, railcars no longer cross the bridge because of the closing of the Resolute paper mill, just across the border in Fort Frances, Ontario in Canada. The existing LPOE site is spatially constrained as it is landlocked on all sides.

The International Bridge consists of two adjacent bridges: a concrete bridge on the east with two lanes for inbound/outbound passenger vehicle traffic; and a steel bridge on the west that is shared by rail and commercial vehicle traffic, which cross over existing railroad tracks. Additionally, pedestrians enter the LPOE from a sidewalk located on the west side of the metal span of the bridge. In 2022, Aazhogan Limited Partnership, a partnership of the Rainy River First Nations and the BMI Group, acquired the International Bridge.

The LPOE was originally constructed in 1993 and since then has had minor alterations, including an exterior façade replacement in 2005. Figure 1-3 illustrates the existing facilities at the LPOE, which primarily consist of the following:

- 10,000 square foot main operations building;
- Two primary and two secondary passenger vehicle inspection lanes;
- One primary commercial vehicle inspection lane;
- A mobile gamma-ray inspection technology (GRIT) shed;
- Public restrooms;
- A secure storage shed;
- A toll booth; and
- A visitor parking lot

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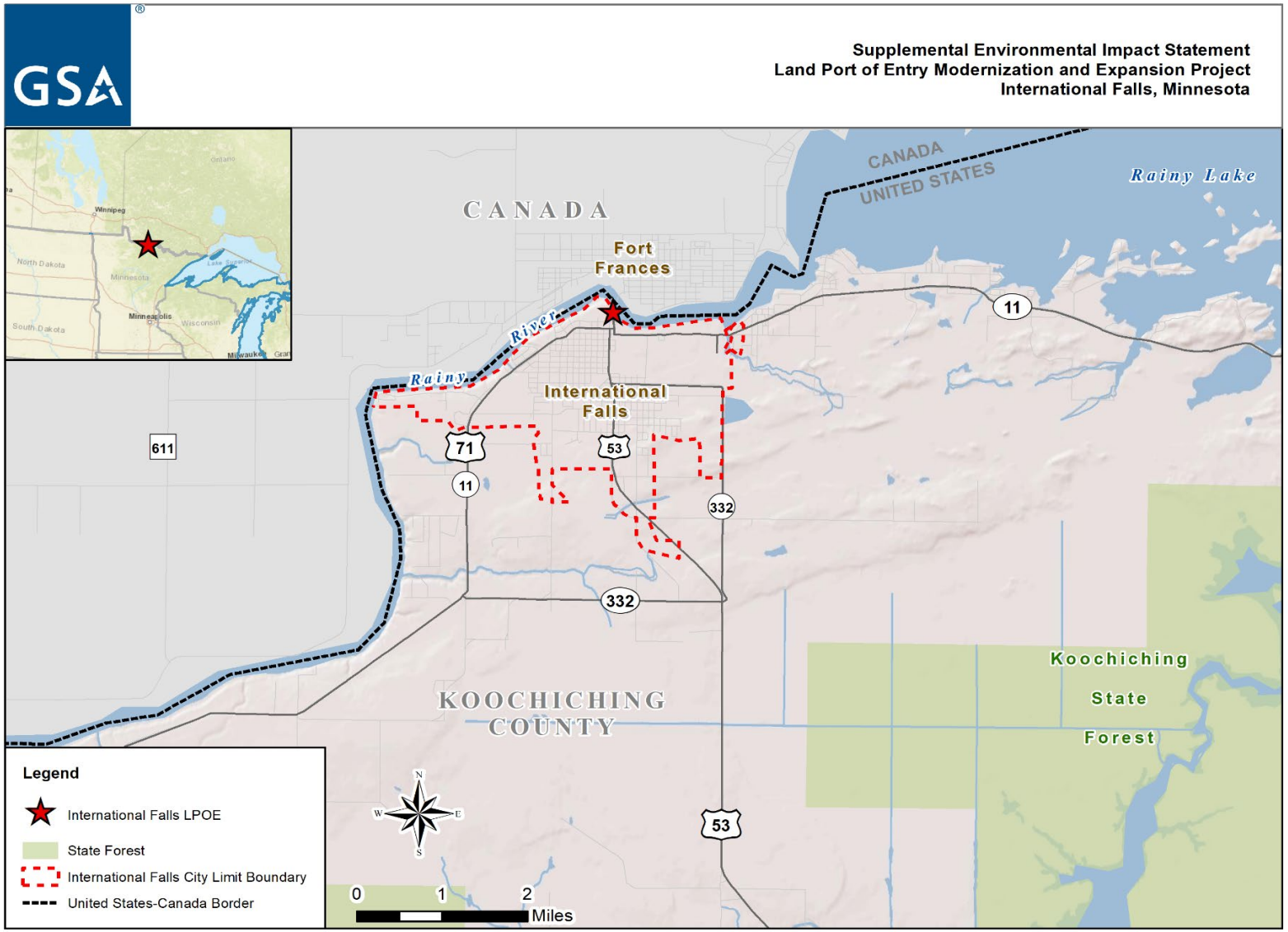
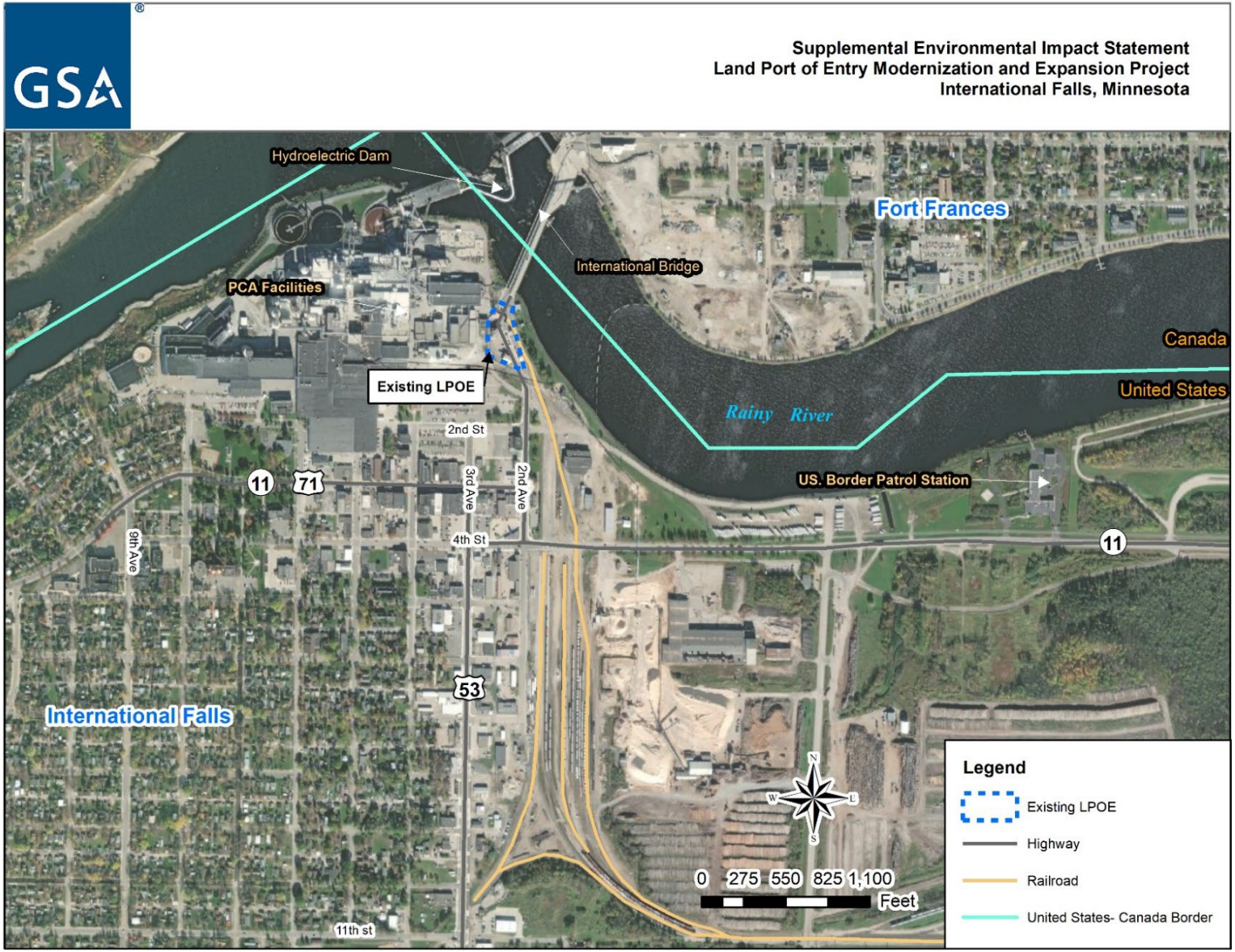


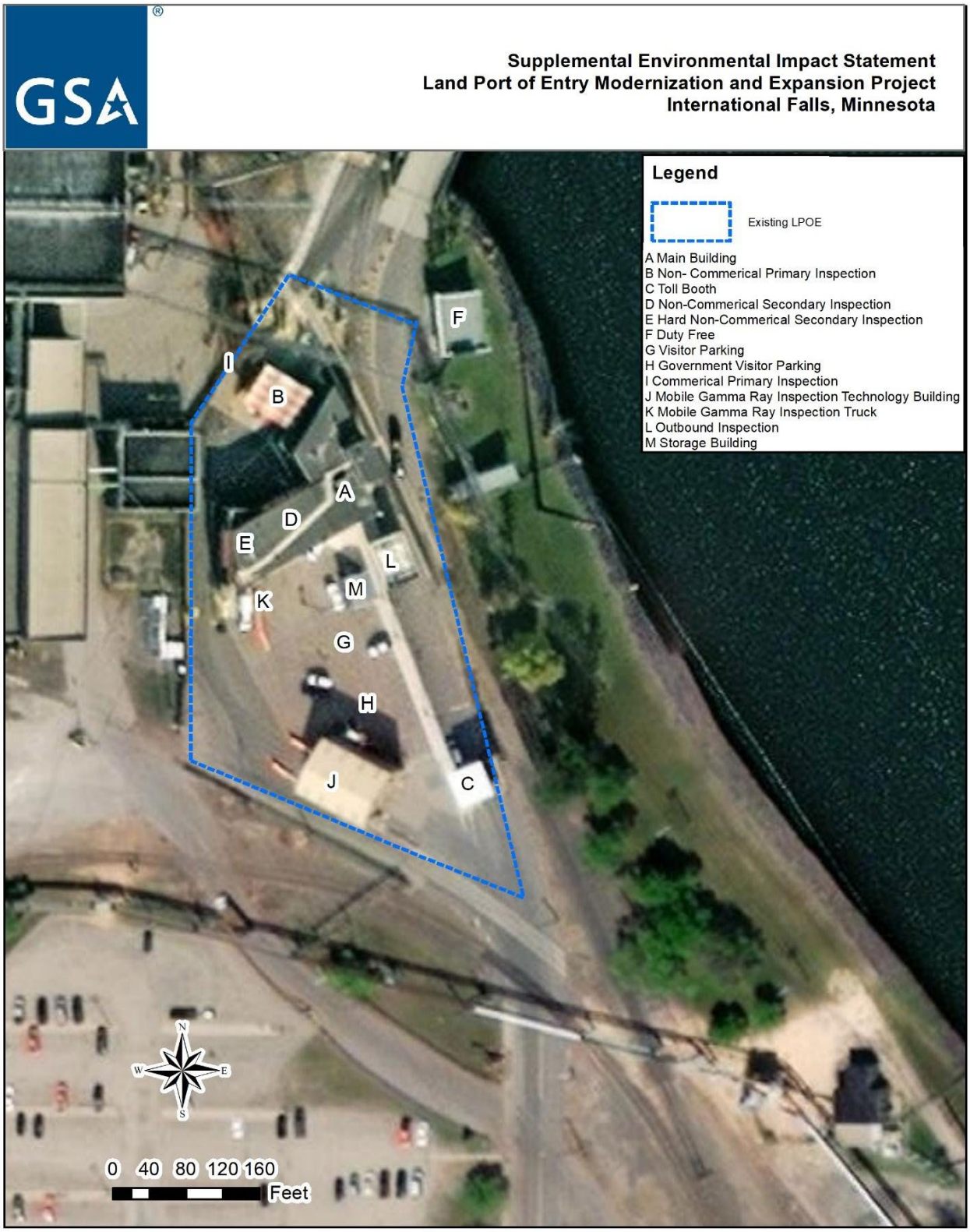
Source: Google Maps, 2023a

Figure 1-1. General Location of the International Falls Land Port of Entry



Source: Google Earth 2022

Figure 1-2. International Falls LPOE and Surrounding Features



Source: GSA 2019a

Figure 1-3. International Falls LPOE Existing Facilities

1.1.2 Project Updates Since the 2011 Final EIS

Since the publication of the 2011 Final EIS and 2012 ROD, the space and facility requirements (also referred to as Program of Requirements [POR]) for CBP have changed, resulting in a need to revise the 2011 Feasibility Study and to reflect the GSA's current needs at the LPOE. Additionally, project updates have occurred that were documented in a 2018 Feasibility Study or have otherwise been identified by GSA since the completion of the 2012 ROD. As such, GSA is preparing this Draft SEIS to assess the potential impacts of the project updates that were not assessed in the 2011 Final EIS.

In summary, the following changes to existing conditions were identified in the 2018 Feasibility Study:

- **Paper mill change in ownership** – PCA has acquired Boise, Inc. and the new ownership has new requirements and operations that would require changes to existing utilities and may require modification to its site plan for the area south of SR-11. The assumptions for the relocation of a new site for PCA trailers after delivery to the woodyard are no longer valid due to a change in operations by PCA. A new location must be identified to relocate these trailers to free up the expansion area for the new LPOE facilities. In addition, other PCA facilities and functions will require relocation as a result of the port expansion, which has expanded the overall project footprint.
- **New tenants at the LPOE** – U.S. Department of Agriculture/Animal Plant Health Inspection Services-Plant Protection and Quarantine (USDA-APHIS-PPQ) and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) are planning to be part of the LPOE. The U.S. Food and Drug Administration is no longer planning to be part of the LPOE, which changes the space and facilities requirements.
- **Closure of the Resolute paper mill** – The Resolute paper mill was located in Fort Frances, Ontario and closure of operations occurred in 2014 (demolition occurred in 2022). As a result, rail traffic no longer crosses the International Bridge.
- **Changes in building requirements and additional parking needs** – Compared with the 2011 Final EIS's Preferred Alternative (Alternative 10), every building requirement increased in size and additional parking is required to satisfy the updated needs. There has been an increase in the proposed usable area for overall building space needed from 42,282 to 80,611 square feet, based on the addition of a maintenance building and expansion in the sizes of all other buildings. The 2018 Feasibility Study incorporated updated versions of the U.S. LPOE Design Standard, Facilities Standards for PBS P100, and other guidance that have become effective since completion of the 2011 Feasibility Study.

In addition to the 2018 Feasibility Study updates, the following considerations were identified by GSA that require analysis in this Draft SEIS:

- The daylighting of a section of First Creek between SR-11 and the Rainy River that was previously contained in a culvert;
- Stormwater management that would be redesigned in the 300-foot section of First Creek due to potentially two new areas of pavement crossing the creek or a new culvert being installed; and
- New renewable energy technologies that are being considered for implementation at the expanded and modernized LPOE.

1.2 PURPOSE AND NEED

The Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act (IIJA) (2021), also known as the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law (BIL)[1], includes $3.4 billion for GSA to undertake 26 major construction and modernization projects at LPOEs nationwide. The need for FIS at many LPOEs, including the International Falls LPOE, has

[1] For more information, visit: https://www.whitehouse.gov/build/guidebook/

surpassed the capacity for which they were originally designed. If constructed, the LPOE modernization projects would provide opportunities to incorporate sustainability features that would reduce greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions, reduce facilities' impacts on the environment, and, at the same time, increase the federal government's mission readiness by increasing its resilience to climate change.

The purpose and need for the Proposed Action remain similar to that identified in Sections 1.4 and 1.5 of the 2011 Final EIS. In summary, the purpose of the Proposed Action is for GSA to support the mission of CBP and other tenant agencies by bringing the International Falls LPOE operations in line with current land port design standards and operational requirements while addressing existing deficiencies identified with the ongoing port operations. Generally, the deficiencies outlined in Section 1.5.1 of the 2011 Final EIS remain at the LPOE. The deficiencies fall into two broad categories: deficiencies in the overall site layout and substandard building conditions.

Therefore, in order to bring the International Falls LPOE operations in line with design standards and operational requirements, the Proposed Action is needed to:

- Improve the capacity and functionality of the International Falls LPOE to meet future demand, while maintaining the capability to meet border security initiatives;
- Address spatial and layout constraints that lead to traffic congestion and safety issues for the employees and users of the LPOE;
- Provide adequate space and facilities for the federal agencies to accomplish their missions; and
- Address the project updates that have occurred since the 2011 Final EIS.

1.3 RELEVANT ENVIRONMENTAL LAWS AND REGULATIONS

1.3.1 National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) and NEPA Process

NEPA requires federal agencies to consider the potential impacts to the natural and human environment from their proposed actions and disclose the potential impacts in a document that is circulated for public review. The NEPA process is intended to help public officials make decisions based on an understanding of the environmental consequences and to take actions that protect, restore, and enhance the environment (40 CFR 1500.1). Therefore, in accordance with NEPA, GSA will take this SEIS and related input from the public and other federal and state agencies into consideration as part of its decision-making process.

A supplement to a draft or final EIS is required when any of the following occurs:

- An agency makes substantial changes to the proposed action that are relevant to its environmental concerns.
- There are significant new circumstances or information relevant to the environmental concerns that have bearing on the proposed action or its impacts.

If an agency decides to supplement its EIS, it prepares, publishes, and files an SEIS in the same fashion as a draft or final EIS. Due to the project changes as outlined in Section 1.1.2, GSA has decided to develop this Draft SEIS. GSA also considered comments from interested parties in the development of this Draft SEIS (see Chapter 6 and Appendix A).

The scope of this Draft SEIS conforms to CEQ NEPA Implementing Regulations (40 CFR 1500–1508) regarding incorporation by reference:

> "*Agencies shall incorporate material, such as planning studies, analyses, or other relevant information, into environmental documents by reference when the effect will be to cut down on bulk without impeding agency and public review of the action. Agencies shall cite the incorporated material in the document and briefly describe its content*."

As such, this Draft SEIS incorporates by reference information and analysis contained in the 2011 Final EIS and focuses on new information related to changes in project development and site conditions as outlined in Section 1.1.2.

1.3.2 Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act

The NHPA of 1966 (16 U.S.C. 470), as amended, is the most comprehensive federal law pertaining to the protection of cultural resources and establishes a program for the preservation of historic properties (i.e., districts, sites, buildings, structures, and objects) throughout the nation. Section 106 of the NHPA requires federal agencies to consider the effects of their activities on such properties.

Implementing regulations for Section 106 are at 36 CFR 800 (Protection of Historic Properties), which requires the responsible federal agency, in consultation with the State Historic Preservation Officer (SHPO)/Tribal Historic Preservation Officer (THPO), and federally recognized Tribes, to determine the level of effort to identify historically significant cultural resources in the area of potential effects (APE) of the undertaking.

In accordance with 36 CFR 800, federal agencies are encouraged to coordinate studies and documents prepared under Section 106 with those done under NEPA. Section 800.8(a) of the regulations provides guidance on how NEPA and Section 106 processes can be coordinated. GSA will conform to the consultation, identification and documentation standards set forth in 36 CFR 800.8(c), and will notify, in advance, the SHPO and Advisory Council on Historic Preservation (ACHP), where it intends to use the NEPA process to comply with Section 106.

Further details on the Section 106 process that was conducted for this Draft SEIS are discussed in Section 3.11 and Chapter 6.

1.3.3 Section 7 of the Endangered Species Act

The Endangered Species Act (16 U.S.C. 1531 *et seq*.) provides a means for conserving the ecosystems upon which threatened and endangered species depend and a program for the conservation of such species. The Endangered Species Act directs all federal agencies to participate in conserving these species and to use their authorities to further the purposes of the Act. Section 7 of the Act outlines the procedures for federal interagency cooperation to conserve federally listed species and designated critical habitats. Specifically, Section 7(a)(1) of the Act charges federal agencies to aid in the conservation of threatened and endangered species, and Section 7(a)(2) requires the agencies to ensure that their activities are not likely to jeopardize the continued existence of listed species or adversely modify designated critical habitats.

GSA Section 7 consultation activities for this Draft SEIS are described in more detail in Chapter 6.

1.3.4 Other Relevant Laws, Regulations and Requirements

CEQ regulations for NEPA found in 40 CFR 1502.24 state that, to the fullest extent possible, agencies shall prepare draft EISs concurrently and integrated with environmental impact analyses and related surveys and studies required by environmental review laws and EOs. It also requires a draft EIS to list all federal permits, licenses, and other entitlements that must be obtained in implementing the proposed project. Table 1-1 provides a list of potentially relevant laws and regulations with which GSA must comply with as part of the project planning and NEPA processes.

Table 1-1. Relevant Laws and Regulations

Statutes
Archaeological Resources Protection Act of 1979 (16 U.S.C. § 470aa-mm)
Clean Air Act of 1970 as amended (42 U.S.C. § 7401, et seq.)
Clean Water Act of 1977 as amended (33 U.S.C. § 1251, et seq.)
Comprehensive Environmental Response, Compensation, and Liability Act of 1980 (42 U.S.C. § 9601, et seq.)
Endangered Species Act of 1973 (16 U.S.C. § 1531-1544)
Energy Independence and Security Act (42 U.S.C. § 17001, et seq.)
National Energy Conservation Policy Act (42 U.S.C. § 8231, et seq.)
National Historic Preservation Act of 1966 (54 U.S.C. § 300101 et seq.) (89 Public Law 665 (1966))
Resource Conservation and Recovery Act of 1976 (42 U.S.C. § 6901, et seq.)
Regulations
32 CFR 229 – Protection of Archaeological Resources: Uniform Regulations
33 CFR 320-330 – U.S. Army Corps of Engineers Regulations
36 CFR 800 – Protection of Historic Properties
40 CFR 300-399 – Hazardous Substance Regulations
40 CFR 6, 51, and 93 – Conformity of General Federal Actions to State or Federal Implementation Plans
CEQ Regulations (40 CFR 1500-1508)
Secretary of the Interior's Standards and Guidelines for Archaeology and Historic Preservation (48 Federal Register 44716, Thursday, September 29, 1983)
Executive Orders
EO 11593 – Protection and Enhancement of the Cultural Environment
EO 11988 – Floodplain Management
EO 11990 – Protection of Wetlands
EO 12898 – Federal Actions to Address Environmental Justice in Minority Populations and Low-Income Populations
EO 13007 – Indian Sacred Sites
EO 13045 – Protection of Children from Environmental Health Risks and Safety Risks
EO 13175 – Consultation and Coordination with Indian Tribal Governments
EO 13287 – Preserve America
EO 13327 – Federal Real Property Asset Management
EO 13589 – Promoting Efficient Spending
EO 13990 – Protecting Public Health and the Environment and Restoring Science to Tackle the Climate Crisis
EO 14008 – Tackling the Climate Crisis at Home and Abroad
EO 14030 – Climate-Related Financial Risk
Minnesota Administrative Rules (MAR)
Endangered, Threatened, Special Concern Species (MAR Chapter 6134)
Invasive Species (MAR Chapter 6216)
Lead Paint Removal (MAR Chapter 7025)
Noise Pollution Control (MAR Chapter 7030)
Solid Waste (MAR Chapter 7035)
Hazardous Waste (MAR Chapter 7045)
Waters of the State (MAR Chapter 7050)
National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System (MAR Chapter 7070)
Storm Water Regulatory Program (MAR Chapter 7090)
Wetland Conservation (MAR Chapter 8420)

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CHAPTER 2 DESCRIPTION OF THE PROPOSED ACTION AND ALTERNATIVES

Chapter 2 describes the alternatives development process, as well as GSA's Proposed Action and the No Action Alternative that are analyzed in this Draft SEIS. This chapter also discusses the alternatives that were considered and dismissed by GSA.

2.1 ALTERNATIVES DEVELOPMENT PROCESS

2.1.1 2011 International Falls Port of Entry Feasibility Study

The 2011 Feasibility Study for the International Falls LPOE considered extending the existing LPOE east and south in areas bordered by the Rainy River, the Boise, Inc. (now PCA) property, and 2nd Avenue and 4th Street. The Feasibility Study investigated 10 conceptual Build alternatives and a No-Build Alternative. Each build alternative addressed space and facility needs for CBP, as well as traffic management between the International Bridge and the City of International Falls through the LPOE. During the course of the 2011 Feasibility Study, 5 out of the 10 Build alternatives were considered and dismissed because they did not meet the needs and requirements of the FIS and GSA.

2.1.2 International Falls LPOE Improvements Study EIS and the 2011 Final EIS Preferred Alternative

2.1.2.1 *EIS for the International Falls LPOE Improvements Study*

During the course of the 2011 Feasibility Study, five viable conceptual Build alternatives were identified: Alternatives 5, 7, 8, 9, and 10. GSA determined that additional public involvement, agency coordination, and analysis of these Build alternatives was warranted. Accordingly, GSA prepared an EIS for the *International Falls LPOE Improvements Study* that further analyzed these five Build alternatives. Table 2-1 provides brief summaries of the alternatives that were analyzed and corresponding sections in the 2011 Final EIS that provide greater detail of the alternatives.

Table 2-1. Summary of Alternatives Analyzed in 2011 Final EIS

Alternative	Description	Major Disadvantages	Satisfy Purpose and Need?	Section in 2011 Final EIS Discussed
No-Build Alternative	No major new construction or demolition; no new acquisition of property.	Major deficiencies would remain.	No	Section 2.2.1
Alternative 5	Demolition of existing building; construction of new facilities, and expansion of LPOE, with acquisition of 4 acres of new property.	Does not satisfy spatial needs, thus some major deficiencies would remain.	Marginally	Section 2.2.2
Alternative 7	Demolition of existing building; construction of new facilities, and expansion of LPOE, with acquisition of 17 acres of new property.	Operations require two separate facilities/locations; use of space not maximized; new traffic pattern would adversely impact local businesses.	Yes	Section 2.2.3
Alternative 8	Demolition of existing building; construction of new facilities, and expansion of LPOE, with acquisition of 6.5 acres of new property.	Conflicts with rail and commercial traffic would remain.	Marginally	Section 2.2.4

Table 2-1. Summary of Alternatives Analyzed in 2011 Final EIS

Alternative	Description	Major Disadvantages	Satisfy Purpose and Need?	Section in 2011 Final EIS Discussed
Alternative 9	Demolition of existing building; construction of new facilities, and expansion of LPOE, with acquisition of 12 acres of new property.	Operations require two separate facilities/locations; use of space not maximized; new traffic pattern would adversely impact local businesses.	Yes	Section 2.2.5
Alternative 10	Demolition of existing building; construction of new facilities, and expansion of LPOE, with acquisition of 15 acres of new property.[1]	Operations require two separate facilities/locations.	Yes	Section 2.2.6

Note: Exhibit 2.1 in Section 2.2 of the 2011 Final EIS provides an illustration of the project boundary for each alternative analyzed.
[1] The 2011 Final EIS incorrectly indicated Alternative 10 would acquire 15 acres. The expansion area measures approximately 20 acres.

Alternatives 5, 7, 8, 9, and 10 all involve demolishing existing buildings, constructing new facilities, and expanding the LPOE to meet required space standards and increased security requirements of the FIS. However, the alternatives differ in the acquisition of property required, configuration of the layout of facilities, traffic circulation patterns and type, and extent of environmental impacts.

2.1.2.2 *Description of the Preferred Alternative in the 2011 Final EIS*

GSA identified Alternative 10 as the Preferred Alternative in the 2011 Final EIS because it was the alternative that best satisfied the Proposed Action's purpose and needs and had the least impact on the human and natural environment. According to NEPA, the environmentally preferable alternative is the alternative "that causes the least damage to the biological and physical environment; [and]…best protects, preserves, and enhances historic, cultural, and natural resources" (CEQ, 1981). A ROD selecting Alternative 10 was signed by GSA on January 12, 2012, and published in the *Federal Register*.

Alternative 10 would relocate the majority of the LPOE improvements and operations to a 20.5-acre site southeast of the existing site between SR-11 (also referred to as 4th Street) and Rainy River. Analysis of Alternative 10 in the 2011 Final EIS included a development of paved trailer parking area for the former Boise, Inc. (now PCA) south of SR-11 and east of 3rd Avenue E. This parking area was sited on Boise-owned land, but construction was to be done by GSA. Refer to the 2011 Final EIS for a layout of Alternative 10.

The ROD stated that the Preferred Alternative, Alternative 10, would have less-than-significant impacts on the natural and social environment of the study area and International Falls, including minor changes or impacts in surface water, surface water runoff, traffic, increased lighting, and hazardous substances. All practicable means of avoiding or minimizing environmental harm from the selected alternative were adopted through the attached program of mitigation, monitoring, or enforcement.

Throughout the remainder of this SEIS, Alternative 10 is referred to as the 2011 Preferred Alternative.

2.1.3 2018 Feasibility Study

Since 2011, changes to the project have occurred and GSA developed a 2018 Feasibility Study update (GSA 2019a), as described in Section 1.1.2. The 2011 Preferred Alternative is the starting basis for the refinement of the Preferred Alternative for the 2018 study. The Proposed Action considered in this SEIS is structured such that the overall organization of the functions and circulation would remain similar to the 2011

Preferred Alternative. However, in the interim years, the CBP POR has increased greatly in terms of building size for the Main Building, non-commercial inspection and commercial inspection, as well as the inclusion of new tenants requiring additional USF of facility space.

GSA visited the project area in late 2017 and met with CBP to review their requirements and operations and toured the LPOE facilities. GSA also met with PCA, the current operator of the paper mill, toured the PCA site, and discussed changes in the operation of the paper mill from the previous owner (Boise). Based on CBP and tenant requirements and changes to PCA operations, modifications were incorporated into the project site plan.

2.2 ALTERNATIVES CONSIDERED IN THE DRAFT SEIS

The Proposed Action for this Draft SEIS remains the same as the Proposed Action stated in the 2011 Final EIS: to replace the existing International Falls LPOE with a new LPOE facility "to improve safety, security, and functionality." Similar to the 2011 Final EIS, the Proposed Action would involve the acquisition of property, demolition of existing facilities, and construction of new buildings and facilities to meet the space requirements of the CBP and other federal agencies.

GSA has identified one action alternative that is analyzed in this Draft SEIS:

- Alternative 1: Full Build – Construct the facilities as described for the 2011 Preferred Alternative assessed in the 2011 Final EIS (see Section 2.2.1 of the Draft SEIS) and modified by project updates (see Sections 1.1.2 and 2.2.1 for additional details).

In addition to Alternative 1, a No Action Alternative is considered, as described in Section 2.2.2. Under the No Action Alternative, GSA would not move forward with the Proposed Action. The No Action Alternative serves as a baseline scenario for which potential environmental consequences can be compared to Alternative 1 for this Draft SEIS.

2.2.1 Alternative 1 – Full Build

Alternative 1 for this Draft SEIS is defined as the acquisition of property, demolition of existing facilities, and construction of the new facilities, as identified under GSA's 2011 Preferred Alternative in the 2011 Final EIS (see Section 2.1.2.2 of this Draft SEIS), but with modifications based on project updates, as discussed in Section 1.1.2 and summarized in Table 2-2.

Table 2-2. Summary of Changes from 2011 Final EIS compared to Alternative 1

Criteria	2011 Final EIS	Alternative 1
Facility Square Footage	42,282	80,611, plus additional parking
Impacts to First Creek, north of SR-11	Not considered as the creek was previously contained within a culvert.	To be considered because the creek has been daylighted. Analysis to include associated stormwater management due to creek crossings or installation of new culvert.
Renewable Energy Technologies	Not considered.	Solar and geothermal technologies considered.
PCA Land Preparation	Trailer parking to be located east of First Creek.	Trailer parking to be located either east or west of First Creek, as well as other building, railroad, and utility relocations and road widening actions as described under *Site Preparation* below.

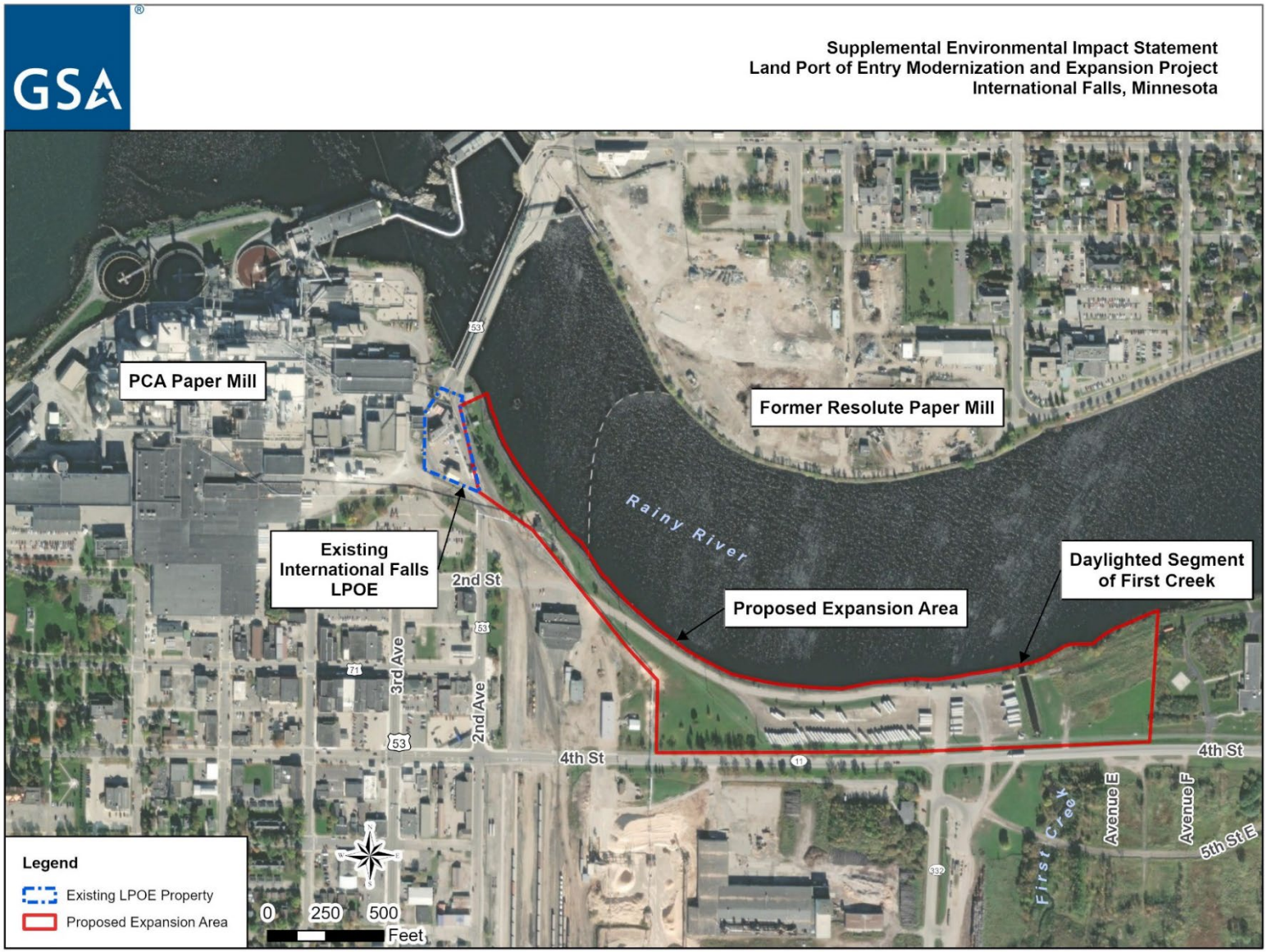
The project site plan was modified to locate each of the LPOE's facilities and supporting inspection areas, parking, and other miscellaneous facilities. Other changes include changes in tenants proposed to occupy the LPOE and changes in rail traffic due to the closure of the Resolute paper mill in Fort Frances. Under Alternative 1, it is expected that the overall organization of the functions and circulation would remain similar to the 2011 Preferred Alternative.

Alternative 1 is based on acquisition of additional acreage to expand the current LPOE site (see Figure 2-1). The proposed site acquisition (herein referred to as the proposed expansion area) encompasses a 20.5-acre area that stretches east from the LPOE along the Rainy River shoreline to an area just west of a U.S. Border Patrol Station and primarily bordered by SR-11 on the south. This is the same expansion area as previously considered under the 2011 Preferred Alternative. Approximately 16.4 and 4.1 acres are owned by PCA and RLD, respectively. The proposed expansion area is zoned as "Manufacturing" and consists of several buildings, a parking lot for PCA trailer parking, and greenspace, including a manmade stormwater feature that drains into the Rainy River. Most of the LPOE functions would be relocated in the expanded portion of the parcel between the Rainy River and SR-11.

Figure 2-2 provides a conceptual site layout of the proposed new facilities under Alternative 1. This site layout is a conceptual representation used for discussion and environmental analysis. The exact layout of the LPOE would be determined by the design contractor but would be similar in scope to what is described in the Draft SEIS. Final design would be coordinated with the city and county governments, Minnesota Department of Transportation (MnDOT), and other relevant stakeholders including PCA, MD&W Railway, Aazhogan, CentraGas and other utility providers. The main facilities of the LPOE would consist of the following:

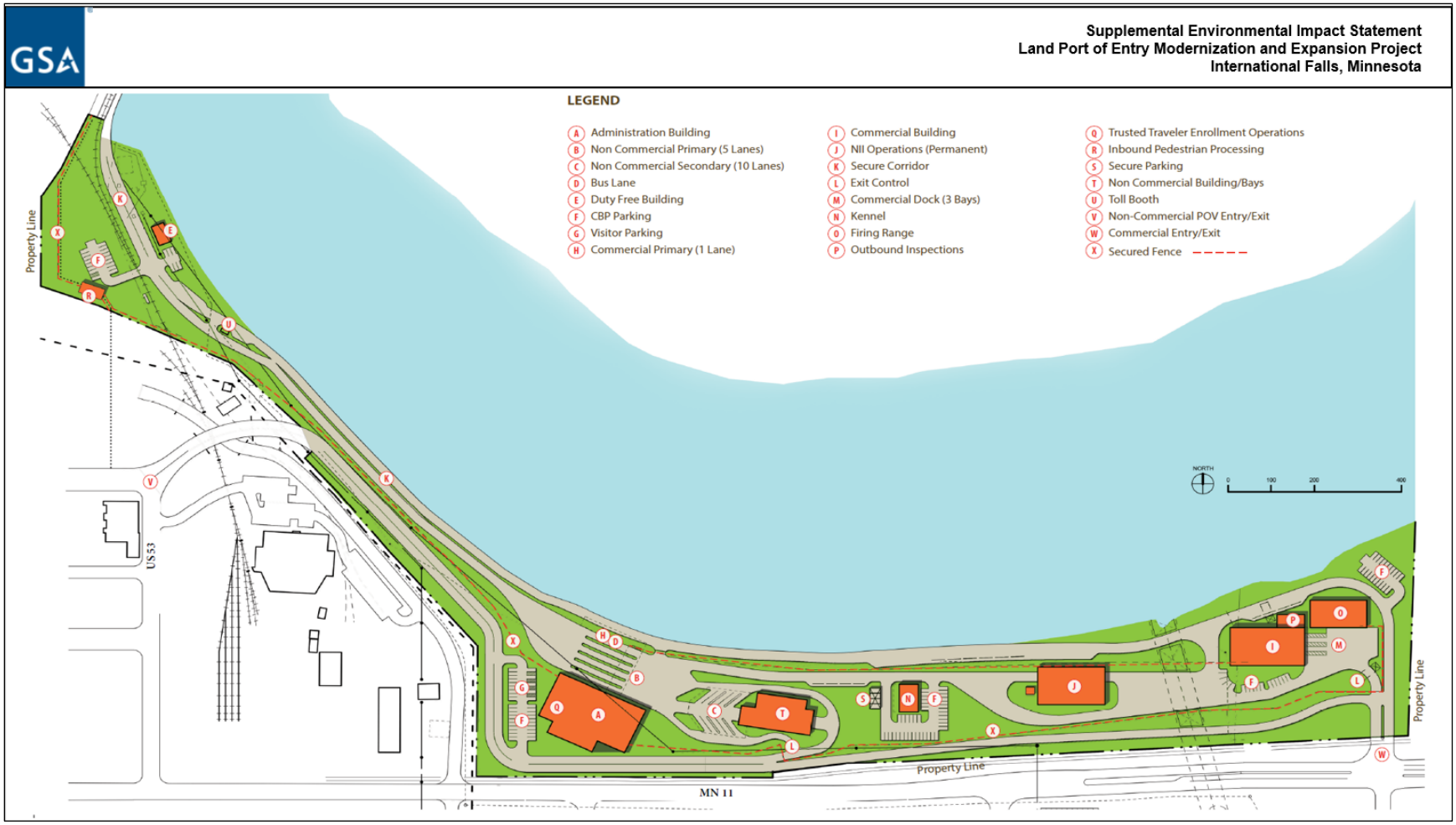
- Main Administration Building – Two-story building, which may include Trusted Traveler operations
- Non-Commercial Inspection Facilities (Primary and Secondary) – Includes 5 primary and 10 secondary passenger canopied lanes and parking spaces, and one passenger vehicle bay
- Commercial Inspection Facilities – Includes one canopied lane and booth, one bus lane, Non-Intrusive Inspection Building, Commercial Building, Commercial Dock, Secure Parking Enclosure, Indoor Firing Range, Commercial Impound Lot, and Truck Inspection Staging, and two commercial bays
- Kennel
- Outbound Inspection Facilities – Includes a canopied non-commercial booth and Outbound Inspection Building
- Pedestrian Inspection Satellite Building
- Toll Booth

The expanded and modernized LPOE would also accommodate a new toll plaza and other non-government on-site functions.



Source: Google Earth 2022

Figure 2-1. International Falls LPOE and Proposed Land Acquisition under Alternative 1



Source: GSA 2019a

Figure 2-2. Alternative 1 (2011 Preferred Alternative with Project Updates)

Note: this figure does not reflect the removal of the culverted section of First Creek between Route 11 and the Rainy River. The culvert has been removed and is now daylighted. The figure likewise does not reflect the redesign of stormwater management required as a result of the culvert removal to account for two new areas of pavement crossing First Creek. Refer to Figure 2-1 for a depiction of the daylighted culvert near the east end of the parcel.

Under Alternative 1, all commercial traffic would enter and exit the LPOE from SR-11, east of downtown International Falls. All non-commercial traffic would enter and exit the LPOE downtown at the terminus of US-53. Due to the narrowness of the parcel, some portions of the Canadian-bound traffic would be contained on an elevated section, above the bank and the edge of the Rainy River. Proposed new circulation patterns would eliminate any vehicular/railway crossings within the LPOE (see Figures 2-3 and 2-4). However, the POV entry and exit drives would cross the MD&W Railway rail lines west of the LPOE parcel. The proposed new LPOE site would include a new pedestrian inspection satellite facility and toll booth for Canadian bound traffic. Pedestrians would be processed in a satellite building, a short walk from the bridge, exiting directly into International Falls without crossing any of the vehicular lanes in the LPOE.

Under Alternative 1, GSA would upgrade utilities by increasing utility capacity for electrical; plumbing, water supply, and sanitary waste; stormwater detention; mechanical; and fire protection to accommodate the site reconfiguration. A culvert may be installed in the portion of First Creek within the proposed expansion area; alternatively, crossings may be constructed. Coordination with the city or county may be required to establish drainage easements associated with a new culvert.

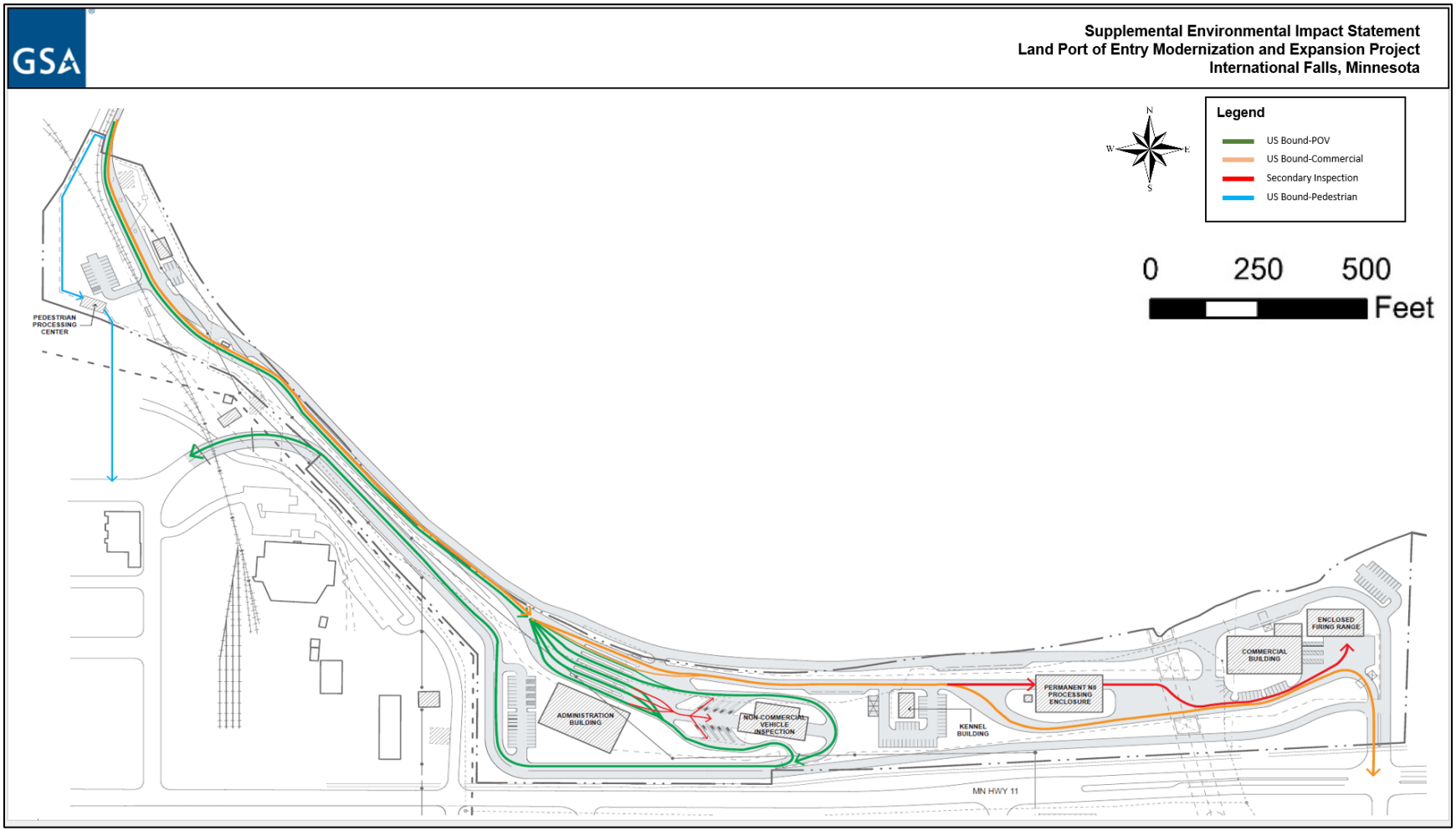
Alternative 1 would incorporate sustainable, climate-resilient, cyber-secure, and operationally efficient design. GSA would seek to meet or exceed energy and sustainability goals established by federal guidelines and policies, along with industry standard building codes and best practices. Sustainability elements may include, but are not limited to:

- Implementation of the Facilities Standards for the PBS (P100) in facilities design (GSA 2021a), which:
    - Establishes standards and criteria for GSA-owned inventory and lease construction facilities; and
    - Includes mandatory standards for energy and sustainable design, historic preservation, accessibility, and other codes and standards.
- Diversion of at least 50 percent of nonhazardous construction and demolition waste from a landfill.
- Consideration of renewable energy sources for viability and feasibility.

All new and modernization construction would seek to achieve Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED) certification at the highest feasible level within reasonable cost, with Gold level standards at a minimum. The new facilities would comply with the Energy Independence and Security Act (EISA) of 2007. Between EISA 2007 and LEED, the project would adhere to whichever requirements are higher. Furthermore, the project would also adhere to the CEQ's *Guiding Principles for Sustainable Federal Buildings*. The design team would utilize GSA's *Guiding Principles Checklist* to track and report compliance.

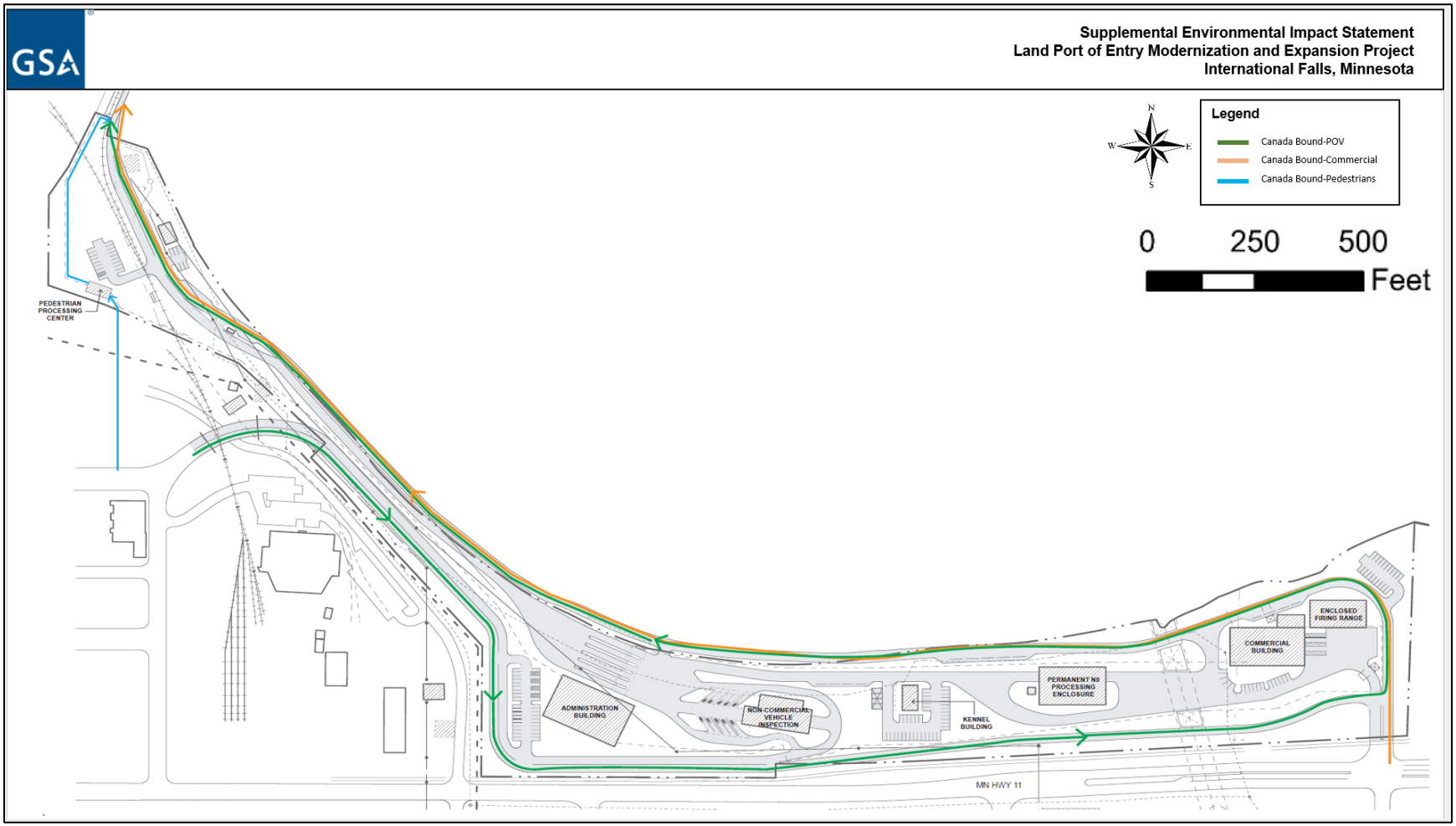
Section 438 of the 2007 EISA specifies stormwater management requirements that would be incorporated into final design of the Proposed Action. Relevant guidance includes:

- U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (USEPA) Technical Guidance On Implementing The Stormwater Runoff Requirements For Federal Projects Under Section 438 Of The Energy Independence And Security Act; and
- GSA PBS Chief Architect Memorandum On Compliance With Section 438 (Stormwater) Requirements Of The Energy Independence And Security Act Of 2007.



Source: GSA 2019a

Figure 2-3. Inbound (U.S. Bound) Traffic Circulation of Alternative 1 Conceptual Layout



Source: GSA 2019a

Figure 2-4. Outbound (Canada Bound) Traffic Circulation of Alternative 1 Conceptual Layout

2.2.1.1 *Demolition and Construction*

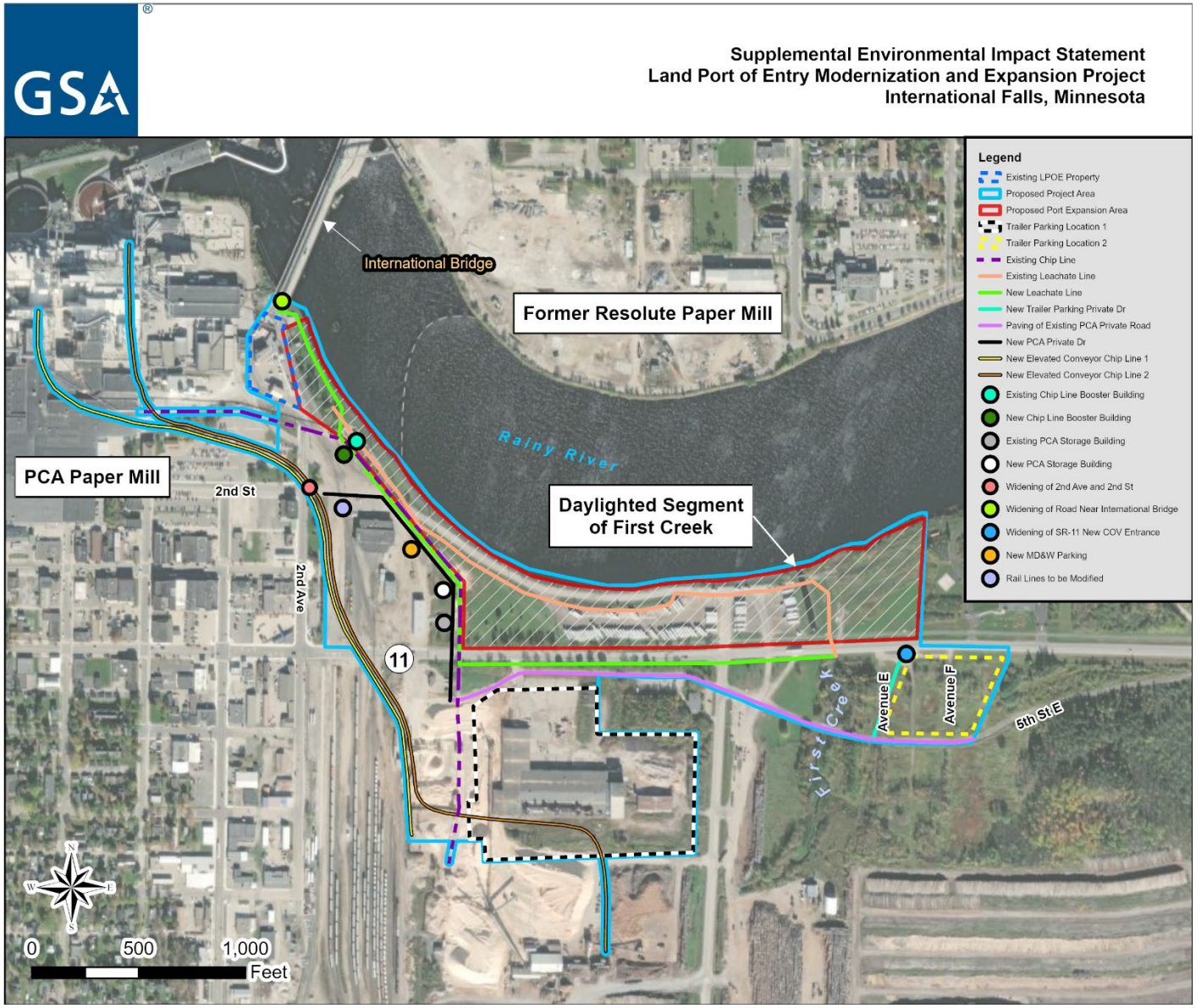
A construction phasing plan would be developed during design and implemented during demolition and construction to ensure continuity of operations of the LPOE, as well as minimize disruptions to PCA and other neighboring operations. If determined necessary during the design stage, Alternative 1 may include the installation of temporary facilities, roadways, and other circulation routes within the LPOE footprint to allow for the LPOE to remain operational 24 hours per day, 7 days per week.

The International Falls LPOE main building, inspection canopies, storage facilities, utility and paved areas, including inspection lanes, and other auxiliary buildings would be demolished and disposed of accordingly. GSA would require diversion of at least 50 percent of nonhazardous construction and demolition waste from the landfill per Section 207 of EO 14057, *Catalyzing Clean Energy Industries and Jobs Through Federal Sustainability*. Construction would require shoreline improvements to include repair of the existing shoreline hardening, as well as placement of riprap, landscaping, and other fortification structures as necessary, to stabilize riparian areas and accommodate new construction. Stabilization could also include the construction of support piers along the Rainy River shoreline, particularly for roadways to be built along the river. The specific characteristics and locations shoreline hardening, including for piers along the Rainy River if required, would be developed during final design. The Rainy Lake Bike Trail, which runs along the southern border of the proposed expansion area, may need to be temporarily closed and re-routed during construction.

At the time of this report, demolition and construction activities are estimated to begin in 2025, with substantial completion anticipated in 2029. Due to weather conditions, it is anticipated that peak construction would occur during the months of April through October. From November through March, it is anticipated construction activities would primarily consist of interior building work and/or within temporary enclosures to protect work conditions from cold weather. The number of construction workers and truck trips required for construction is currently unknown, but based on similar, recent GSA LPOE projects, peak construction is estimated to require a potential maximum of 100 construction workers and 150 trucks per day for deliveries and waste removal. During non-peak construction, it is estimated there would be approximately 50 workers onsite and approximately 75 trucks per day for deliveries and waste removal. Demolition and construction would take place primarily during normal business hours; however, some nighttime construction may be required during the months of April through October depending on construction phasing. All construction and demolition waste would be disposed of and recycled at authorized facilities. The LPOE facility would remain operational 24 hours per day, 7 days per week.

Connected Actions

To prepare the proposed expansion area for development, some existing utilities and PCA infrastructure would need to be accommodated in a new way, either within the LPOE via easements or moved off site to the west or south on PCA-owned land. The initial assumptions that were followed in the 2011 Final EIS for the relocation of a new site are no longer valid due to a change in operations by PCA. These changes have also triggered the reconfiguration of some of the existing PCA operations on PCA lands. The following infrastructure may require relocation: chip line booster building, PCA storage building, leachate line, MD&W Railway rail lines, PCA private truck road and trailer parking, natural gas line, and power lines. Relocation and site work outside of the proposed expansion area would primarily occur on land both west of the LPOE and south of SR-11. Relocation of utilities and infrastructure may be conducted by either GSA or PCA, depending on final acquisition negotiations. If GSA does not directly perform the relocation of the infrastructure, PCA would be fairly compensated to conduct such actions. Actions taken by PCA are still included within the scope of this SEIS analysis as they would be considered a "connected action" as per 40 CFR 1501.9(e)(1), as they "are interdependent parts of a larger action and depend on the larger action for their justification." Infrastructure relocation is subject to final design but would occur within the project area shown in Figure 2-5 and as described below.



Source: Google Earth 2022

Figure 2-5. Site Preparation of PCA Lands for Alternative 1

The PCA plant typically shuts down for 5 to 7 days approximately every 18 months to perform maintenance, upgrades, and/or renovation projects per their ongoing operations. GSA would coordinate with PCA to conduct activities, such as shifting operations from the current to the new chip line booster building and moving electrical lines from current to new poles, during shutdown periods to limit impacts to PCA operations. Site preparation would be coordinated as needed with PCA, MD&W Railway, and utility providers to minimize disruption to operations to the extent practicable.

GSA would also coordinate with the other landowner in the proposed expansion area, RLD, as appropriate.

Building Relocation and Construction

Two PCA facilities currently within or directly adjacent to the proposed expansion area would be relocated:

- The PCA chip line booster building currently located in the proposed expansion area would be relocated. A new chip line booster building would be constructed just west of the elevated pneumatic chip line on existing PCA lands. The existing building would be demolished after a new chip line booster building is constructed.
- In addition, a PCA storage building would be relocated to a new position slightly to the north to accommodate the construction of a new private road (see *Roadway and Bridge Work* discussion below).

As a result of the Proposed Action and the need to relocate the chip line booster building, PCA is considering replacing the existing elevated pneumatic chip line system with a new elevated belt conveyor system at another location further to the west. This would require demolition of the existing pneumatic chip line and construction of two new elevated structures consisting of conveyor belts to transport chipped wood from staging piles near the former BildRite property to the PCA plant. The new structures would require support columns which may be of comparable sizing, height (approximately 30 feet high), and spacing as the existing elevated chip line. Support columns would be placed in existing, disturbed areas along the alignment of the new elevated conveyor chip lines shown in Figure 2-5.

Leachate Line

A leachate line[2] that currently runs through the proposed expansion area would be relocated. The portion of the existing line within the proposed expansion area runs in a north-south direction from SR-11 near the easternmost boundary of the expansion area north towards the Rainy River. The line then turns left, running along and adjacent to the Rainy River, and terminating at the PCA facility. The leachate line collects leachate from an offsite closed landfill known as Moonlight Rock Landfill. Leachate is then treated at the PCA facility prior to discharge.

The portion of the leachate line within the proposed expansion area would be removed and the line would be re-routed to run along the southern and western boundary of the expansion area on PCA-owned land. Approximately 4,000 linear feet of new leachate line would be constructed to include single wall high density polyethylene pipe and fittings, double wall high density polyethylene pipe and fittings, and associated manholes. Work related to this effort would require excavation of lines and backfill. Construction of the new line would occur while the old line remains in service. Flow from the old line would be halted during a switchover period to connect to the new line. Following connection to the new line, the old line would be demolished.

MD&W Railway Rail Lines and Parking Area

MD&W Railway rail lines would be reconfigured on PCA lands to create a new paved area so PCA can accommodate the reduced amount of parking spaces that resulted from the expanded and modernized

[2] Leachate refers to the liquid effluent that drains from a landfill. Leachate from the Moonlight Rock Landfill is collected and transported via a pipeline (i.e., referred to as the "leachate line" in this SEIS) to the PCA facility.

LPOE. Site work would occur primarily on PCA lands directly west of the proposed expansion area and east of 2nd Avenue. This relocation would include abandonment of existing tracks; construction of new storage tracks south of the existing MD&W Railway building; new gate arms on the roadways and pedestrian walkways crossing the rail line; new at-grade crossing panels with warning devices and control equipment; and a new turnout. In total, approximately 1,300 linear feet of new railroad tracks would be built. Construction would include the following site work:

- Site grading, including clearing, grading, and site drainage; erosion control during construction (silt fence); removal of pavement as needed; and preparation of railroad subgrade.
- Site work, including installation of a new turnout in existing track, construction of new turnouts in new track, construction of new tracks and turnouts, installation of new switch stands (with bow handles), and installation of bumping posts.
- Removal of tracks removed from service (after new storage tracks open to service); MD&W Railway storage tracks; and a main line turnout leading to MD&W Railway storage tracks. The main line, grade crossing, roadway, and two turnouts on MD&W Railway storage tracks would be restored.

Associated with this reconfiguration would be construction of new MD&W Railway building parking lots on the site of the abandoned tracks.

Roadway and Bridge Work

Roadways outside of the proposed expansion area would require minor modifications to accommodate the new port and PCA operations. This includes the following actions:

- A new paved private drive for PCA trucks would be constructed to replace a private drive removed from the proposed expansion area. This new private drive would be located on PCA lands directly west of the proposed expansion area and east of 2nd Avenue near the MD&W Railway rail line relocation, as well as directly south of the proposed expansion area, east of 3rd Avenue E.
- A new paved private road would be constructed connecting cross traffic from the LPOE to a new trailer parking site (see *Trailer Parking* below).
- The existing portion of 5th Street E directly south of the proposed expansion area and SR-11 would be repaved. No new physical disturbance to First Creek would occur.
- Portions of 2nd Avenue near the proposed new non-commercial entrance to the LPOE, but outside of the proposed expansion area, would require widening to allow for POV and bus traffic to enter and exit to and from downtown International Falls
- SR-11 would be widened at the proposed commercial entry/exit, including acceleration lanes, deceleration lanes, and esplanades. A new signal and signage would be installed at the entry/exit point.
- The roadway near the International Bridge would be widened at the LPOE approach to provide a radius appropriate for commercial traffic at the LPOE, including oversize loads.

Trailer Parking

Trailer parking would be relocated from its current location within the proposed expansion area north of SR-11 to a new paved lot (sized to hold 90 trailers). Trailer parking would be moved to one of two potential locations on PCA-owned lands: the first potential location (Trailer Parking Location 1) is south of SR-11 west of 3rd Avenue E on the former BildRite property that has since been acquired by PCA. The second potential location (Trailer Parking Location 2) is south of SR-11 and east of First Creek. Construction on

either parcel would consist of approximately 217,000 square feet of asphalt paving on compacted fill. Work related to the trailer parking relocation would include:

- Demolition of existing PCA private roads and existing paving at the existing trailer parking site.
- Preparation work for a new PCA private road (asphalt paving on stone base) and trailer parking.
- Relocation of the existing truck scale.

Construction at the former BildRite property would entail demolition of existing facilities, to include proper handling and disposal of demolition debris in accordance with local, federal, and state regulations.

CentraGas Utility

Natural gas utilities within the existing LPOE would need to be relocated. The substations would remain within the newly expanded and modernized LPOE. Work related to this relocation would include:

- Natural gas distribution main substation and line relocation, including all associated piping.
- Pressurization of regulator station (includes piping, all equipment, and hot tap).
- Demolition of the existing station after new work is complete (to be conducted by CentraGas utility).
- Tie into the distribution system.

Minnesota Power and Electrical Utility Relocation

Electrical utilities would need to be relocated throughout the project area. Secondary utility power relocation work would include:

- Relocation of the aerial power distribution line from the PCA facility west of the International Bridge to the PCA facility south of SR-11.
- Relocation of the aerial power distribution from the International Bridge to MD&W Railway buildings, west of the proposed expansion area.
- Allowance for miscellaneous aerial power line relocation.
- Allowance for miscellaneous underground power line relocation and direct burial polyvinyl chloride (PVC) conduit.

2.2.1.2 *Operations*

There are no current plans for an increase in staffing at the LPOE; however, it is possible small staff increases could occur in future years. CBP also anticipates operational changes due to new programs and new equipment and technologies being introduced during operations. If a staff increase occurs, it is anticipated that there would be no more than 25 to 30 new workers hired to support the new facilities at the LPOE.

2.2.1.3 *Renewable Energy Technologies*

Alternative 1 would consider implementation of renewable energy technologies within the expanded and modernized LPOE. These technologies were not considered in the 2011 Final EIS but have since been proposed for inclusion in future site plans. Renewable technologies that may be incorporated into the facility design include solar (photovoltaic [PV] or solar collectors) and certain types of geothermal heat pumps. Selection of each technology, to include final sizing, is dependent on final design. It is possible a combination of these technologies could be selected during final design. With the exception of the geothermal technology that would utilize the Rainy River, all associated infrastructure would be constructed within the newly expanded and modernized LPOE footprint.

Note that wind turbines were considered as an option for renewable energy for the project; however, due to potential concerns with specialized maintenance requirements, as well as impacts to viewsheds and historic-age resources within International Falls, wind energy is not being further considered at this time.

Solar

Photovoltaic. PV panels are non-mechanical devices made of semiconductor material that convert sunlight directly into electricity (EIA 2022a). PV systems generally consist of either roof-mounted or ground-mounted panels (see Figure 2-6). Ground-mounted panels generally include standalone solar panels mounted on a pole or carport. The size of any array would be dependent on the amount of energy generated by the system. PV panels would require hard wiring connection to serviced buildings, which could require underground connections. Placement of panels would consider solar insolation (i.e., the measurement of solar radiation in a specific area at a given time), shading and southern exposure, space availability, and structural stability (as applicable). Occasional maintenance would be required in the form of panel washing, snow removal, and panel replacement.

Source: Freedom Solar 2023

Source: Polar Racking 2023

Figure 2-6. Representative Photovoltaic Systems

Solar Collection. Solar collectors absorb the sun's light energy and convert it into heat energy, which can then be used to provide heated water, space heating or cooling, or other applications where fossil fuels might otherwise be used (EIA 2022b). These systems typically have two main parts: a solar collector and a storage tank. The most common collector is called a flatplate collector, which is typically roof-mounted and consists of a thin, flat, rectangular box with a transparent cover that faces the sun (see Figure 2-7). Small tubes run through the box and carry a liquid, either water or other fluid, such as an antifreeze solution, to be heated. Tubes are attached to an absorber plate, which is painted black to absorb the heat. As heat builds up in the collector, it heats the fluid passing through the tubes, and the storage tank then holds the hot liquid. Placement of solar collectors would have the same criteria as PV panels, (solar insolation, shading and southern exposure, space, and structural stability) and would also require periodic maintenance, similar to PV panels.

Source: SEF 2023

Figure 2-7. Representative Solar Thermal Collector System

Geothermal Heat Pumps

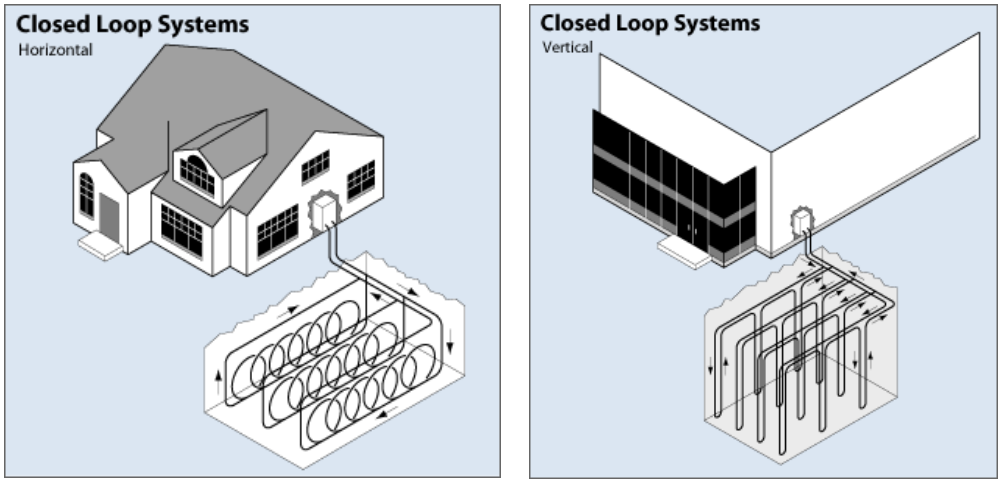
Geothermal heat pumps are a type of geothermal heating and cooling system that use the relatively constant temperature of the earth or nearby bodies of water as an exchange medium to heat and cool buildings. During warmer periods, heat pumps extract heat from buildings and transfer it to a circulating fluid in a cooler ground loop system. During cooler periods, fluid circulating in the ground loop system absorbs heat from the earth and transfers it to the heat pumps. The heat pumps then extract the heat from the fluid, which is then used to increase the temperature of the air transported to the buildings (DOE 2023a).

There are generally two types of heat pump systems, including open-loop and closed-loop systems. Open-looped systems rely on water source (i.e., groundwater or surface water) as the heat exchanging fluid. These types of systems are not considered in this SEIS due to prohibitive environmental concerns. Closed-loop systems rely on a circulating fluid, such as propylene glycol or ethanol, as the heat exchange fluid. There are generally three types of closed-loop systems, including horizontal and vertical layouts, and systems that rely on a nearby body of water, such as a river (DOE 2023a). Horizontal and vertical layouts in Minnesota function based on the fact that the earth below the frost line (usually about 6 feet deep or more in Minnesota) is a constant temperature of approximately 50 degrees Fahrenheit, all year (GSA 2019a).

For a horizontal layout, a trench would be dug about 6 feet below ground surface. Typical layouts use two pipes, either with one buried at 6 feet, and the other at 4 feet, or two pipes placed side-by-side in a 2-foot-wide trench (DOE 2023a). Trenches could be up to 150 feet long. Exact depths and details for these systems vary from project to project and would require engineering design services to determine required parameters for this project location.

A vertical layout, also known as a bored geothermal heat exchanger (BGHE) system, would require boring into the subsurface to install polyethylene piping in bore holes typically at depths that could range between 150 to 200 feet deep, depending on the local geology (MDH 2022). Generally, wells have between 15- to 25-foot spacing between boreholes. While the designs for vertical closed loop systems vary widely, a general rule of thumb is to use one borehole per nominal ton of geothermal heat pump capacity (MNGHPA 2009).

See Figure 2-8 for an example schematic of horizontal and vertical installations, respectively.



Source: DOE 2023a

Figure 2-8. Horizontal and Vertical Geothermal Heat Pumps

River water cooling (RWC) technology may also be considered. This concept is similar to ground-based technologies but relies on a body of water to absorb heat or provide cooling in support of other thermal systems used to condition building spaces. For the International Falls LPOE, the waterbody to be utilized would be the Rainy River.

Passive heat exchangers would be submerged within the river, and piping would be installed within the riverbed and along the shoreline to connect the LPOE chilled water loop. A pump house would also be constructed to operate the system. The water loop would pass through the heat exchangers, reject the heat contained in the water to the river water loop, and return to the LPOE as chilled water that could be used to cool buildings. In a closed-loop system, no intake of water is necessary. This system requires only pumping power and, because of the closed-loop nature of the distribution system, it requires only the pump energy needed to overcome the friction losses in the system (Goldman Copeland et al. 2018).

The heat exchangers would need to be installed at sufficient depth in the river to draw from water that is of a constant year-round temperature. This system does not rely on a vapor compression system like those used in air conditioners and chillers. Instead, it uses the constant supply of cold water passing by the LPOE to provide the chilled water. Occasional maintenance would be required for the RWC system to ensure pumps remain operational and the heat exchanger and pipes do not become impaired.

The type of system to be employed and number of pump systems would be dependent on system sizing and geotechnical investigations to determine subsurface site conditions. Systems would require connections to the applicable buildings, and each building supported by geothermal heat pumps technology would require the design and installation of supply air ductwork.

2.2.1.4 *Previously Identified Mitigation*

The 2012 ROD established a Program of Mitigation, Monitoring, or Enforcement that identified all practicable means of avoiding or minimizing adverse environmental impacts from the 2011 Preferred Alternative. These mitigation measures are considered and incorporated into this Draft SEIS as applicable.

Additionally, in the 2012 ROD, GSA committed to addressing specific comments on the EIS as design and site engineering occurred, acknowledging that such compliance is required by several permitting and reviewing agencies. The comments included the following items, which are considered in the Draft SEIS:

- Bridging First Creek and wetlands/floodplain;

- Use of native species vegetative buffers between manmade project components and the Rainy River and First Creek floodplains; and
- Redirection and pre-treatment of stormwater runoff before being discharged into natural watercourses.

2.2.2 No Action Alternative

The No Action Alternative is included and analyzed to provide a baseline for comparison with impacts from the Proposed Action and also to satisfy federal requirements for analyzing "no action" under NEPA (40 CFR 1502.14(d)).

Under the No Action Alternative, there would be no construction of a new LPOE to replace the existing LPOE. Any type of modification to the existing port would be limited to minor repairs and maintenance, as needed. The operation of the International Falls LPOE would generally remain similar to current conditions, but the capacity and efficiency of the port would likely degrade over time due to potential increased traffic demand. Deficiencies in port operations would remain or worsen over time. This alternative would not meet the purpose and need for the Proposed Action, as identified in Section 1.2.

2.3 ALTERNATIVES DISMISSED FROM FURTHER CONSIDERATION

2.3.1 Modernize Existing Port Footprint

An alternative to only modernize the International Falls LPOE, with no acquisition of new land, was considered as a potential alternative during the project design process. This alternative would include modernization activities within the current LPOE footprint only.

The International Falls LPOE is spatially constrained as it is essentially landlocked on all sides, primarily by the International Bridge, PCA facilities, and the Rainy River. Therefore, modernization-only would greatly limit options to improve capacity and functionality of the LPOE. Without expansion, increasing demands on facilities would result in continued deficiencies in operational efficiency and safety. CBP staff would continue with inadequate space for operations. This alternative would not allow GSA to fully support CBP's mission by bringing the LPOE operations in line with current land port design standards and operational requirements. As a result, the Modernization-Only Alternative would not meet GSA's purpose and need for the Proposed Action and, therefore, this alternative was not carried forward for further analysis in this Draft SEIS.

CHAPTER 3 AFFECTED ENVIRONMENT AND ENVIRONMENTAL CONSEQUENCES

Chapter 3 describes the existing environmental conditions of the project area, which includes the existing International Falls LPOE, the proposed expansion area, and areas required for connected actions as described in Chapter 2. This chapter also identifies the potential environmental consequences of the Proposed Action and the No Action Alternative. Resource areas analyzed in this SEIS include: geology, topography, and soils; water resources; biological resources; air quality and climate change; noise; transportation and traffic; land use and visual resources; infrastructure and utilities; socioeconomics; cultural resources; human health and safety; and environmental justice and protection of children's health and safety.

Since publication of the 2011 Final EIS, changes to the Proposed Action and site conditions have occurred (see Section 1.1.2) that affect some of the analysis and impacts findings presented within the 2011 Final EIS. The analysis in this SEIS considers these changes and, where appropriate, identifies differences between the findings in the 2011 Final EIS and this SEIS. Impact findings from the 2011 Final EIS are summarized at the beginning of the *Environmental Consequences* section for each resource area within this chapter.

3.1 METHODOLOGIES

3.1.1 Affected Environment Methodology

The affected environment summarizes the current physical, biological, social, and economic environments of the area within the region of influence (ROI) of the Proposed Action. The ROI defines the extent of the area where direct effects from project-related construction and operation may be experienced and also encompasses the areas where indirect effects from the Proposed Action would most likely occur. As such, the extent of the ROI varies by environmental resource area depending upon the scope of potential impacts from the Proposed Action and No Action Alternative (i.e., site-specific versus regional baseline conditions). For example, the geographic area of analysis for some environmental resources extends beyond the property line of the existing International Falls LPOE to encompass a city- or county-level analysis (e.g., air quality); however, the ROI for the majority of the resource areas in this SEIS are generally contained within the footprint of the project area boundary (e.g., geology, topography, and soils).

3.1.2 Environmental Consequences Methodology

The impacts analysis considers effects to a resource for each alternative and describes the types of impacts that would occur (Section 3.1.2.1) and assigns significance criteria (Section 3.1.2.2).

3.1.2.1 *Types of Impacts*

The terms "impacts" and "effects" are used interchangeably in this chapter. According to the CEQ NEPA Regulations at 40 CFR 1500-1508, *direct* and *indirect* effects are defined as:

- **Direct effects –** Effects, *which are caused by the action and occur at the same time and place* (1508.1(g)(1)). In other words, direct impacts are those that are caused directly and immediately from project-related activities, such as excavation of land to construct the new LPOE that could cause soil erosion. Most direct effects are confined to the project area (e.g., geology), but some may extend beyond the project boundary (e.g., noise).
- **Indirect effects –** Effects, *which are caused by the action and are later in time or farther removed in distance, but are still reasonably foreseeable*. Indirect effects may include growth inducing effects and other effects related to induced changes in the pattern of land use, population density or growth rate, and related effects on air and water and other natural systems, including ecosystems (1508.1(g)(2)). Indirect effects are spatially removed from project-related activities and/or occur

later in time but are reasonably certain to occur. For example, soil erosion could lead to adverse impacts on water quality, such as causing turbidity and sedimentation in streams during rain events. These types of impacts tend to be diffuse, resource-specific, and less amenable to quantification or mapping than direct effects.

3.1.2.2 *Impact Intensity Thresholds*

Potential impacts are described in terms of intensity, geographic context, and duration, as applicable. Definitions for intensity thresholds for the resources analyzed in this chapter are provided in Table 3.1-1. A discussion of measures that GSA would implement to reduce impacts is at the end of each resource area section.

Criteria were defined as a means of measuring the size of the impact and its significance. The significance of impacts was determined systematically by assessing the magnitude (how much) and duration (how long) of an impact. Table 3.1-1 summarizes how each parameter is categorized. Significance thresholds are further defined for each resource within the respective sections.

Table 3.1-1. Summary of Environmental Impact Parameters

Intensity	
Negligible	The impact is not measurable or discernable from current conditions.
Minor	The impact is slight but detectable.
Moderate	The impact is readily apparent, and there would be a noticeable change from current conditions.
Major	The impact is severe, significant, and highly noticeable; major impacts may be above a threshold of significance.
Geographic Context	
Site-Specific	Impacts are limited to the International Falls LPOE and associated project boundaries.
Local	Impacts extend beyond the International Falls LPOE and associated project boundaries, affecting the area in the general vicinity of the project area.
Regional	Impacts affect a larger area such as Koochiching County.
Duration	
Short-term	Impacts would occur only during construction (temporary).
Long-term	Impacts would occur after construction.

3.2 GEOLOGY, TOPOGRAPHY, AND SOILS

This section describes the baseline conditions for geological resources in the project area and potential geological impacts that could result from implementing the Proposed Action and No Action Alternative, as discussed in Chapter 2. Geological resources consist of the Earth's surface and subsurface materials and are typically described in terms of geology, topography, soils, and geologic hazards. Geology is the study of the Earth's physical structure and composition, as well as the configuration of the surface and subsurface features. Topography describes the general shape and arrangement of the natural and artificial physical features of a land surface. Soils are the unconsolidated material overlying bedrock, and are typically described in terms of type, slope, and physical characteristics, such as permeability, strength, and erosion potential. Geologic hazards are natural geologic events that can endanger human lives and threaten property, such as seismicity. The conditions described in the affected environment focus on geology, topography, and soils. Seismicity is not addressed in this section as the project area is not considered as high risk for seismic activity (USGS 2023a).

This SEIS uses the following documents and data sources to characterize the affected environment and assess potential impacts regarding geological resources:

- The 2011 Final EIS Section 3.1 provides a description of the physical geography and geology of the project area. The 2011 Final EIS Sections 4.1.1 and 4.1.2 present the anticipated impacts resulting from construction and operations of the new LPOE facility, as considered in the 2011 Final EIS, for the physical geography and geology.
- Primary data sources were used to update and supplement the affected environment discussion regarding geologic resources. The Natural Resources Conservation Service's Web Soil Survey (WSS) was used to update soil maps and to verify and update the presence of prime farmland soils, hydric soils and coarse-textured soils within the settings. The soils information presented in the WSS originated from the United States Department of Agriculture's Soil Survey of Koochiching County Area, Minnesota. Additionally, information from Phase I Environmental Site Assessments (ESAs) conducted in 2021 and 2022 for the existing LPOE site and the proposed expansion area, respectively, are incorporated in the existing conditions discussion.

3.2.1 Affected Environment

3.2.1.1 *Region of Influence*

The ROI for geology, topography, and soils focuses on the footprint of the project area, including the existing International Falls LPOE (1.6 acres), proposed expansion area (20.5 acres), and areas for potential connected actions (up to approximately 30 acres) necessitated by the LPOE expansion as described in Section 2.2.1.1.

3.2.1.2 *Regulatory Setting*

Stormwater runoff is regulated nationally through the National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System (NPDES) and implemented in Minnesota through the State Disposal System (SDS). The Minnesota Pollution Control Agency (MPCA) is the authorized entity for administering NPDES/SDS permits. The state's Construction Stormwater Permitting Program is designed to reduce the amount of sediment and pollution entering surface and groundwater associated with construction projects. Operators of construction sites disturbing one or more acres of land are required to obtain permit coverage for stormwater discharges under a Construction Stormwater General Permit (CSGP). Under the CSGP, operators must implement a range of pollution prevention measures as outlined in a stormwater pollution prevention plan (SWPPP), which includes erosion and sediment controls and site stabilization controls to limit or prevent discharges of pollutants. See Section 3.3, Water Resources, for additional details on the NPDES/SDS and CSGP permitting requirements.

3.2.1.3 *Existing Conditions*

Existing conditions for geologic resources since publication of the 2011 Final EIS generally remain the same as current conditions.

Geology

The general geology of the Western Lake Section of the Central Lowland Physiographic Province of the Interior Plains, in which the project area lies, is dominated by glacial and fluvial landforms developed during the Pleistocene (2.58 million to 11,700 years ago) and Holocene (11,700 years ago to present) Epochs (MGS 1982). The area is covered mostly by silty and clayey lacustrine sediments and lake- modified glacial till. Thickness of the deposits is highly variable, typically ranging between 50 and 150 feet near the Rainy River to less than 30 feet further inland. Crystalline metamorphic rocks underlie the glacial deposits (NRCS 2009). The bedrock of International Falls consists of undivided metasedimentary rocks, including greywacke, slate, local units of conglomerate, arenite, graphitic slate, fine-grained felsic volcanogenic and volcaniclastic rocks and their metamorphic equivalents, and mafic metavolcanic rocks (MGS 1996).

Due to the high variability of geologic conditions, depth-to-bedrock within the project area is not known. However, data provided by the Minnesota Geological Survey indicates that depth-to-bedrock in International Falls is generally 10 feet or less below ground surface (MGS 2022).

Topography

According to the 2019 U.S. Geological Survey (USGS) 7.5-minute topographic quadrangle for International Falls, Minnesota, the center of the project area is at an elevation of approximately 1,116 feet above mean sea level (USGS 2019). The topography of the project area is relatively flat, and the gradient gradually slopes downward towards the north, generally in the direction of the Rainy River (USGS 2019). Consequently, the presumed direction of shallow groundwater flow in the vicinity of the project area is towards the north based upon surface topography; however, actual groundwater flow direction has not been confirmed.

Soils

As shown in Figure 3.2-1, the only soil map unit present within the entire project area is the Urban land-Kooch-Kab complex, 0 to 4 percent slopes (NRCS 2022). Urban land soil types are those which are considered to have been impacted sufficiently by development such that many of the natural soil properties have been significantly altered, at least at the surface. This is typically due to the placement of fill and excessive compaction over time. According to the WSS, this soil is not classified as prime farmland and is not classified as a hydric soil (i.e., those soils found in wetlands) (NRCS 2022).

Of the approximately 22 acres within the existing LPOE and proposed expansion area boundaries, approximately 9 acres are developed (i.e., building, roadways, parking lots), and approximately 13 acres are undeveloped (i.e., vegetated areas). The approximately 38 acres of connected action footprint consists of approximately 26 acres of developed area and 12 acres of undeveloped area. Within the connected action footprint, 3.5 acres of the approximately 17-acre lot for Trailer Parking Location 1 are undeveloped, while nearly all of the entire 3.5 acres of Trailer Parking Location 2 are undeveloped (see Figure 2-5). Based on historic imagery, nearly all of the project area has been previously disturbed (EDR 2022).

Source: USDA 2022

Figure 3.2-1. Soils Within Project Area

3.2.2 Environmental Consequences

3.2.2.1 *Summary of Physical Geography and Geology Impacts from the 2011 Final EIS*

GSA determined that the 2011 Preferred Alternative would not have any significant adverse effects on physical geography and geology. Impacts to geology, topography, and soils from the 2011 Preferred Alternative are discussed in Sections 4.1.1 and 4.1.2 of the 2011 Final EIS and are summarized as follows:

- The 2011 Preferred Alternative would not substantially alter the physical geography of the study area. No major grading or change in the profile or elevation of land would occur.
- The 2011 Preferred Alternative would not impact the geology of the study area.

3.2.2.2 *Methodology*

To evaluate the impacts on geological, topography, and soil resources, GSA reviewed the project alternatives to determine whether any activities have the potential to cause the following within the ROI:

- Modify or otherwise affect geologic features
- Alter the topography or grade of terrain
- Disturb or displace soils

A major adverse impact to geological resources would occur if the project alternatives would result in:

- altered geological structures that control groundwater quality;
- exposure of people or structures to potential substantial adverse effects from a geologic hazard (i.e., on- or off-site landslide, lateral spreading, subsidence, liquefaction, or collapse);
- soil erosion that produces substantial gullying, extensive damage to vegetation, or a sustained increase in sedimentation in streams;
- substantial loss of soil, and/or a substantial decrease in soil stability and permeability; or
- substantial disruption, displacement, compaction, or covering of soils.

Except when installing impermeable surfaces, generally adverse impacts on geological resources can be avoided or minimized if proper construction techniques and erosion-control measures are incorporated into project development.

3.2.2.3 *Alternative 1 – Full Build*

Construction

Geology

Alternative 1 would have direct, long-term, minor, site-specific impacts on geology during demolition and construction within the project area. Construction of the new facilities and infrastructure would require excavation; however, the depth of excavation is currently unknown and would depend on the results of the geotechnical investigation and engineering report to be prepared for the development in accordance with P100 Standards and current Minnesota State Building Code. For most of the new facilities and infrastructure, this could involve some disturbance or modification of the surficial geology, but impacts are anticipated to be within a depth comparable to past construction of the existing International Falls LPOE facilities.

GSA is also considering geothermal energy as a renewable energy source for the International Falls LPOE. While this consideration is preliminary and would be determined during final design, installation of a geothermal heat pump system would involve excavating the ground at depths greater than the frost line (e.g., around 6 feet in Minnesota, but likely greater in International Falls) or drilling boreholes into the subsurface (e.g., about 150 to 200 feet deep) to install wells (GSA 2019a). For RWC technology, excavating activities would be required to construct underground pipelines between the buildings and heat exchangers that would be installed in the Rainy River. The drilling of boreholes and excavating of trenches would remove bedrock and some surficial material.

Generally, direct, long-term, minor, adverse, site-specific impacts to geology would be expected as any excavation work for a geothermal system would not remove any unique or economically valuable resources. The installation and operation of a geothermal heat pump would not induce any seismic activity because of the relatively shallow depth of the wells and the fluid circulating through any well would be enclosed in a closed loop system. The type of geothermal system that could be constructed for this project is subject to final design and geotechnical evaluations. GSA would have to evaluate factors such as spatial requirements, site geology, and system requirements to further determine the feasibility of implementing geothermal technology. If such technology were to be used, GSA would follow all state requirements for the construction of wells and/or use of river water. See Section 3.3, Water Resources, for additional discussion on permitting requirements that would potentially be required for construction of a geothermal system.

Construction of solar technologies would not impact geologic resources as they would not remove or change the bedrock or unique geologic resources.

Topography

Alternative 1 would have direct, long-term, negligible, adverse, site-specific impacts on topography. Within the project area, existing vegetation would be removed, and the site would be graded as necessary. As the majority of the project area is relatively flat and previously disturbed, the grading of soils would be minimal, and topography would not change substantially from current conditions.

Soils

Because surface disturbance would be limited to areas located on already developed and/or on previously disturbed, flat surfaces, loss of topsoil and increased potential for erosion from Alternative 1 would represent a direct, long-term, minor, adverse, site-specific impacts on soils. Table 3.2-1 includes approximate total acreages of potential soil disturbance from construction under Alternative 1. This assumes total disturbance of the entire project area. However, it is likely that land preparation activities associated with the connected action footprint would require a lesser amount of disturbance. Notably, the vegetated area west of Trailer Parking Location 2 along First Creek is not expected to be developed.

Table 3.2-1. Construction Impacts to Soils within the Project Area

Project Area Location	Area Impacted (acres)
Existing International Falls LPOE	1.6
Proposed Expansion Area	20.5
Connected Action Footprint	
Trailer Parking Location 1	16.9
Trailer Parking Location 2	3.5
Remainder of Connected Action Footprint	37.9
Total, Maximum Disturbance[1]	**76.9**

[1] Assumes selection of Trailer Parking Location 1. Total acreage of disturbance with selection of Trailer Parking Location 2 would be 63.5 acres.

The use of heavy equipment for site preparation and construction of buildings, roads/walkways, parking areas and other infrastructure would require removal of vegetation, grading, excavation, and filling. If any natural soil horizons exist, they would likely be lost during construction. Heavy equipment may compact or loosen and destroy the structure and function of organic and mineral soils over the long term, reducing soil moisture and most likely resulting in increased runoff and erosion.

Soil erosion from use of heavy equipment could also occur as a result of ground disturbance, leading to detachment of soils and transport of disturbed surfaces in wind and stormwater runoff. Soil productivity (i.e., the capacity of the soil to produce vegetative biomass), would be permanently impacted as the surface soils would be replaced with mostly paved development.

The project would be required to obtain a CSGP from MPCA prior to construction, which specifies measures for stabilizing soils and minimizing soil loss during construction. Compliance with the terms of this permit would limit impacts from soil erosion during construction.

Operation

No impacts to geology or topography are anticipated during operations of Alternative 1. There would be an increase in impervious surfaces that could contribute to increased potential for water runoff and soil erosion, leading to direct, long-term, minor, adverse local impacts to soils adjacent to the project area. Table 3.2-2 includes approximate total acreages of potential net increases in impervious surfaces under Alternative 1. There would be a net increase in impervious surface area associated with the Alternative 1 of up to 16.8 acres. This considers the fact that the existing LPOE is comprised almost entirely of impervious surfaces (1.6 acres) as well as the existing impervious surfaces within the proposed expansion area associated with the existing trailer parking (7.2 acres). Connected actions are anticipated to add 3.5 and 3.3 acres of impervious surface with selection of Trailer Parking Location 1 or 2, respectively, when considering existing facilities in place. Additional connected actions are not anticipated to add a consequential net increase of impervious surfaces, considering they would take place within existing, developed areas or would replace existing structures.

Table 3.2-2. Net Increase in Impervious Surfaces under Alternative 1

Project Area Location	Area Impacted (acres)
Existing International Falls LPOE	0
Proposed Expansion Area	13.3
Connected Action Footprint	
Trailer Parking Location 1	3.5
Trailer Parking Location 2	3.3
Remainder of Connected Action Footprint	0
Total, Max Increase in Impervious Surface [1]	**16.8**

[1] Assumes selection of Trailer Parking Location 1. Total increase in impervious surface with selection of Trailer Parking Location 2 would be 16.6 acres.

Overall increases in impervious surfaces could be smaller dependent on selection of stormwater management facilities. Selection of stormwater management facilities is subject to final design but based on other similar LPOE projects may include street drainage connected to storm drains which lead to a bioretention basin system where stormwater would percolate into the ground. GSA would be required to meet or exceed Section 438 of the 2007 EISA requirements for stormwater runoff (see Section 3.3, Water Resources).

3.2.2.4 *No Action Alternative*

Under the No Action Alternative, GSA would not expand or modernize the International Falls LPOE; current facilities and infrastructure at the existing LPOE would remain. No ground or subsurface disturbance from new facility or infrastructure construction would occur; therefore, there would be no impacts on existing geology, topography, and soils.

3.2.2.5 *Impacts Reduction Measures*

Measures to reduce construction impacts on geology and soil-related concerns, such as soil erosion, loss, and stability, would be addressed in the project design plans, as well as through erosion and sediment controls and site stabilization measures necessary for the Minnesota CSGP. Such measures would include setting up barriers and utilizing standard best management practices (BMPs) (e.g., earth walls, soil nails, riprap, turbidity barriers, etc.) to reduce impacts to soils or from soil erosion. Refer to Section 3.3, Water Resources, for a discussion of additional measures that would limit impacts from soil loss as a result of erosion during construction and operations.

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3.3 WATER RESOURCES

This section describes the baseline conditions for water resources and assesses the potential for local and regional water resources to be affected by implementing the Proposed Action and the No Action Alternative as discussed in Chapter 2. Water resources may be grouped into five different areas that characterize the spectrum of potential impacts to this resource, including water quality and supply, surface waters, groundwater, floodplains, and wetlands.

This SEIS uses the following documents and data sources to characterize the affected environment and assess potential impacts regarding water resources:

- The 2011 Final EIS Section 3.2 provides a description of surface waters, groundwater, floodplains, and wetlands in the project area. The 2011 Final EIS Section 4.2 presents the anticipated impacts resulting from construction and operations of the new LPOE facility for water resources.
- GSA reviewed the following reports and data and updated the existing conditions discussion based on this information: the 2018 Feasibility Study; Phase I ESAs conducted in 2021 and 2022 for the existing LPOE site and proposed expansion area, respectively; the *City of International Falls Comprehensive Plan* adopted in 2020; Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) mapping website; and the National Wetlands Inventory (NWI) website. Additionally, various water-related reports by state and county agencies have been revised or updated since 2011 and were reviewed for this SEIS, including:
  - Lower Rainy River and Rapid River Watersheds Monitoring and Assessment Report (i.e., the 303(b) report)
  - Lower Rainy River Watershed Total Maximum Daily Load
  - Lower Rainy River Watershed Restoration and Protection Strategy Report
  - Rainy-Lake of the Woods State of the Basin Report
  - Final Lake of the Woods Excess Nutrients Total Maximum Daily Load
  - 2018-2028 Koochiching County Comprehensive Local Water Management Plan

3.3.1 Affected Environment

3.3.1.1 *Region of Influence*

The ROI for surface water, floodplains, and wetlands includes those resources that exist within and adjacent to the International Falls LPOE, the proposed expansion area, and areas for potential connected actions necessitated by the LPOE expansion and modernization as described in Section 2.2.1.1. The ROI also includes surface waters and wetlands that would receive runoff and wastewater discharges from the project alternatives. The ROI for groundwater resources includes any aquifer that underlies the project area.

3.3.1.2 *Regulatory Setting*

Watershed Governance

The International Joint Commission (IJC) is a binational organization established by the U.S. and Canada through the signing of the Boundary Waters Treaty of 1909. The IJC oversees and protects the shared waters between the two countries through the approval and regulation of projects that affect transboundary waters (IJC 2023a). The International Rainy - Lake of the Woods Watershed Board (IRLWWB) was founded to help the IJC meet its responsibilities. The IRLWWB consists of the International Rainy-Lake Control Board and the International Rainy River Pollution Board. Under the guidance of the IJC, the IRLWWB assists with the binational coordination of water quality efforts for the basin and helps coordinate the management of the water levels and flows on the Rainy River and Rainy Lake.

Water Quality

Water quality is regulated within the context of meeting standards established for compliance with the federal Clean Water Act (CWA). Under the CWA, states are required to adopt water quality standards to protect their water resources and the designated uses for these waters (e.g., drinking water, recreation, and aquatic life). The MPCA is the agency responsible for regulating water quality standards in Minnesota. Minnesota water quality and CWA requirements relevant to this project include:

- **Minnesota Administrative Rules Chapter 7050 (*Waters of the State*)** – These rules provide Minnesota's water quality standards for all waters of the state, defined as "all streams, lakes, ponds, marshes, watercourses, waterways, wells, springs, reservoirs, aquifers, irrigation systems, drainage systems and all other bodies or accumulations of water, surface or underground, natural or artificial, public or private, which are contained within, flow through, or border upon the state or any portion thereof." Additionally:
    - Seven primary beneficial use classes are identified in the water quality standards rules, and are outlined in Exhibit 3.1 of the 2011 Final EIS. All groundwater resources are classified as domestic consumption use.
    - The rules also include narrative and numeric water quality standards that protect specific beneficial uses and antidegradation protection to help maintain high quality waters.
    - MPCA also adopted narrative wetland standards into these rules, which identify the importance of maintaining wetland water quality.
- **CWA Sections 303(d) and 305(b) –** Section 303(d) requires states to identify and develop a list of "impaired" waterbodies for which water quality standards for at least one designated use are not met and to develop Total Maximum Daily Load (TMDL) studies for those impaired waterbodies. A TMDL establishes the maximum amount of a pollutant allowed in a waterbody and serves as a planning tool to restore a waterbody so that it can support its intended designated use. States are also required to submit a Section 305(b) water quality assessment report that provides information on the water quality status of all waters in the state. Both the 303(d) list and 305(b) report are typically integrated into a single watershed assessment report.
- **CWA Section 404 Permit Program –** Regarding the protection of waters of the U.S. (WOTUS), USEPA Section 404(b)(1) guidelines state that "no discharge of dredged or fill material shall be permitted if there is a practicable alternative to the proposed discharge which would have less adverse impact on the aquatic ecosystem, so long as the alternative does not have other significant adverse environmental consequences." The 404 Permit Program authorizes U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE) to determine the Least Environmentally Damaging Practicable Alternative and to issue permits under this program. Depending on the extent and intensity of impacts, USACE issues either an Individual Permit (more than minimal individual or cumulative impacts), a General Permit (only minimal adverse effects), or a Letter of Permission (a more streamlined Individual permit) under Section 404. In Minnesota, wetland and stream crossings of utility lines may be eligible for a Utility Regional General Permit, depending on severity of impacts to WOTUS. To be eligible for this utility permit, construction activities cannot cause the loss of greater than 0.5 acre of WOTUS. In January 2023, USEPA and USACE issued a final rulemaking, revising the definition of WOTUS to include (FR 2023):
    1) Traditional navigable waters, the territorial seas, and interstate waters (paragraph (a)(1) waters);
    2) Impoundments of "waters of the United States" (paragraph (a)(2) impoundments);

3) Tributaries to traditional navigable waters, the territorial seas, interstate waters, or paragraph (a)(2) impoundments when the tributaries meet either the relatively permanent standard or the significant nexus standard (jurisdictional tributaries);

4) Wetlands adjacent to paragraph (a)(1) waters, wetlands adjacent to and with a continuous surface connection to relatively permanent paragraph (a)(2) impoundments, wetlands adjacent to tributaries that meet the relatively permanent standard, and wetlands adjacent to paragraph (a)(2) impoundments or jurisdictional tributaries when the wetlands meet the significant nexus standard (jurisdictional adjacent wetlands); and

5) Impoundments of "waters of the United States" (**paragraph (a)(2) impoundments**).

- **Rivers and Harbors Act.** Section 10 of the Rivers and Harbors Act (33 U.S.C. 401 et seq.) requires authorization from USACE for work or structures in, over, or under any navigable waters of the U.S. Furthermore, work outside the limits of navigable waters may require a Section 10 permit if the structure or work affects the course, location, condition, or capacity of the waterbody. CWA Section 404 jurisdiction encompasses more waters than Section 10 jurisdiction, (i.e., all Section 10 waters are considered Section 404 waters, but not all Section 404 waters are considered Section 10 waters). The Rainy River is considered a navigable water of the U.S. and, therefore, is under the jurisdiction of both Section 404 and Section 10.

- **CWA Section 401, Water Quality Certification** – Section 401 requires that before a federal Section 404 permit can be issued for an activity, the State (or Tribe) in which the activity will occur must certify that the activity will not violate state water quality standards set under the CWA in WOTUS. When a project that will impact WOTUS in Minnesota requires a 404 permit, the MPCA reviews the project under Section 401 to ensure that it will not violate the more restrictive water quality standards that the MPCA has established for that body of water. Projects are also responsible for meeting state water quality standards in all "waters of the state."

- **CWA Section 402, National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System**– Section 402 establishes the federal NPDES program, which is administered through the NPDES/SDS program in the state of Minnesota. The NPDES/SDS permit regulates a treatment and disposal system that discharges a specified amount of a pollutant into a surface water and is required for sewer discharges and stormwater discharges from developments, construction sites, or other areas of soil disturbance.

- **Construction Stormwater General Permit** – MPCA issues coverage to construction site owners and their operators under the CSGP. This permit is required for construction sites that disturb 1 acre or more of land. A SWPPP is required prior to submitting for this permit.

- **Municipal Separate Storm Sewer Systems (MS4s)** – An MS4 is a conveyance or system of conveyances to manage stormwater and is owned or operated by a public entity (e.g., cities, counties, highway departments, etc.). Public entities that own or operate an MS4 are required to develop and implement a SWPPP to reduce the discharge of pollutants from their storm sewer system, to the maximum extent practicable. Although there are no MS4s in Koochiching County, International Falls is expected to be subject to an MS4 permit in the future (MPCA 2021).

The Minnesota Department of Health (MDH) also plays a role in regulating water quality through establishing programs set forth by the Safe Drinking Water Act (SDWA) and setting standards for contaminants in drinking water and water sources as well as monitoring performance of public water systems and private groundwater wells.

The Minnesota Department of Natural Resources (MNDNR) oversees the Public Waters Work Permit Program. Under this program, projects constructed below the ordinary highwater level, which alter the course, current, or cross section of public waters or public waters wetlands, may require a Public Waters Work permit from MNDNR. Examples of development activities addressed by this program include filling,

excavation, shore protection, bridges and culverts, structures, docks, marinas, water level controls, dredging, and dams (MNDNR 2023). The Rainy River is designated as a public water.

Section 438 of the 2007 EISA provides stormwater management guidance for federal development or redevelopment projects with more than 5,000 square feet of land disturbance in any manner that diverges from the area's present-day use and composition. Section 438 requires federal projects maintain or restore the "pre-development hydrology" of the project area. "Pre-development hydrology" is defined as the stormwater runoff characteristics of the site in its natural state, prior to human development; it does not pertain to the current state of the site (e.g., a parking lot) (GSA 2019b).

Water Appropriation and Supply

MNDNR is responsible for ensuring an adequate water supply to meet requirements for various uses, including domestic consumption, fish and wildlife, and recreational, among others. Under the Water Appropriation Permit Program, a water use permit from MNDNR is required for all users withdrawing more than 10,000 gallons of water per day (or 1 million gallons per year) from any surface or groundwater resource (MNDNR 2023).

Wetlands

The Minnesota Wetland Conservation Act regulates development activities at the state level, such as drilling, filling, and excavation that impact wetlands and monitors the replacement and restoration of impacted wetlands with a goal of no net loss within Minnesota. Local government units administer the Act, while oversight is provided by the Board of Soil and Water Resources and enforcement is provided by MNDNR. In Koochiching County, the higher priority areas are within 1,000 feet from all lakes and 500 feet from rivers. These areas have been deemed high priority for avoiding the loss of major wetland functions such as the filtering of contaminants, biodiversity, flood water storage, and water quality (Koochiching County 2018).

Two or more wetland protection programs (e.g., CWA Section 401/404, Wetland Conservation Act, or Public Waters Work Permit Program) may cover the same wetland and in some cases, various portions of the same wetland will be regulated by different programs. However, state and federal agencies along with local governments coordinate to help determine applicable regulatory program jurisdiction on a case-by-case basis. The regulatory process is often initiated at the local level where program representatives can identify which regulations apply depending on the location and nature of the proposed activity that may affect wetlands or other water resources.

In January 2014, the City of International Falls adopted a *Comprehensive Wetland Protection and Management Plan* that provides an inventory of wetlands and a strategy for wetlands preservation while also taking into consideration the need for economic growth (International Falls 2011). The wetland plan proposes that impacts on wetlands of less than 10,000 square feet (0.23 acre) would not require a Local Government Unit permit but would require a USACE Pre-Construction Notification. Projects over the minimum square footage would require both a Local Government Unit permit and a USACE permit (City of International Falls 2020).

EO 11990, *Protection of Wetlands*, requires that federal agencies take measures to not only minimize the destruction, loss, or degradation of wetlands, but also to enhance wetland habitats. Wetlands are included in the definition of a WOTUS and, therefore, are also protected under the Section 404 Permit Program, overseen by USACE (see previous *Water Quality* discussion).

Floodplains

FEMA defines a floodplain as being any land area susceptible to inundation by water from any source (FEMA 2023). From a management standpoint, floodplains are usually low-lying land adjacent to a stream or a body of standing water. Furthermore, FEMA categorizes floodplains by the frequency of flooding. For example, the 1-percent-annual-chance floodplain (also referred to as the base floodplain or 100-year

floodplain) and 0.2-percent-annual-chance floodplain (also referred to as the 500-year floodplain) are land areas that have a 1 percent and 0.2 percent chance, respectively, of experiencing a flood each year. Another often used FEMA term is the regulatory floodway, which is the channel of a river or other water course and the adjacent land areas that must be reserved in order to discharge the base flood (i.e., 1-percent-annual-chance floodplain) without cumulatively increasing the water surface elevation more than a designated height. In a flood event, the floodway functions as part of the waterway and is filled with flowing water. FEMA prepares Flood Insurance Rate Maps (FIRMs) that delineate floodways and flood hazard areas for regulators, developers, and communities. These maps are used to administer floodplain regulations and to reduce flood damage.

Under the Floodplain Management Act, MNDNR oversees community floodplain management programs and establishes floodplain regulations, which counties and cities typically implement through local zoning. The City of International Falls does not have a floodplain ordinance; however, the community does have a FEMA flood risk map. Therefore, it is assumed that the city adopts the state's model floodplain ordinance, which provides standards and guidance on floodplain-related development to minimize risk from potential flood hazards in communities.

Because floodplains are associated with shorelines of watercourses, development standards also often exist for these areas. MNDNR runs the Shoreland Management Program to protect areas along the shoreline of lakes and streams and to help guide land development activities within and near these areas. Under the program, MNDNR establishes shoreland regulations, while local governments administer these regulations through local ordinances. Shoreland zoning ordinances regulate the following land development standards, depending on the classification: lot area and width; structure and septic system setbacks from the water; and size of the shore impact zone, of which vegetation and land alteration activity is limited (MNDNR 2023). In the City of International Falls, shorelands along the Rainy River are formally designated as a Shoreland Overlay District in the city's zoning ordinances. The applicable standards are provided in the city's code of ordinances, Section 11-50, *Shoreland Management* (City of International Falls 1979a).

Federal activities within floodplains must comply with EO 11988, *Floodplain Management*. Per EO 11988, federal agencies are required to avoid long- and short-term adverse effects associated with the occupancy and modification of floodplains to the extent possible wherever there is a practicable alternative, thereby minimizing flood risk and risks to human safety. An eight-step decision-making process for floodplain management is outlined in 44 CFR 9.6. Per EO 11988 guidance, GSA issued the *Public Buildings Service Desk Guide For Floodplain Management*, which requires GSA to evaluate potential impacts of proposed actions taken in a floodplain, and to avoid, minimize, or mitigate impacts associated with the occupancy, modification, or development in floodplains (GSA 2019c). Based on GSA's guidelines, the Proposed Action would qualify as a "critical" action, meaning that a local flooding event could lead to regional or national catastrophic impacts (GSA 2019b). As such, the minimum floodplain of concern for critical actions is the 0.2-percent-annual-chance floodplain (also known as the critical action floodplain).

Groundwater

Various Minnesota agencies have different roles in groundwater use, protection, and monitoring:

- MNDNR primarily monitors and manages availability of and ecological impacts to groundwater.
- Minnesota Department of Agriculture is involved with monitoring and addressing groundwater issues related to agricultural pesticide and fertilizer contamination.
- MPCA addresses industrial contamination to groundwater.
- MDH is responsible for ensuring safe drinking water from supply wells per the SDWA.

MDH implements a Well Management Program to protect public health and groundwater by regulating the construction of new wells and borings. As such, the MDH regulates the construction of BGHE systems under Minnesota Rules, Chapter 4725 (Wells and Borings), which establishes requirements for the location,

design, construction, testing, repair, and sealing of these systems, including standards for piping materials, heat transfer fluids, and grout mixes. Applications and documentation for these systems must be submitted to MDH for approval.

3.3.1.3 *Existing Conditions*

Existing conditions for water resources since publication of the 2011 Final EIS generally remain the same as current conditions. One change that has occurred since 2011 is the degradation of the culverted section of First Creek within the proposed expansion area, and subsequent daylighting of the culvert.

Geographic and Hydrologic Setting

As shown in Figure 3.3-1, the City of International Falls is located in the Rainy River Basin (sometimes referred to as Rainy-Lake of the Woods Basin), which is approximately 27,000 square miles and comprises both U.S. and Canadian territories (MPCA 2020). The Rainy River originates approximately 2.5 miles east of International Falls at the Rainy Lake outlet near the City of Ranier and flows west for approximately 85 miles along the border of Minnesota and Ontario, Canada, until it enters Four Mile Bay/Lake of the Woods at Wheelers Point.

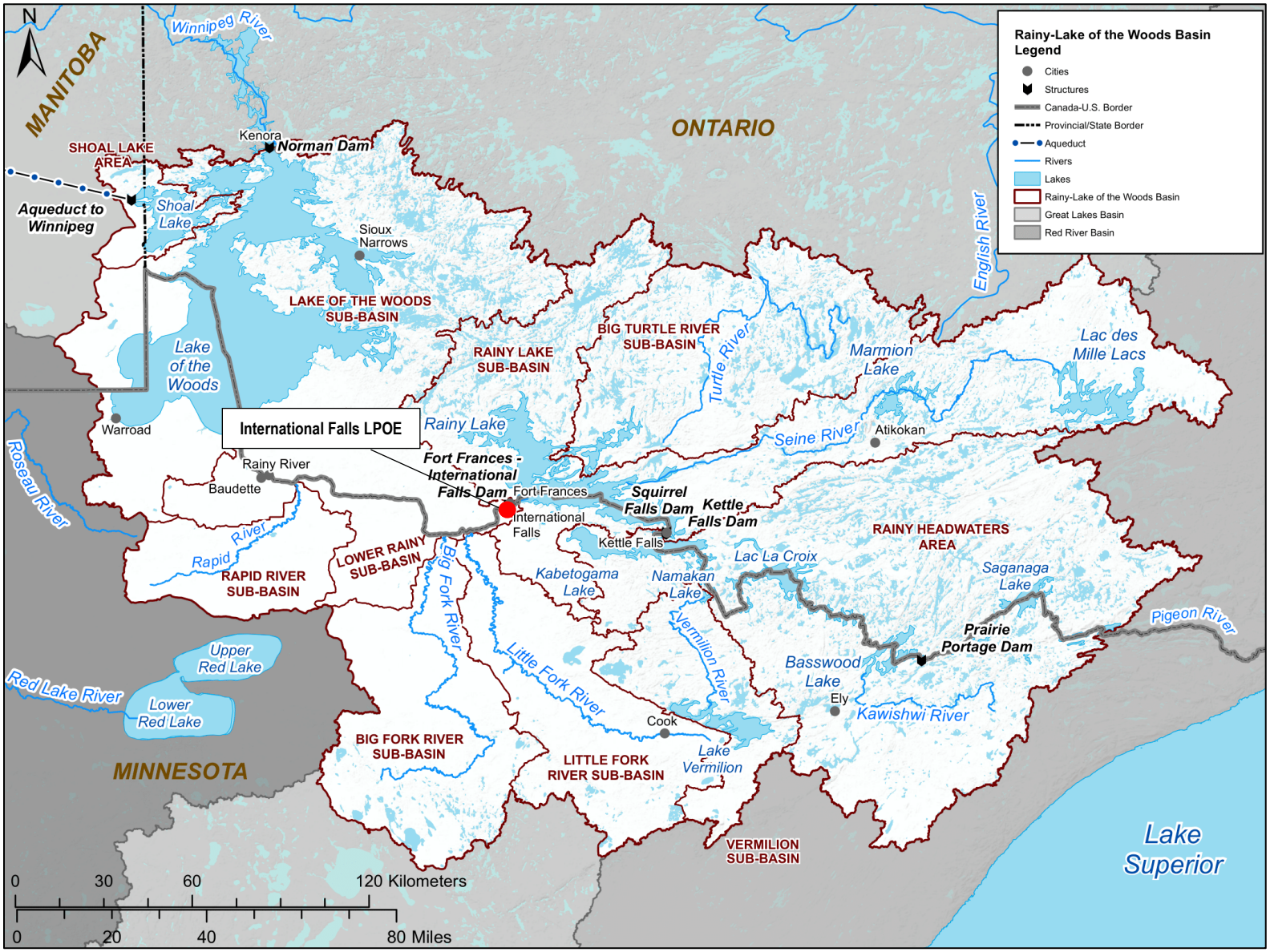
Climate within the basin is characterized by short, hot summers and long, severe winters. The mean annual precipitation is about 27 inches, of which about 30 percent falls as snow (IRNLRCSB 2017). Inflow of streams into the lakes is typically highest during the late spring to early summer months due to snowmelt and rainfall. December through March typically are the driest months, while June, July and August are the wettest. Flood events are a moderate to high concern in areas within the basin, including International Falls. In the Spring of 2022, the Rainy River Basin experienced record or near record snowfall which resulted in major flooding throughout the watershed in the following spring and summer months (IJC 2022). Minnesota acknowledges that climate change is impacting the state; climate trends within the Rainy River Basin include increasing average temperatures and rainfall, longer frost-free seasons, a decline in winter precipitation and an increase in the length of the ice-free season on the larger lakes (USEPA 2016a).

Surface Water

Watershed

The project area is located within the Lower Rainy River Watershed (within the larger Rainy River Basin). The Rainy River borders the northern boundary of the project area. The nearest USGS gauging station to the project area is Station 05129515 (referred to as the "Rainy River Boat Landing Below International Falls" station), which is just downstream of International Falls. Flow rates vary widely at this station. For the year 2022 flows were mostly between 5,000 and 10,000 cubic feet per second; however, during the summer months, flows peak around 50,000 cubic feet per second during a major flood event (USGS 2023b).

The Fort Frances-International Falls dam is located on the Rainy River just downstream of the project area and is used to provide hydroelectric power and flood control for the river and Rainy Lake. Multinational management of water levels in the Rainy River Basin is managed by multiple entities in the U.S. and Canada, including the owners and operators of the dams within the basin (H2O Power Corporation in Canada and PCA in the U.S.), the IJC, and the International Rainy-Lake of the Woods Watershed Board. Since 1949, Canada and the U.S., through the IJC, have jointly established formal rules for regulating water levels and flows of the Rainy River and Rainy Lake. The IJC makes decisions on the operation of the dam and typically tries to maintain water elevations between 1,112 feet and 1,119 feet at the dam (IJC 2023b). However, during major flooding in the Summer of 2022, water levels reached up to 1,123 feet and caused the dam to fully open its gates, with flowrates at the gauging station reaching up to 50,000 cubic feet per second. The project area is at an elevation of around 1,112 feet at its lowest point.



Source: NOAA 2023a

Figure 3.3-1. Rainy River - Lake of the Woods Basin

Water Quality

Throughout most of the Lower Rainy River Watershed, the Rainy River has designated use classifications for aquatic life, aquatic recreation, and drinking water. A segment of the river (from Baudette to Lake of the Woods) is also designated a use classification for wild rice production, but not for drinking water.

Generally, the Rainy River is meeting standards for its designated use classifications and is suitable for swimming, with water quality data indicating a thriving community of fish and other aquatic organisms (MPCA 2023a). Although water quality in the Lower Rainy River Watershed remains relatively good, the watershed's 303(b) report noted that some water quality indicators could be improved, including reducing total suspended solids, increasing dissolved oxygen for aquatic organisms, and reducing bacteria levels for recreational purposes (MPCA 2022a).

Major nonpoint sources of pollution within the watershed include watershed runoff; phosphorous export from wetlands; activities associated with livestock; increases in artificial drainage and combined with stream channelization; timber harvesting; atmospheric deposition of phosphorus; and failing septic systems (MPCA 2022a). Point sources within the watershed include nine permitted sources, three of which are located in the City of International Falls: PCA Paper Mill (listed as "Boise White Paper, LLC" under industrial permit MN0001643); MD&W Railway, and the North Koochiching Area Sanitary District (NKASD) wastewater treatment plant. Currently, all of the conditions/limits of the discharge permits within the watershed are being met (MPCA 2022a). See Section 3.9, Infrastructure and Utilities, for additional details on NKASD wastewater treatment plant.

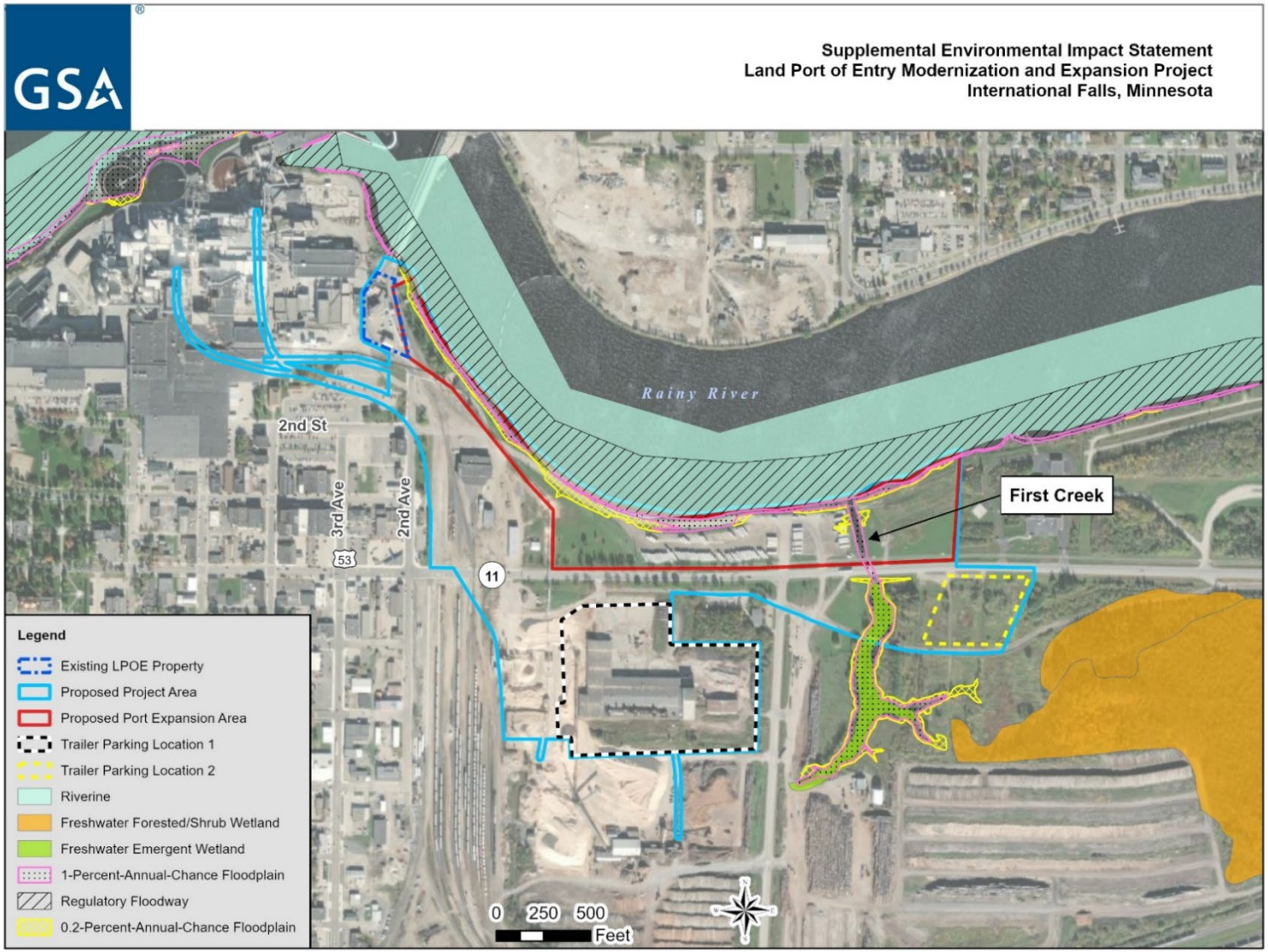
Within the Lower Rainy River watershed, three streams failed to meet water quality standards and were placed on the 303(d) impaired waters list: Black River and West Fork Black River are currently undergoing the TMDL process for *E. coli* and Lake of the Woods is impaired for recreational use due to elevated nutrient levels (excessive levels of total phosphorous) that cause nuisance algae blooms. Since the Rainy River is the largest source of water for Lake of the Woods, the river is subject to phosphorus limits under a TMDL (MPCA 2022a). To reduce phosphorous levels, MPCA has developed wasteload allocations for regulated point sources discharging into the Rainy River. Additionally, the Rainy River is noted as being impaired for aquatic consumption; there is a Fish Consumption Advisory for all waterbodies in the wider Rainy River Basin due to mercury levels found in fish tissue, mainly attributed to air pollutants (MPCA 2020).

The Lower Rainy River Watershed contributes to the City of International Falls public water supply. The city collects, stores, treats, and distributes water from the Rainy River and Rainy Lake as drinking water. The drinking water is treated at the International Falls water treatment plant located upstream of the project area adjacent to Second Creek. See Section 3.9, Infrastructure and Utilities, for additional details on the International Falls water treatment plant.

Surface Water Resources In Project Area

Figure 3.3-2 illustrates the surface water features within and adjacent to the project area. The northern boundary of the project area is comprised of approximately 7,000 feet of Rainy River shoreline. This boundary is fairly steep and comprised mostly of riprap.

A small tributary, First Creek, is located on the eastern portion of the proposed expansion area, meandering from an area south of the expansion area, continuing north under SR-11, and then discharging into the Rainy River. Because First Creek is a tributary that drains into Rainy River (recognized as a navigable water by USACE [USACE 2023]), it is considered a WOTUS. The segment of the creek located within the proposed expansion area was formerly running through a culvert; however, since completion of the 2011 Final EIS, parts of the culvert collapsed, and the creek segment was widened and daylighted to its current state around 2013 (GSA 2022a). Within the project area, the creek is 30 feet wide and 300 feet long, with the banks of the creek consisting mostly of riprap and a bed of natural clay.



Source: USFWS 2023; FEMA 2022

Note: The former culvert within the proposed expansion area that drains First Creek into the Rainy River currently is not classified as a wetland in the NWI; this segment was formerly covered, but then daylighted around 2013 because of the collapsed culvert.

Figure 3.3-2. Hydrologic Features at the International Falls LPOE Project Area

A leachate line associated with a nearby closed landfill is located southeast of the proposed expansion area (see Chapter 2). The underground line traverses north across SR-11 towards a point near the river, just east of First Creek, and emerges aboveground, crossing over concrete structures at the outlet of the creek, as shown in Figure 3.3-3. The leachate line continues west underground, generally following the contour of the river and into the PCA facilities north of the LPOE, where it is treated prior to discharge.

Source: GSA 2022a

Figure 3.3-3. Leachate Line Crossing First Creek, Near Rainy River

At the existing LPOE, surface runoff drainage is provided by the stormwater sewers that lead into the Rainy River (CCA 2021). The proposed expansion area contains multiple stormwater inlets and outfalls, primarily located on the southern boundary of the proposed expansion area, along SR-11, as well as along the northern boundary of the expansion area, adjacent to the Rainy River (GSA 2022a). Currently, Koochiching County does not have any MS4 permits within its jurisdiction. However, the City of International Falls is expected to be subject to an MS4 permit in the future based on the following criteria that triggers MS4 requirements: it is a city with a population greater than 5,000 people and municipal stormwater drains into an impaired water (Lake of the Woods TMDL for total phosphorous). As a result, a wasteload allocation for phosphorous was assigned to the city to account for coverage under a future MS4 NPDES/SDS permit (MPCA 2021).

Floodplains

Based on a review of FEMA mapping (FIRM panel 27071C0450D) (FEMA 2022), the project area includes 2.1 acres and 1.6 acres of FEMA-designated 1-percent annual-chance and 0.2-percent-annual-chance floodplains along the Rainy River and First Creek, respectively (see Figure 3.3-2).

According to Koochiching County, First Creek provides drainage for portions of a PCA woodyard, 3rd Avenue E, SR-11, and South International Falls (Koochiching County 2022). Flooding near the woodyard and 3rd Avenue E occurs almost every year.

Wetlands

The City of International Falls adopted a Comprehensive Wetland Protection and Management Plan in 2014 to assist the city in making better land use decisions and to aid in wetland preservation. The city conducted a field inventory and identified wetland areas throughout the city based on data from MNDNR (City of International Falls 2020). The city's wetland inventory is consistent with the NWI mapping of wetland areas within the project area, as shown in Figure 3.3-2.

Per the USFWS NWI, the segment of First Creek that was covered by a former culvert within the proposed expansion area currently is not classified as a wetland in the NWI, most likely because the culvert collapsed and the segment was then daylighted around 2013; however, since the daylighting of the culvert in First Creek, some vegetation has emerged (see Figure 3.3-4). The portion of First Creek south of SR-11 is classified as a 2.88-acre Freshwater Emergent Wetland, which is a wetland characterized by shallow waters and emergent plants (see Figure 3.3-2). An additional, larger wetland feature located south and east of

proposed Trailer Parking Location 2 encompasses approximately 41.4 acres and is classified as freshwater forested/shrub (see Figure 3.3-2).

Source: PHE 2022

Figure 3.3-4. First Creek, Looking Towards Rainy River

Groundwater

The project is located within the Arrowhead Groundwater Province. It is underlain by crystalline bedrock that typically has limited groundwater available for use except in major river valleys where there is a thicker sediment layer (DNR 2021). In Koochiching County, groundwater is found in bedrock fractures and small glacial aquifers that often have a limited capacity for groundwater pumping (Koochiching County 2018). MNDNR permits all high-capacity groundwater withdrawals in the state (where the pumped volume exceeds 10,000 gallons per day or 1 million gallons per year), though no high-capacity users are located in or near International Falls (MPCA 2020).

A Wellhead Protection Area is a scientifically modeled boundary that reflects the geographic area where water will travel to the public water supply well(s) in a 10-year time of travel. The closest protection area to the project area is approximately 15 miles to the southeast in Littlefork (Koochiching 2018), where the community withdraws its drinking water from two wells in the Quaternary Buried Artesian aquifer (Littlefork 2021). Although groundwater quality data is limited within the Lower Rainy River Watershed, the 303(b) watershed assessment report indicates that the quality is considered good and that there does not appear to be a great risk for groundwater contamination (MPCA 2020).

According to the Minnesota Well Index website, there are no public or private supply wells within the project area. The nearest active domestic water supply well is 10,000 feet southeast of the project area and is 312 feet in depth (MDH 2023). The index indicates that two wells are adjacent to the proposed expansion area; a well owned by PCA that is classified as industrial use and a well owned by MD&W Railway which was used for monitoring purposes and has since been sealed (MDH 2023). A log record from 1992 for the MD&W Railway well indicates that the depth to the water table is about 5 feet below ground, though was not verified by MDH (MDH 1992). Assuming the ground elevation is around 1,116 feet (above mean sea level), as indicated in topographic maps, this would mean that the elevation of the water table may be around 1,111 feet (above mean sea level). Due to its proximity to the Rainy River, it is assumed that the depth to groundwater is similar or near to the surface elevation of the Rainy River. FEMA maps indicate a water surface elevation of approximately 1,112 feet for the river (FEMA 2022), which is consistent with assumptions regarding depth to groundwater.

3.3.2 Environmental Consequences

3.3.2.1 *Summary of Water Quality Impacts from the 2011 Final EIS*

GSA determined that the 2011 Preferred Alternative would have direct impacts on water resources. Impacts to water resources from the 2011 Preferred Alternative are discussed in Section 4.2 of the 2011 Final EIS and are summarized as follows:

- The 2011 Preferred Alternative may have direct impacts to surface waters through construction of piers to support construction of new access roads or other activity. Increases in stormwater runoff due to an increase in impervious surfaces may also have an impact on water quality. Construction would be subject to compliance with the requirements of Section 438 of the 2007 EISA for stormwater runoff.
- The 2011 Preferred Alternative may result in direct impacts to the floodplains through the construction of piers to support the access road or other activity within the floodplain of the Rainy River.
- The 2011 Preferred Alternative may result in direct impacts to wetlands through construction of piers to support the access road or other activity along the Rainy River.
- The 2011 Preferred Alternative would not impact groundwater resources or water supply.

3.3.2.2 *Methodology*

To evaluate the impacts on water resources, GSA reviewed the project alternatives to determine whether any activities have the potential to cause the following within the ROI:

- Alteration of stormwater discharges or infiltration rates
- Alteration of groundwater recharge rates
- Discharge to or modification of surface waters or groundwater
- Use of surface water or groundwater
- Disturbance to wetlands
- Disturbance to floodplains

A major adverse impact to water resources would occur if the project alternatives would result in:

- Substantial alteration of stormwater discharges or infiltration rates, which could adversely affect drainage patterns, flooding, erosion, and sedimentation;
- Substantial alteration of groundwater recharge rates, which could adversely affect availability of groundwater;
- Violation of any federal, state, or regional water quality standards or discharge limitations;
- Modification of surface waters such that water quality no longer meets water quality criteria or standards established in accordance with the CWA, state regulations, or permits (including downgrades of surface water use classification or listing on the Nationwide Rivers Inventory);
- Changes to the availability of surface water or groundwater resources for current or future uses;
- Change in stream channel morphology (i.e., slope and stability);
- Loss of wetlands from the placement of dredge or fill material;

- Alteration or conversion of wetland function caused by the removal of vegetation or contamination from an accidental release of petroleum, oils, or lubricants or hazardous materials; or
- Increased flooding (flooding risk to nearby properties) through altered land uses (e.g., development in floodplain areas) that change current flooding levels or patterns.

3.3.2.3 *Alternative 1 – Full Build*

Construction

The new LPOE footprint would expand south and east, along approximately 3,600 feet of the Rainy River shoreline. Construction activities would result in up to approximately 52 acres of ground disturbance, with some conversion of pervious areas into impervious areas. For conservative measures, this acreage estimate includes the entire project area, except for Trailer Parking Location 2 (as Trailer Parking Location 1 is the larger of the two proposed storage lots and only one parking location would be developed). Direct impacts to waterbodies include the potential construction of riverbank structures along the Rainy River for the support of a new access road near the river and potential construction of a new culvert to cover the First Creek segment within the project area. Alternatively, instead of a new culvert, a bridging structure would be constructed to cross over First Creek. Additionally, GSA may implement a geothermal energy system, which could require construction of horizontal trenches or vertical borings within the project area and/or construction of pipes and heat exchanger within and adjacent to the river, depending on the type and final design of the system. Finally, a leachate line that is collecting effluent from a nearby landfill would be relocated (see Section 2.2.1.1).

Surface Waters

Direct, short-term, minor to moderate, adverse local and regional impacts would occur to water resources resulting from land disturbance and altered drainage patterns, potentially leading to increased erosion, sedimentation, and pollutants to receiving waters. The potential clearing and excavation to build roads and structures near the riverbank, as well as to install new shoreline fortification structures, could cause slope instabilities and additional erosion and sedimentation. Construction of piping and heat exchangers associated with RWC technology would temporarily increase sedimentation and could disturb embedded contaminants within the Rainy River (see Section 3.12, Human Health and Safety). These activities could degrade the water quality of Rainy River, First Creek, and other downstream waterbodies, adversely impacting other users, such as recreational users and aquatic resources (see Section 3.4, Biological Resources). In general, conditions under applicable permits and the consideration of local zoning ordinances would be expected to minimize potential adverse impacts to water resources resulting from the potential construction of structures at and adjacent to the Rainy River and First Creek. Since the Rainy River and First Creek are considered WOTUS, GSA may be required to apply for a USACE Section 404 permit, a 401 Certification from MPCA, and a Public Works Water permit from MNDNR if work is required in or near these waterbodies.

GSA would be required to apply for a CSGP from MPCA. Conditions of this permit require the development of appropriate documentation, including a SWPPP, construction site map, and stormwater design specifications and calculations. A SWPPP is required to address control of pollutant discharges using BMPs selected for the project and to address stormwater monitoring. These BMPs include, but are not limited to, the measures outlined in Section 3.3.2.5.

The CSGP also requires additional water quality treatment for waters identified as impaired. As noted in Section 3.3.1.3, Rainy River has a wasteload allocation assigned to it because of Lake of the Woods impairment for elevated phosphorus levels, and other pollutants of concern within Rainy River watershed include total suspended solids. Total suspended solids concentrations in runoff from construction sites generally exceed 1,000 milligrams per liter, while total phosphorus concentrations typically range from 0.01 to 0.16 milligrams per liter (MPCA 2023b). Additionally, at most construction sites, the majority of phosphorus would be in particulate form, which is usually easier to treat. Therefore, implementing BMP

for total suspended solids (e.g., infiltration and filtration) would also reduce phosphorus. Additional methods to reduce phosphorus could include limiting the use of certain types of land treatment applications, such as fertilizers, hydroseed, or wood mulch. GSA would evaluate options for these land applications for their phosphorus content. GSA would take into consideration the erosion protection and sediment control practices as described in the *Minnesota Stormwater Manual* when developing the SWPPP for the project. A TMDL for the Rainy River has also been approved by USEPA for mercury in fish impairment; however, MPCA does not require additional stormwater design or mitigation measures since mercury is usually attributed to air pollutants and not general land development projects.

Post-construction, GSA would be required to meet the conditions of the Notice of Termination, which involves a closeout process to certify that: the site has been stabilized with vegetation; the drainage system is stable; temporary BMPs have been removed; and final housekeeping tasks are completed. With adherence to the conditions of the CSGP and Notice of Termination, overall impacts to surface waters from construction activities are anticipated to be short-term and minor.

Relocation of the leachate line would increase the risk of contamination to water resources during construction. To minimize risks of contamination, GSA would coordinate with PCA regarding shut-down and re-connection procedures of the line and would also implement erosion and sediment control measures along the pipeline route as outlined in the SWPPP and any other required permit conditions to minimize adverse impacts to water quality.

Water used for various construction activities would either be trucked in or tapped from nearby connections. If nearby connections are utilized, this would be accommodated by the existing capacity of the International Falls water treatment plant, which is supplied via the Rainy River. This would result in direct, short-term, negligible, adverse, regional impacts to the regional water supply.

Floodplains

Piping associated with the RWC technology would be installed along the shoreline, which is within the 1-percent annual-chance and 0.2-percent-annual-chance floodplain; however, adverse impacts are expected to be direct, short-term and minor, as the acreage of floodplains impacted would be minimal and GSA's final site layout would use strategies to maintain or restore, to the maximum extent technically feasible, the predevelopment hydrology of the disturbed areas.

Wetlands

Direct adverse local impacts to wetlands are expected. Overall impacts would result in long-term, minor to moderate impacts as the area of impact is relatively small and would occur in previously disturbed wetlands. First Creek within the proposed expansion area is not mapped as NWI wetlands; however, since the daylighting of the culvert in First Creek, some vegetation has emerged. Additional, minimal amounts of wetlands disturbance could occur during relocation of the existing leachate line south of the proposed expansion area over First Creek, as well as during widening of SR-11 over First Creek, depending on final alignment. Based on conservative estimates using NWI mapping and assuming presence of wetlands near the daylighted section of First Creek, it is assumed that no more than 1 acre of potential wetlands could be removed and/or disturbed due to construction. The Rainy River shoreline has been fortified with riprap and consists of previously disturbed, sloped areas. Trailer Parking Location 2 is located directly east of, but would be expected to avoid, nearby wetlands along First Creek. A road crossing of First Creek south of SR-11 would also require re-paving but is not expected to require disturbance to wetlands associated with First Creek.

As necessary, GSA would conduct a wetland delineation within the project area during project design and finalization of site layout prior to any construction activities to support the Section 404 permitting process with USACE and 401 Certification process with MPCA. Depending on the acreage of wetlands disturbed and coordination with USACE, GSA would be required to obtain a General Permit (less than 0.5 acres disturbed), a Letter of Permission (between 0.5 and 3 acres disturbed), or an Individual Permit (over 3 acres

disturbed). A permit may also be required from International Falls, depending on the total acreage of wetlands disturbed. Depending on the extent of wetlands impacts, GSA would consider options to minimize, avoid, or mitigate potential impacts.

If a Section 404 permit is required from USACE, GSA would need to apply using a joint application form, which also includes applying for a Section 401 Water Quality Certification from the MPCA to ensure that construction activities would not violate any water quality standards. As part of the joint application process, GSA must also complete an Antidegradation Assessment Form and submit it with the application. USACE and MPCA would then review the application for a Section 404 Permit and Section 401 Certification, respectively. Once the USACE receives and reviews an application, USACE would issue a public notice. Any required environmental review must be completed prior to the 401 Certification process, meaning the ROD for this SEIS would have to be complete prior to MPCA making any certification decision (MPCA 2023c). Depending on the extent and nature of impacts GSA may be eligible for a Utility Regional General Permit.

Construction activities along the Rainy River and for a new culvert in or bridge over First Creek may also require a Public Waters Work permit from MNDNR. This includes any closed-loop geothermal system installed in the bed of a public water. A permit would not be issued for installations where the system poses a navigational hazard or where the system may damage the aquatic ecology of the waterbody. GSA would take into consideration BMPs as outlined in the MNDNR's *Best Practices for Meeting DNR General Public Waters Work Permit GP2004-0001*. This manual is utilized by the MnDOT for the repair or replacement of bridges, culverts, and stormwater outfalls at public waters. It includes information on best available methods for protecting or enhancing the ecological and water resources; guidance of best practice options for hydrologic design of structures impacting public waters; and guidance on best practices for in-water construction work (MNDNR 2014).

For construction along the Rainy River, GSA would also consider the City of International Falls' development standards for a Shoreland Overlay District as provided in the city's zoning ordinance. During final design of Alternative 1, GSA would analyze opportunities to protect and restore the natural shoreline of the Rainy River.

Groundwater

Indirect, short-term, minor adverse impacts to groundwater could occur depending on groundwater depth-to-water site since construction could affect groundwater flow or degrade existing groundwater quality. Construction of a trench or boreholes could occur if GSA decides to implement a geothermal energy system (see Section 2.2.1.3). Per Minnesota regulations, bore holes are required to be grouted to prevent contamination of groundwater. Furthermore, to minimize the risks related to potential contamination of drinking water, heat transfer fluids used in BGHE systems must be propylene glycol or ethanol that meets the requirements of Minnesota Rules, part 4725.7050. Potential contamination to groundwater from construction of a geothermal system would be direct, short term, minor, and local with adherence to conditions under the applicable permits. Prior to any construction activities, a geotechnical investigation would be conducted to determine subsurface conditions and depth to groundwater. A BGHE Construction Permit would be required from MDH for any BGHE system.

GSA would implement appropriate measures to prevent any groundwater contamination, such as that arising from hazardous materials used during construction or accidental releases of petroleum from construction equipment (see Section 3.12, Human Health and Safety). Groundwater depth is anticipated to be shallow and likely corresponds to the level of the surface water in both the Rainy River and First Creek. Should dewatering be required during construction, GSA would obtain appropriate permits as needed for groundwater dewatering discharge (i.e., NPDES/SDS construction stormwater permit).

Operation

Surface Waters

A net increase in impervious area under Alternative 1 would result in an increase in surface runoff volume. This in turn would lead to increased potential for pollutants to degrade receiving waters and an increase in the risk of flooding. The intensity and extent of the impact depends largely on the final amount of impervious area and proposed onsite drainage features, as well as miscellaneous climate factors beyond human control, such as severity and frequency of storms. Based on a conservative assumption, the project could add up to 17 acres of new impervious area under Alternative 1 (see Section 3.2, Geology, Topography, and Soils). This acreage of impervious area conservatively assumes that most of the site's vegetated areas would be converted to hard surfaces and does not account for proposed sustainable site features that GSA would incorporate into the final design. According to requirements outlined under the CSGP, permittees must design and construct a permanent stormwater treatment system to treat the water quality volume if the project's ultimate development replaces vegetation and/or other pervious surfaces creating a net increase of one or more acres of cumulative impervious surface. Further, Section 438 of the 2007 EISA specifies that federal agencies are required to reduce stormwater runoff from federal development and redevelopment projects to protect water resources. Therefore, it is expected that a permanent stormwater treatment system would be required for the project and would be designed such that all stormwater discharged from the expanded and modernized LPOE would not result in a violation of state water quality standards, including nuisance conditions, erosion in receiving channels or on downslope properties.

GSA would consider the Minnesota Stormwater Manual when designing the permanent stormwater management system for the proposed LPOE facility. This manual provides specific stormwater management objectives and associated design considerations, as well as landscape designs to enhance stormwater treatment. It also provides a framework for addressing stormwater sizing based on the following criteria: recharge, water quality, channel protection, over bank flooding, and extreme storms. Recent trends and projections of climate change in Minnesota indicate more extreme weather events and greater annual precipitation with faster melting snow-pack (MPCA 2015a). New stormwater lines and features, including a potentially new culvert in First Creek, would be sized based on criteria as outlined in the Minnesota stormwater manual and considering regional climate trends.

Because the City of International Falls may be subject to an MS4 general permit in the future, it could be responsible for reducing levels of phosphorus because of a downstream TMDL in Lake of the Woods. The city would be required to develop a stormwater pollution prevention program that oversees pollutant reduction measures and to adopt best practices. Although GSA would not be subject to these requirements, GSA would consider design of a final stormwater management system in consideration of downstream water quality issues, including phosphorus and suspended solids, as a BMP. Because the Minnesota Stormwater Manual includes technical guidance for TMDL-related permit requirements, GSA would take into account pollution prevention and reduction measures as provided in the manual into the final stormwater design.

The increase in impervious area could also result in an increase in salt usage for snow/ice removal. Increased salt usage can end up in receiving waters, which could lead to increased chloride concentrations in surrounding waterways. This could adversely affect drinking water resources as well as surface water resources that serve as aquatic wildlife habitat (MPCA 2023; see Section 3.4, Biological Resources). GSA would work closely with MnDOT and/or other local and state agencies to determine maintenance requirements for the removal of snow and address the reduction of potential pollutants, including salts, in its final stormwater system.

Depending on the amount of aboveground oil storage on site, GSA would develop a spill prevention, control, and countermeasures (SPCC) plan to minimize the risks of a potential discharge of oil into a stormwater system or receiving waterbody.

Relocation of the leachate pipeline would be a long-term beneficial local and regional impact to water resources. Currently this line is located aboveground over First Creek near the creek's discharge point to the Rainy River. The pipe lays on top of existing concrete structures across the creek and presents a potential risk of contamination of the river. The pipeline would be relocated underground, further south and away from the river, and there would be an overall reduction in length of the pipeline that is directly adjacent to the river.

The use of RWC technology as a geothermal energy system could involve circulating fluid in a closed piping system installed in the river and running the fluid through heat exchangers that would transfer heat to or from the buildings depending on the season. The process would not involve withdrawals and discharges of river water, but it could cause changes in water temperature in the river locally around the system piping. Requirements associated with allowable temperature rise would be verified with state and local agencies. Due to the volume of the Rainy River and the continuous movement of water across the piping, it is anticipated that any ambient changes in river temperature would not occur much beyond the actual location of the pipes within the river. Potential effects on aquatic life are addressed in Section 3.4, Biological Resources. RWC technology would require ongoing, periodic maintenance, which would result in short-term and local impacts to water resources through increased turbidity from river bottom disturbances. Additionally, procedures and BMPs would be used to reduce potential impacts as coordinated with the appropriate agencies.

Floodplains

Long-term, minor, direct and indirect adverse impacts could arise due to construction within a designated 1-percent annual-chance and 0.2-percent-annual-chance floodplain. The complete avoidance of floodplains for this project is not considered practicable as the LPOE is spatially constrained by existing industrial facilities, the Rainy River, and other surrounding infrastructure as discussed in Section 2.3. Approximately 2.1 acres and 1.6 acres of the 1-percent annual-chance and 0.2-percent-annual-chance floodplains occur within the project area, respectively, along the shoreline of the Rainy River and First Creek. In accordance with EO 11988, *Floodplain Management*, GSA would follow the eight-step floodplain decision making process for floodplain management outlined in 44 CFR 9.6. Per GSA's *Desk Guide For Floodplain Management*, GSA prepared a Floodplain Assessment and Statement of Findings, which is included in Appendix C of this SEIS.

Final design of the International Falls LPOE would incorporate standard measures, including those specified in P100 Standards, to reduce or manage stormwater flows as well as impacts to the floodplain and from flooding on the proposed facility's buildings. This would include reviewing plans for permanent structures to be in compliance with FEMA National Flood Insurance Program's Building Standards requirements for nonresidential structures, which require elevating the lowest floor to or above the base flood level. In accordance with Section 438 of the 2007 EISA, GSA would use site planning, design, construction, and maintenance strategies to maintain or restore, to the maximum extent technically feasible, the predevelopment hydrology of the property with regard to the temperature, rate, volume, and duration of flow. GSA would consider green infrastructure and low impact development practices, such as reducing impervious surfaces, using vegetated swales and revegetation, protection and restoration of the shoreline of Rainy River, and using porous pavements. Final design plans would also adhere to local requirements regarding development within the shoreland areas as outlined in the City of International Falls' code of ordinance, *Shoreland Management* for development along the Rainy River.

Wetlands

No impacts to wetlands are anticipated during operations.

Groundwater

Impacts to groundwater during operations would be negligible. The potential for adverse impacts from contamination of groundwater during use of a well or drilled boreholes associated with a geothermal energy

system would be minimal as the construction, maintenance, and sealing would be in compliance with Minnesota Rules, Chapter 4725 for BGHE systems and Minnesota Statutes, Chapter 103I for GTED systems.

3.3.2.4 *No Action Alternative*

Under the No Action Alternative, GSA would not expand or modernize the International Falls LPOE; current facilities and infrastructure at the existing LPOE would remain. No ground or subsurface disturbance from new facility or infrastructure construction would occur; therefore, adverse impacts on existing water resources would mainly be limited to maintenance activities at the LPOE. The existing leachate line would not be relocated and its current location above the existing structures crossing First Creek would continue to pose a contamination risk to First Creek, Rainy River, and other downstream waters. Flooding risks would remain along SR-11 near the existing PCA woodyard and near 3rd Avenue E since the First Creek daylighted segment would not be improved.

3.3.2.5 *Impacts Reduction Measures*

GSA requires that new construction and substantial renovation of its facilities obtain a LEED Gold certification (GSA 2021a). The LEED certification for the project is based on an accumulation of several scored green building features that include objectives for reducing adverse impacts to water quality and minimizing risks from flooding hazards. In addition, GSA requires a minimum Sustainable Sites Initiative (SITES) silver rating. Regarding water, all major capital projects with a scope of site work exceeding 5,000 square feet must meet the equivalent of the following SITES certification credits:

- SITES credit 3.1, "Manage Precipitation On Site" to reduce adverse impacts to aquatic resources, channel morphology, and dry weather base flow by replicating natural hydrologic conditions and retaining precipitation onsite.
- SITES credit 3.3, "Manage Precipitation Beyond Baseline" with the goal to capture and manage the equivalent of the 95th percentile precipitation event.

GSA would follow the impact reduction measures and BMPs outlined within the Minnesota CSGP (included in the SWPPP) and take into account additional BMPs listed in the *Minnesota Stormwater Manual* and MNDNR's *Best Practices for Meeting DNR General Public Waters Work Permit GP2004-0001*. This would include potential BMPs, such as infiltration or filtration, to reduce suspended solids, phosphorus, and salts. Additional methods for reducing phosphorus could include evaluating land application products for phosphorus content and limiting the use of these products.

GSA would coordinate with the USACE, MPCA, and MNDNR during design to determine what types of permits are required for potential construction work in the Rainy River and First Creek, to include for potential use of a geothermal energy system. GSA would also coordinate with the City of International Falls regarding development standards for a Shoreland Overlay District as provided in the city's zoning ordinance and any additional permits required for potential impacts to wetlands and floodplains.

As stated in the 2012 ROD, GSA would also commit to:

- Developing in compliance with Section 438 of the 2007 EISA with the objective of restoring the hydrology to predevelopment conditions;
- Considering green infrastructure and low impact development practices, such as reducing impervious surfaces, using vegetated swales and revegetation, protection and restoration of the riparian shoreline of Rainy River, and using porous pavements;
- Developing an SPCC plan; and
- Further analyzing opportunities to protect and restore the natural shoreline of the Rainy River during the final design of the project.

3.4 BIOLOGICAL RESOURCES

This section describes the baseline conditions for biological resources in the project area and potential impacts that could result from implementing the Proposed Action and No Action Alternative as discussed in Chapter 2. The biological resources that have been identified for consideration in this SEIS are vegetation, wildlife, and special status species (including federally and state-listed threatened and endangered species and migratory birds).

This SEIS uses the following documents and data sources to characterize the affected environment and assess potential impacts regarding biological resources:

- The 2011 Final EIS Sections 3.3 and 3.4 provide descriptions of the vegetation and wildlife habitat and of threatened and endangered species potentially occurring within the project area, respectively. The 2011 Final EIS Sections 4.3 and 4.4 present the anticipated impacts resulting from construction and operations of the new LPOE facility, as considered in the 2011 Final EIS, for vegetation and wildlife habitat and for threatened and endangered species, respectively.
- The list of federally protected species identified within the project area was obtained through the USFWS Information for Planning and Consultation (IPaC) system. The MNDNR's Rare Species Guide provided information regarding rare species within Koochiching County.

3.4.1 Affected Environment

3.4.1.1 *Region of Influence*

The ROI for biological resources includes vegetation, wildlife, and special status species found within 1,000 feet of the project area, which includes the existing 1.6-acre International Falls LPOE, the proposed 20.5-acre expansion area, and up to 30-acre area for potential connected actions necessitated by the LPOE expansion (see Section 2.2.1.1).

3.4.1.2 *Regulatory Setting*

Endangered Species Act. The Endangered Species Act (16 U.S.C. 1531 et seq.) establishes a national policy for conserving threatened and endangered species of fish, wildlife, and plants, and the habitat on which they depend. Under Section 3 of the Endangered Species Act:

- An endangered species is defined as any species in danger of extinction throughout all or a significant portion of its range.
- A threatened species is any species likely to become an endangered species within the near future throughout all or a significant portion of its range.
- A proposed species is a species found to warrant listing as either threatened or endangered, and for which listing has been officially proposed in the *Federal Register*.
- A candidate species is any species that has been announced in the *Federal Register* as undergoing a status review but has not yet been listed. Candidate species do not receive federal protection under the Endangered Species Act until officially listed as a threatened or endangered species.

Critical habitat for federally listed threatened and endangered species is a specific geographic area (or areas) that contain physical or biological features essential to the conservation of the threatened or endangered species and may require management or protection.

Under Section 7 of the Endangered Species Act, federal agencies must consult with the USFWS when any action the agency carries out, funds, or authorizes may affect either a species listed as threatened or endangered under the Endangered Species Act, or any critical habitat designated for it.

The MNDNR administers the Minnesota Endangered and Threatened Species Statute, which imposes a variety of restrictions, sets up a permit program, and identifies exemptions related to species designated as endangered or threatened within the state. In addition to state-level threatened and endangered species, Minnesota also recognizes species of special concern, defined as a species that while "not endangered or threatened, it is extremely uncommon in Minnesota, or has unique or highly specific habitat requirements and deserves careful monitoring of its status. Species on the periphery of their range that are not listed as threatened may be included in this category along with those species that were once threatened or endangered but now have increasing or protected, stable populations" (MNDNR 2016). Species of special concern are not protected by Minnesota's Endangered and Threatened Species Statute or the associated Rules.

Federally and state-protected threatened and endangered species, as well as Minnesota species of special concern, are all identified as species in greatest conservation need. The MNDNR identifies species in greatest conservation need within the Minnesota State Wildlife Action Plan (2016) in order to prioritize species and habitats for conservation.

Bald and Golden Eagle Protection Act. The Bald and Golden Eagle Protection Act (BGEPA) prohibits taking without a permit, or taking with wanton disregard, any bald or golden eagle or their body parts, nests, chicks, or eggs, which includes collection, molestation, disturbance, or killing. The BGEPA protections include provisions such as the protection of unoccupied nests and prohibition on disturbing eagles. The BGEPA includes limited exceptions to its prohibitions through a permitting process, including exceptions to take bald or golden eagle nests that interfere with resource development or recovery operations.

Migratory Bird Treaty Act. The Migratory Bird Treaty Act (16 U.S.C. 703 *et seq*.) protects birds that have common migration patterns between the U.S. and Canada, Mexico, Japan, and Russia. The Migratory Bird Treaty Act makes it unlawful to pursue, hunt, take, capture, kill, or sell birds (including any parts, dead or alive, feathers, eggs, and nests) that are listed in the statute. Currently there are approximately 1,100 species on the list nationwide.

Invasive Species. EO 13112, *Invasive Species*, as amended in 2016, states the national policy is to prevent the introduction and spread of invasive species or to control and eradicate populations of invasive species that have already become established. In this context, an invasive species is "a non-native organism whose introduction causes or is likely to cause economic or environmental harm, or harm to human, animal, or plant health."

3.4.1.3 *Existing Conditions*

Existing conditions for biological resources since publication of the 2011 Final EIS generally remain the same as current conditions.

Vegetation

Ecoregions denote areas of general similarity in ecosystems and in the type, quality, and quantity of environmental resources. As stated in the 2011 Final EIS, the project area is located within the Northern Minnesota Forest Lake Plains ecoregion, generally characterized as flat to gently sloping plains with extensive wetlands, some forest land, and several eroded river channels. This ecoregion is part of the larger Laurentian Mixed Forest ecological region. Major forest species in the region are black spruce, cedar, tamarack, aspen, and pine (GSA 2011). The majority of the proposed expansion area is developed or was previously disturbed and only sparsely vegetated. Dominant vegetation consists of maintained grass, a limited number of trees, and some emergent herbaceous species along the shores of the Rainy River and First Creek (GSA 2022a).

Most areas associated with connected actions (see Section 2.2.1.1) were cleared during prior development activities and have limited vegetation remaining if any. Both potential alternative sites for the PCA trailer parking area (Trailer Parking Locations 1 and 2) consist of sparse vegetation; however, Trailer Parking

Location 2 has more dense vegetation and several clusters of trees comparable to the vegetation in the easternmost portion of the proposed expansion area. The site is crossed by three unpaved roadways designated as Avenue E, Avenue F, and an unnamed lane between them.

Wildlife

Very little quality wildlife habitat is located in the ROI due to human disturbance. Birds migrating through the area may occasionally stop at or near the project area to rest or forage. However, because the project area contains minimal vegetation, is primarily dominated by mowed or maintained grassland, and has high levels of human disturbance, the ROI is not likely to be an important migratory stopover for most birds relative to other sites.

Species most likely to be encountered within the ROI include those highly adaptable species common to disturbed or urban areas, including small mammals, such as squirrels, and birds that tolerate human activity. Signs of Canada geese were observed during the October 2022 site visit for the 2022 Phase I ESA. The easternmost portion of the proposed expansion area and the potential site for Trailer Parking Location 2 offer limited, low-quality habitat for the most likely species in the ROI.

The segment of First Creek between SR-11 and Rainy River that was enclosed in a culvert at the time of the 2011 Final EIS has subsequently been uncovered. Therefore, this channelized segment of the creek may provide low-quality habitat for some of the smaller aquatic species migrating from Rainy River or from upstream in First Creek. Aquatic species known to inhabit the Rainy River include sensitive species, such as lake sturgeon, and game species, such as walleye, northern pike, and muskie.

Special Status Species

The USFWS's IPaC was queried for federally listed, proposed, or candidate threatened and endangered species and designated critical habitats potentially occurring within the ROI. The species list generated by the database search includes a total of five species (four mammals and one insect; see Table 3.4-1). Table 3.4-1 also includes a brief assessment of each species' likelihood of occurrence in the ROI based on the species' range/distribution and habitat requirements. USFWS-designated critical habitat for one of these species, the Canada lynx, occurs within the ROI. No aquatic species listed by USFWS are expected to occur in the ROI.

Table 3.4-1. Federal Special Status Species with Potential to Occur within ROI

Species	Federal Status	Habitat	Expected to Occur in ROI?
Mammals			
Canada lynx (*Lynx canadensis*)	Threatened	Dense forested areas characterized by deep snow and an adequate prey population of snowshoe hares.	No. While the ROI occurs within designated critical habitat for Canada lynx, the area is highly developed, does not support extensive areas of forested habitat required by this species, and lacks suitable prey population of snowshoe hare.
Gray wolf (*Canis lupus*)	Threatened	Highly adaptable species able to inhabit a range of areas including temperate forests, mountains, tundra, taiga, grasslands, and deserts. In Minnesota, usually occurs in areas with few roads.	No. This species primarily preys upon large, hooved mammals such as moose, elk, deer, caribou, and bison. The highly developed nature of the ROI and the presence of humans would deter the presence of prey species and of gray wolves.

Table 3.4-1. Federal Special Status Species with Potential to Occur within ROI

Species	Federal Status	Habitat	Expected to Occur in ROI?
Northern long-eared bat (*Myotis septentrionalis*)	Endangered	Generally associated with old-growth forests and relies on intact interior forest habitat. Forages within forests and along forest edges. Hibernates in caves, mines, and tunnels in areas with temperatures above freezing and with low risk of disturbance. During the daytime, may roost in crevices, under loose bark on trees, or in small spaces associated with buildings or under bridges.	Possibly. While this species is not anticipated to hibernate or forage within the ROI, there is potential for northern long-eared bats to utilize nearby trees or structures as daytime roosting sites.
Tricolored bat (*Perimyotis subflavus*)	Proposed Endangered	Associated with forests, where they forage near trees and along waterways. Roosts may be found in tree foliage, while maternity colonies may utilize structures such as buildings or bridges. Hibernation usually occurs in caves, mines, or tunnels.	Possibly. While this species is not anticipated to hibernate within the ROI, there is potential for tricolored bats to forage along the Rainy River or to utilize nearby trees or structures as daytime roosting sites.
Insects			
Monarch butterfly (*Danaus plexippus*)	Candidate	Suitable breeding habitat associated with presence of milkweed plants, which grow in sunny areas with soils ranging from well-drained to those occurring near water. Migrates south to overwinter in Mexico.	Possibly. Fourteen species of milkweed grow in Minnesota, so suitable breeding habitat for the monarch butterfly may occur within the ROI, particularly within the easternmost portion of the proposed expansion area and Trailer Parking Location 2.

Source: USFWS 2022, NatureServe 2023, Wild Ones 2023

Table 3.4-2 lists the state-designated threatened and endangered species identified by the MNDNR that may be found within Koochiching County, a summary of general habitat requirements, and a brief assessment of each species' likelihood of occurrence in the ROI. As state-designated species of special concern do not receive protection under state statutes, they are not included in Table 3.4-2. No aquatic species listed by MNDNR are expected to occur in the ROI.

Table 3.4-2. State Threatened and Endangered Species with Potential to Occur within ROI

Species	State Status	Habitat	Expected to Occur in ROI?
Insects			
Caddisfly (*Goera stylata*)	Threatened	Little is known about specific habitat of this species in Minnesota. Other species within this genus are known to inhabit fast-moving, cold, clear streams and eat epiphytic algae that grows on rocks.	No. Known from three locations in the state, one of which is Nett Lake River in Koochiching County. This river is located in the southern portion of the county and is not located within the ROI.

Table 3.4-2. State Threatened and Endangered Species with Potential to Occur within ROI

Species	State Status	Habitat	Expected to Occur in ROI?
Plants			
Common moonwort (*Botrychium lunaria*)	Threatened	Semi-open habitats such as gravelly banks, rocky ledges, and talus. May also occur in utility corridors where the soil has been left undisturbed.	No. The disturbed nature of the project area makes it unlikely that this species may be found along the open banks of the Rainy River and First Creek.
Cuckoo flower (*Cardamine pratensis*)	Threatened	Associated with small ponds or pools in sedge-dominated fens and in white cedar swamps.	No. Suitable habitat is not expected to occur within the ROI.
Bog adder's mouth (*Malaxis paludosa*)	Endangered	Found in rich conifer swamps, typically dominated by black spruce and an open shrub layer. Usually found perched on low hummocks of sphagnum moss and feathermosses.	No. Suitable habitat is not expected to occur within the ROI.
Beaked spikerush (*Eleocharis rostellata*)	Threatened	In Koochiching County, occurs in a highly specialized microhabitat within large, low-nutrient acidic peatlands. These specialized areas are wet, sunny habitats dominated by low-growing sedges and mosses.	No. Suitable habitat is not expected to occur within the ROI.
Floating marsh marigold (*Caltha natans*)	Endangered	Occurs in shallow, slow-moving water. Roots in mud, silt, or clay.	No. Suitable habitat is not expected to occur within the ROI.
Hair-like beak rush (*Rhynchospora capillacea*)	Threatened	Restricted to small, fragile, native calcareous fens that are maintained by the local discharge of cold, calcareous groundwater.	No. Suitable habitat is not expected to occur within the ROI.
Jointed rush (*Juncus articulates*)	Endangered	Found in sandy soils along lakeshores.	No. Suitable habitat is not expected to occur within the ROI.
Pale sedge (*Carex pallescens*)	Endangered	Occurs on the margin of fire-dependent forests of pine, spruce, aspen, and birch adjacent to the Lake Superior shore. Prefers low, moist, grassy or rock habitats at the edge of the forest where it receives partial sunshine. In Koochiching County, seems to occur in shallow wetlands of recent, anthropogenic origin.	No. Suitable habitat is not expected to occur within the ROI.
Ram's head orchid (*Cypripedium arietinum*)	Threatened	Coniferous forest habitats.	No. Suitable habitat is not expected to occur within the ROI.
Siberian yarrow (*Achillea alpina*)	Threatened	Occurs in open woods, shallow swamps, and margins of wet	No.

Table 3.4-2. State Threatened and Endangered Species with Potential to Occur within ROI

Species	State Status	Habitat	Expected to Occur in ROI?
		meadows. Loamy soil in sunny or partially shaded wetland edges.	Any potential wetlands in the project area that may be impacted have been highly disturbed and are not expected to support suitable habitat. Mapped NWI wetlands south of SR-11 along First Creek would not be directly impacted, and potential adverse impacts to water quality carried downstream from First Creek would be negligible with implementation of best management practices.
Small white waterlily (*Nymphaea leibergii*)	Threatened	Shallow, protected bays in lakes and slow-moving streams, especially those impounded by beaver dams.	No. Suitable habitat is not expected to occur within the ROI.
Sterile sedge (*Carex sterilis*)	Threatened	Mineral-rich calcareous fens of the prairie region.	No. Suitable habitat is not expected to occur within the ROI.
Upswept moonwort (*Botrychium ascendens*)	Endangered	Open grassy areas between meadows and forests or between lake shores and forests. Also found in grassy openings in forests that were created by low-impact human activities.	No. While vegetation within the project area is dominated by grass, the high level of disturbance in the area would not be suitable for this species.
Moss			
Liverwort (*Trichocolea tomentella*)	Threatened	Found in black ash/conifer and cedar swamps with a high pH, along banks of mountain streams, and in seepages over wet rocks.	No. Suitable habitat is not expected to occur within the ROI.
Cushion peat moss (*Sphagnum compactum*)	Threatened	Grows on wet and sandy soil, siliceous rocks, or bare peat, often in seepage, in late snow melt areas, and on low banks of roadside ditches. In Koochiching County, the two known populations occur in very shallow depressions on bedrock in northern dry bedrock pine woodlands.	No. Suitable habitat is not expected to occur within the ROI.
Lichens			
Yellow specklebelly lichen (*Pseudocyphellaria holarctica*)	Endangered	Found in habitats that are moist, shady, and often foggy. Substrates vary but include mossy rocks and trees. All known populations in Minnesota are near water.	No. While the proposed expansion area borders the Rainy River, the open nature of the site and general lack of trees make it unlikely for this species to be found within the ROI.

Source: MNDNR 2016, 2023a

Note: Refer to Section 3.3, Water Resources, for a discussion of wetland communities located within and near the proposed expansion area.

Migratory Birds

Per the USFWS IPaC results, two migratory birds of conservation concern may occur within the ROI. The bald eagle also may be found in the ROI but is not a bird of conservation concern in this area; this species instead warrants special attention under the BGEPA. Table 3.4-3 identifies the migratory birds of conservation concern identified by IPaC for the ROI.

Table 3.4-3. Migratory Bird Species with Potential to Occur within ROI

Species	Breeding Season in Area	Breeding Habitat	Expected to Occur in ROI?
Chimney swift (*Chaetura pelagica*)	March 15 - August 25	Nests are attached to interior wall of a hollow man-made or natural structure, though most commonly found in chimneys.	Possibly. The buildings within and surrounding the ROI may provide suitable nesting habitat.
Lesser yellowlegs (*Tringa flavipes*)	Breeds elsewhere		Unlikely. Breeds in Canada and spends winters in South America. This species may be encountered within the ROI on stopovers during migration. However, the low-quality habitat existing within the project area is unlikely to support suitable foraging or resting habitat during migration stopovers.

Source: USFWS 2022

Invasive Species

The MNDNR maintains a list of infested waters that contain an aquatic invasive species that could spread to other waters. The stretch of the Rainy River between Rainy Lake and Lake of the Woods, which includes the river segment bordering the project area, was listed as infested for spiny waterflea in 2007 (MNDNR 2023b). The spiny waterflea is native to Europe and Asia and was introduced to the U.S. through discharge of ballast water, first arriving in Lake Superior around 1987. The primary concerns related to this species are impacts to fishing by clogging the eyelets of fishing rods and to native species by preying on native zooplankton that serve as important food sources for native fish species. Once established, populations of spiny waterflea are difficult to control. Their long tail and spines make them difficult for native species to eat, and there are currently no known effective population controls for this species in natural waters (MNDNR 2023c).

3.4.2 Environmental Consequences

3.4.2.1 *Summary of Impacts from the 2011 Final EIS*

GSA determined that the 2011 Preferred Alternative would not have any significant adverse effects on vegetation, wildlife habitat, or protected species. Impacts to vegetation and wildlife habitat and threatened and endangered species from the 2011 Preferred Alternative are discussed in Sections 4.3 and 4.4 of the 2011 Final EIS, respectively, and are summarized as follows:

- The 2011 Preferred Alternative would impact barren land and areas of grass between the Rainy River and south of SR-11 and east of 3rd Avenue E. Less than 0.1 acre of existing forest lands south of SR-11 would be impacted from the construction of the road from the replacement truck storage lot to SR-11.
- The 2011 Preferred Alternative would not impact federal or state threatened or endangered species.

3.4.2.2 *Methodology*

To evaluate the impacts on biological resources, GSA reviewed the project alternatives to determine whether any activities have the potential to cause the following within the ROI:

- Displacement of terrestrial or aquatic communities or loss of habitat;
- Diminished value of habitat for wildlife, plants, or aquatic species;
- Interference with the movement of native resident or migratory wildlife species;
- Conflict with management plans for terrestrial, avian, and aquatic species and their habitat;
- Introduction of noxious or invasive plant species;
- Decline in native fish populations;
- Impacts on or displacement of endangered, threatened, or other protected status species; or
- Encroachment or impacts on designated critical habitat for a federally listed species.

A major adverse impact to biological resources would occur if the project alternatives would result in:

- Long-term loss, degradation, or loss of diversity within unique or high-quality plant communities;
- Unpermitted "take" of federally listed species;
- Local extirpation of rare or sensitive species not currently listed under the Endangered Species Act;
- Unacceptable loss of critical habitat, as determined by the USFWS; or
- Violation of the Migratory Bird Treaty Act or BGEPA.

3.4.2.3 *Alternative 1 – Full Build*

Construction

Vegetation

Alternative 1 would have direct, short- and long-term, minor adverse impacts on vegetation during demolition and construction within the proposed expansion area. Construction of the new facilities and infrastructure would require ground disturbance and removal of up to 13.3 acres of existing vegetation within the proposed expansion area; however, the proposed expansion area generally supports maintained grass and a limited number of trees. Impacts would be greatest east of First Creek where there is less disturbance. The removal of these trees would represent a long-term minor adverse impact in this generally industrial area. Grass and other landscaping would be replanted following construction using native species and seed mixes.

Connected actions for the relocation of PCA facilities and utilities outside the proposed expansion area would have comparable direct, short- and long-term, minor adverse impacts on vegetation. Most areas associated with connected actions were previously cleared for prior development and remain mostly devoid of vegetation. The potential site for relocation of the PCA trailer parking area west of First Creek and south of SR-11 (Trailer Parking Location 1) consists of highly disturbed vegetated areas surrounding the former BildRite property, but could disturb up to 3.5 acres of vegetation to be replaced with asphalt pavement. Trailer Parking Location 2 would require clearing of approximately 3.3 acres of previously disturbed vegetation. The western border of the Trailer Parking Location 2 would be located east of Avenue E (see Figure 2-1) and would not affect First Creek or any associated wetlands south of SR-11.

Wildlife

Alternative 1 would have direct, short-term, minor adverse impacts on local wildlife. Construction within the proposed expansion area would remove existing vegetation and disturb wildlife inhabiting the ROI. However, the vegetation currently present within the proposed expansion area generally consists of maintained grass and a few trees and does not represent high-quality habitat for wildlife. Species may temporarily relocate during construction, but those species that currently utilize the area are likely to return following the construction period and would not be permanently displaced by the human activity.

Proposed construction activities along and within the Rainy River or First Creek would have direct, short-term, moderate adverse impacts on aquatic species. These adverse impacts would include short-term direct effects to the waterway from increased turbidity and disturbance during construction. Indirect effects to aquatic habitat would also occur from increased stormwater runoff and erosion from construction activities in and near waterways degrading water quality (see Section 3.3, Water Resources), as well temporary increases in noise levels during construction that could result in adverse effects to local aquatic wildlife species. Because the channelized portion of First Creek was previously enclosed and was further disturbed during subsequent uncovering, it provides degraded habitat for aquatic species in comparison to upstream segments of the creek and downstream in Rainy River.

Connected actions for the relocation of PCA facilities and utilities outside the proposed expansion area would have comparable direct, short-term, minor, adverse impacts on local wildlife. Most areas associated with connected actions were previously cleared for prior development and remain mostly devoid of wildlife habitat. The potential construction for a relocated trailer parking area would require clearing of approximately 3.5 or 3.3 acres of vegetation for asphalt pavement, depending on location selected, which would have long-term, minor, adverse impacts on local wildlife.

Special Status Species

Table 3.4-4 summarizes the potential impacts to the northern long-eared bat, tricolored bat, and monarch butterfly. With implementation of impact avoidance measures specified in Section 3.4.2.5, no adverse effects to federally protected species are anticipated. No other federally or state protected species are expected to be encountered within the project area; as such, they would not be affected by construction of the Proposed Action. Refer to Appendix B for consistency letters documenting GSA's completion of the

Table 3.4-4. Potential Effects to Threatened and Endangered Species

Species	Status	Potential Impact Summary
Northern long-eared bat (*Myotis septentrionalis*)	Federally Endangered	With implementation of the impact avoidance measures recommended by USFWS and summarized in Section 3.4.2.5, there would be no effect to this species. While the ROI exists within this species' range, proposed construction activities would not reduce the overall amount of available roosting habitat or substantially reduce available foraging habitat. No direct impacts are anticipated. Negligible indirect impacts may be expected from noise, disturbance of existing vegetation, or displacement of prey species during construction; these negligible impacts would be further reduced or avoided with implementation of the measures discussed in Section 3.4.2.5.

Table 3.4-4. Potential Effects to Threatened and Endangered Species

Species	Status	Potential Impact Summary
Tricolored bat (*Perimyotis subflavus*)	Federally Proposed Endangered	With implementation of the impact avoidance measures recommended by USFWS and summarized in Section 3.4.2.5, there would be no effect to this species. While the ROI exists within this species' range, proposed construction activities would not reduce the overall amount of available roosting habitat or substantially reduce available foraging habitat. No direct impacts are anticipated. Negligible indirect impacts may be expected from noise, disturbance of existing vegetation, or displacement of prey species during construction; these negligible impacts would be further reduced or avoided with implementation of the measures discussed in Section 3.4.2.5.
Monarch butterfly (*Danaus plexippus*)	Federal Candidate	With implementation of the impact avoidance measures recommended by USFWS and summarized in Section 3.4.2.5, there would be no effect to this species. Potentially suitable habitat may exist within the ROI, and this species may experience indirect effects from increased human activity, noise, or disturbance of vegetation (specifically milkweed, if present) in the proposed expansion area. However, these negligible impacts would be further reduced or avoided with implementation of the measures discussed in Section 3.4.2.5.

Operation

No additional impacts to vegetation or terrestrial wildlife habitat are anticipated during operations of Alternative 1. The change in noise associated with operation would be negligible in relation to the current, industrial nature of the area and the proposed location along an existing highway. The noise and human activity associated with operation of the expanded and modernized International Falls LPOE is not expected to result in measurable indirect effects to protected species within the ROI. There could be long-term, minor adverse impacts to nearby aquatic habitat from increased runoff from the project area, including in salt usage for snow/ice removal. Increased salt runoff to the Rainy River and First Creek could increase chloride concentrations in surrounding waterways, which can be toxic to certain aquatic wildlife, and affect community structure, diversity, and productivity, even at low levels (MPCA 2023d). These impacts would be managed through stormwater management measures as described in Section 3.3, Water Resources. GSA would work closely with MnDOT and/or other local and state agencies to determine maintenance requirements for the removal of snow and address the reduction of potential pollutants, including salts, in final stormwater system design.

Operations of RWC technology would result in long-term, minor impacts to aquatic species. Closed-loop systems would not require any intake and discharge of river water. Heat rejection from underwater pipes for geothermal RWC technology would result in small, localized temperature changes in the river if the technology is implemented, which would be further destratified by river flow (Goldman Copeland et al. 2018). Such localized temperature changes are not expected to substantially affect aquatic wildlife adversely. The RWC technology would require ongoing, periodic maintenance, which would require short-term and local disturbances to aquatic species. The operation of potential photovoltaic panels or ground-source heat pump systems is not expected to affect vegetation or wildlife.

3.4.2.4 *No Action Alternative*

Under the No Action Alternative, GSA would not expand or modernize the International Falls LPOE; current facilities and infrastructure at the existing LPOE would remain. No ground disturbance from new

facility or infrastructure construction would occur; therefore, there would be no impacts on existing biological resources.

3.4.2.5 *Impact Reduction Measures*

General measures to reduce or avoid construction impacts on biological resources would include:

- Only approved, native species would be used for revegetation. When possible, pollinator-friendly plant species would be used. These plant species would not be invasive or noxious species, and disturbed areas would be promptly restored or revegetated to the extent practicable following construction.
- Construction equipment would be washed before and after coming to the site to the extent practicable to limit the transport of invasive species. If non-native invasive species are present in the project area, these plants would be eradicated and removed from the site before earthmoving activities begin.
- If construction activities occur within the chimney swift nesting period (March 15 - August 25), existing structures would be inspected for nests prior to demolition. Any further requirements would be determined in coordination with applicable state and federal resource agencies pending survey results.
- If milkweed plants are observed within the proposed expansion area, they would be avoided to the extent practicable in order to reduce potential impacts to the federal candidate monarch butterfly.
    - If avoidance is not practicable, milkweed plants would be transplanted outside of the proposed project area. When transplanting milkweed plants, care would be taken to retain as much of the tap root as possible. Digging 4 inches away from each side of the plant would help avoid cutting the tap root. Transplanting in early spring or in late summer/late fall may also increase success (Gomez 2018).
- Turbidity curtains and appropriate engineering controls would be used as needed to reduce potential noise impacts to aquatic wildlife species within the Rainy River. Engineering controls may include the use of vibratory hammers instead of impact hammering and use of "bubble curtains" to attenuate noise.
- Landscaping would consider Minnesota's insect pollinators by (MNDNR 2023d):
    - Planting a variety of native flowers that bloom in the spring, summer, and fall;
    - Providing nesting sites by allowing dead branches, stems, and logs to remain and leaving bare earth for ground-nesting insects;
    - Reducing the use of pesticides; and
    - Allowing native flowering plants to grow along roadsides and drainage ditches.
- Species-specific measures that would be implemented to reduce or avoid potential impacts to the federally endangered northern long-eared bat and the federally proposed endangered tricolored bat include:
    - No tree removal would occur within 0.25 mile of a known occupied hibernaculum.
    - No tree removal would occur within 150 feet of a known occupied maternity roost tree during the pup season (June 1 to July 31).
    - Pre-construction presence/absence surveys would be completed if there is a need to remove potentially suitable habitat within the project area during the pup season (June 1 to July 31). If required, surveys would be conducted pursuant to local USFWS field office and state resource agency requirements and the need for any additional tree clearing restrictions, if any, would be determined in coordination with applicable state and federal resource agencies pending survey results.

- Pre-construction presence/absence surveys for bald eagles would be completed to determine if there is a need to remove potentially suitable habitat within the proposed project area. Bald eagle surveys would be conducted pursuant to local USFWS field office and state resource agency requirements. The need for any restrictions around tree clearing, if any, would be determined in coordination with applicable state and federal resource agencies pending survey results.
- If the project is determined to have potential to disturb or kill eagles, a permit under the BGEPA would be obtained.

Refer to Section 3.3, Water Resources, for a discussion of measures that would limit impacts to wetland habitats and associated species during construction and operations.

3.5 AIR QUALITY AND CLIMATE CHANGE

This section describes the baseline conditions for air quality and climate change within the region and assesses the potential for air quality or climate change to affect, or be affected by, implementing the Proposed Action and No Action Alternative as discussed in Chapter 2.

Air quality is the measure of the atmospheric concentration of defined pollutants in a specific area. An air pollutant is any substance in the air that can cause harm to humans or the environment. Pollutants may be natural or human-made and may take the form of solid particles, liquid droplets, or gases. Natural sources of air pollution include smoke from wildfires, dust, and wind erosion. Human-made sources of air pollution include emissions from vehicles; dust from unpaved roads, agriculture, or construction sites; industrial processes; and smoke from human-caused fires. Air quality is affected by pollutant emission sources, as well as the movement of pollutants in the air via wind and other weather patterns.

GHG emissions released into the atmosphere from human-induced fossil fuel combustion are widely believed to be contributing to changes in global climate. GHGs, which include carbon dioxide (CO_2), methane (CH_4), nitrous oxide (N_2O), water vapor, and several trace gases, trap radiant heat reflected from the Earth in the atmosphere, causing the Earth's average surface temperature to rise. Although GHG levels have varied for millennia (along with corresponding variations in climate conditions), increases driven by human activity have contributed significantly to recent climatic changes.

This SEIS uses the following documents and data sources to characterize the affected environment and assess potential impacts regarding air quality and climate change:

- The 2011 Final EIS Section 3.5 provides a description of air quality in the study area for the 2011 Preferred Alternative and presents a summary of GHG emissions from the state of Minnesota. The 2011 Final EIS Section 4.5 presents the anticipated air quality and GHG impacts resulting from construction and operations of the 2011 Preferred Alternative.
- The *Fourth National Climate Assessment, Volume II: Impact, Risk, and Adaptation in the United States*, 2018 provides an in-depth assessment of projected climate change impacts in the United States, as well as adaptation measures to prepare for those impacts. Chapter 21 discusses projected impacts and potential adaptation options for the Midwest region.
- CEQ's interim *National Environmental Policy Act Guidance on Consideration of Greenhouse Gas Emissions and Climate Change* includes recommendations for agencies on how to analyze and present information related to GHGs and climate change within NEPA documents.

3.5.1 Affected Environment

3.5.1.1 *Region of Influence*

Air Quality. Air quality is measured and regulated on a regional level, and this SEIS utilizes air quality data from the MPCA. The Proposed Action would take place within Koochiching County. Therefore, for purposes of this analysis, the ROI for air quality is defined as Koochiching County.

Greenhouse Gases. The ROI for GHGs differs from other resource areas considered in this SEIS since the concerns about GHG emissions are primarily related to climate change, which is global and cumulative in nature. Therefore, the affected environment is discussed broadly using a global, national, and regional framework to provide context for the analysis of potential GHG impacts from the Proposed Action. Recent scientific evidence indicates a correlation between increasing global temperatures over the past century and the worldwide increase in anthropogenic GHG emissions (IPCC 2018). Climate change associated with global warming is predicted to produce adverse environmental, economic, and social consequences across the globe in the coming years.

3.5.1.2 *Regulatory Setting*

Air Quality

The Clean Air Act (CAA) requires USEPA to set National Ambient Air Quality Standards (NAAQS) (40 CFR 50) for six principal pollutants ("criteria" air pollutants) which can be harmful to public health and the environment (USEPA 2023a). The Clean Air Act identifies two types of NAAQS. Primary standards provide public health protection, including protecting the health of sensitive populations such as asthmatics, children, and the elderly. Secondary standards provide public welfare protection, including protection against decreased visibility and damage to animals, crops, vegetation, and buildings. The primary NAAQS are used as the basis for determining whether a region is complying with CAA requirements and are therefore the main focus of this analysis.

USEPA Region 5 and the MPCA regulate air quality in Minnesota. The CAA (42 U.S.C. 7401-7671q), as amended, gives USEPA the responsibility to establish the primary and secondary NAAQS (40 CFR 50) that set acceptable concentration levels for six criteria pollutants, compounds that cause or contribute to air pollution and which could endanger public health and the environment. The six criteria pollutants are particulate matter (fine particulate matter [10 micrometers or smaller, PM_{10}] and very fine particulate matter [2.5 micrometers or smaller, $PM_{2.5}$]), sulfur dioxide (SO_2), carbon monoxide, nitrogen oxides (NO_x), ozone (O_3), and lead. O_3 is a strong photochemical oxidant that is formed when nitric oxide reacts with volatile organic compounds and oxygen in the presence of sunlight. O_3 is considered a secondary pollutant because it is not directly emitted from pollution sources but is formed in the ambient air.

Short-term standards (1-, 8-, and 24-hour periods) have been established by the USEPA for criteria pollutants that contribute to acute health effects, while long-term standards (annual averages) have been established for pollutants that contribute to chronic health effects. Areas that exceed the NAAQS are designated as nonattainment areas, and those in accordance with the standards are designated as attainment areas. Air quality control regions that have been redesignated from nonattainment to attainment are called maintenance areas.

Table 3.5-1. National Ambient Air Quality Standards

Pollutant	Primary/ Secondary	Averaging Time	Standard	Form
CO	Primary	1 hour	35 ppm	Not to be exceeded more than once per year
		8 hours	9 ppm	
NO_2	Primary	1 hour	100 ppb	98th percentile of 1-hour daily maximum concentrations, averaged over 3 years
	Primary and secondary	1 year	53 ppb	Annual mean
O_3	Primary and secondary	8 hours	0.070 ppm	Annual fourth-highest daily maximum 8-hour concentration, averaged over 3 years
SO_2	Primary	1 hour	75 ppb	99th percentile of 1-hour daily maximum concentrations, averaged over 3 years
	Secondary	3 hours	0.5 ppm	Not to be exceeded more than once per year
$PM_{2.5}$	Primary	1 year	12 µg/m^3	Annual mean, averaged over 3 years
	Secondary	1 year	15 µg/m^3	Annual mean, averaged over 3 years

Pollutant	Primary/ Secondary	Averaging Time	Standard	Form
	Primary and secondary	24 hours	35 µg/m^3	98th percentile, averaged over 3 years
PM_{10}	Primary and secondary	24 hours	150 µg/m^3	Not to be exceeded more than once per year on average over 3 years
Pb	Primary and secondary	Rolling 3-month average	0.15 µg/m^3	Not to be exceeded

Source: USEPA 2023a.
µg = micrograms; CO = carbon monoxide; m^3 = cubic meter; NO_2 = nitrogen dioxide; O_3 = ozone; Pb = lead; $PM_{2.5}$ = particulate matter of diameter 2.5 microns or less; PM_{10} = particulate matter of diameter 10 microns or less; ppb = parts per billion; SO_2 = sulfur dioxide

The CAA mandates that states develop and implement a State Implementation Plan (SIP) to comply with the CAA and achieve and maintain attainment with the NAAQS. The Minnesota SIP has been approved by the USEPA and is revised as needed to comply with new federal or state requirements when new data improves modeling techniques, when a specific area's attainment status changes, or when an area fails to reach attainment (USEPA 2023c). The Minnesota SIP applies to stationary and mobile sources; stationary sources include fossil fuel burning facilities and equipment and various types of industrial sources. Regulation occurs primarily through a process of reviewing engineering documents and other technical information, applying emission standards and regulations in the issuance of permits, performing field inspections, and assisting industries in determining their compliance status.

In 1977, the CAA was amended to include a national visibility goal of restoring pristine conditions in national parks and wilderness areas, which were designated as Class I areas (MPCA 2023e). To achieve these goals, in 1999 the USEPA established the Regional Haze Rule to improve visibility in Class I areas, which requires states to develop a Regional Haze SIP. Minnesota has two Class I areas within its borders, the Boundary Waters Canoe Area Wilderness and Voyageurs National Park. Another nearby Class I area is Isle Royale National Park in Michigan. Voyageurs National Park is located approximately 10 miles from the project area. The Boundary Waters Canoe Area Wilderness is located approximately 48 miles from the project area, and Isle Royale National Park is approximately 190 miles away.

MPCA has the authority to issue permits for the construction and operation of new or modified stationary source air emissions in Minnesota. MPCA air permits are required for any facility that will emit or currently emits regulated pollutants and must comply with the following regulations of the CAA: New Source Review, Prevention of Significant Deterioration, Title V Permitting, National Emission Standards for Hazardous Air Pollutants, and New Source Performance Standards. These regulations typically apply to emissions sources that have the potential to emit more than 100 tons per year of criteria pollutants, 10 tons per year or more of any hazardous air pollutant (HAP), or 25 tons or more of all HAPs combined. In addition, state permits may be required for sources that emit more than 25 tons per year of PM_{10} or 50 tons per year of SO_2.

Minnesota state regulations that could potentially apply to construction activities include the following, as codified under the Minnesota Administrative Rules:

- Part 7011.0150, Preventing Particulate Matter from Becoming Airborne, and
- Part 7009.0020, Prohibited Emissions.

Greenhouse Gases

GHGs are regulated under the CAA via regulations discussed above for air quality. New sources or modifications to existing sources that have the potential to increase GHG emissions by more than 100,000 tons CO_2 equivalent per year may be subject to New Source Review or Prevention of Significant Deterioration requirements, as well as Title V requirements for operational permits, provided they are also

otherwise subject to these requirements. Additionally, the USEPA's Mandatory Greenhouse Gas Reporting Rule (40 CFR 98) requires sources in specific industrial sectors to report their GHG emissions if they emit more than 25,000 metric tons CO_2 equivalent per year. The Proposed Action would not likely be subject to these permitting and reporting requirements.

Several EOs also require federal agencies to estimate and report their GHG emissions and set goals to reducing these emissions. These EOs include:

- EO 13990, *Protecting Public Health and the Environment and Restoring Science to Tackle the Climate Crisis*
- EO 14008, *Tackling the Climate Crisis at Home and Abroad*
- EO 14030, *Climate-Related Financial Risk*

The White House has established national GHG reduction goals, including a goal to lower emissions by 50 percent to 52 percent below 2005 levels by 2030, and achieve net zero GHG emissions by 2050 (DOS et. Al. 2021). Potential strategies to achieve these goals include transitioning the energy sector to renewable and other carbon-free energy sources, promoting electric and other zero-emission vehicles, and improving building efficiency.

In 2023, the CEQ issued interim *National Environmental Policy Act Guidance on Consideration of Greenhouse Gas Emissions and Climate Change*. The guidance includes recommendations for agencies on how to analyze and present information related to GHGs and climate change within NEPA documents. At the time the interim guidance was issued, CEQ also announced a public comment period and may revise the guidance in response to comments received.

The State of Minnesota has developed a Climate Action Framework, which sets a vision for how the state will address and prepare for climate change. It identifies immediate, near-term actions needed to achieve the state's long-term goal of a carbon-neutral, resilient, and equitable future (State of Minnesota 2023). The plan includes a goal to transition to 100 percent carbon-free energy and reduce energy in the building sector by promoting conservation, efficiency, and lower-carbon design, materials, and fuels.

3.5.1.3 *Existing Conditions*

Existing conditions for air quality and GHG emissions since publication of the 2011 Final EIS generally remain unchanged.

Air Quality

There are no designated non-attainment or maintenance areas within Koochiching County. Therefore, General Conformity Rule requirements do not apply to the Proposed Action. The General Conformity Rule states that, if a project would result in a total net increase in direct and indirect emissions of nonattainment or maintenance pollutants that are less than the applicable *de minimis* (i.e., negligible) thresholds established in 40 CFR 93.153(b), detailed conformity analyses are not required pursuant to 40 CFR 93.153(c).

The USEPA and the MPCA monitor levels of criteria pollutants at representative sites throughout Minnesota. However, there are no MPCA air quality monitoring locations within Koochiching County (MPCA 2022b). The closest ambient air quality monitoring stations are located in St. Louis County (40 miles), Beltrami County (110 miles), and Cass County (120 miles). The pollutants monitored at those locations include:

- St. Louis County: O_3 (Voyageurs National Park – Sullivan Bay); NO_x, SO_2, PM_{10}, $PM_{2.5}$ (Virginia City Hall)
- Beltrami County: $PM_{2.5}$ (Red Lake Nation)
- Cass County: $PM_{2.5}$ (Leech Lake Nation – Cass Lake)

Table 3.5-2 shows the primary NAAQS, monitored concentrations, and air monitor location for each criteria pollutant.

Table 3.5-2. Primary Ambient Air Quality Standards and Measured Concentrations

Pollutant	Averaging Time	NAAQS[2]	Monitoring Data (2022)	Monitor Location
CO_2	1-hour	35 ppm	–	–
	8-hour	9 ppm	–	–
NO_2	1-hour	100 ppb	35.9 ppb	Virginia City Hall
	Annual arithmetic mean	53 ppb	12.5 ppb	Virginia City Hall
O_3	8-hour	0.070 ppm	0.052 ppm	Voyageurs National Park
SO_2	1-hour	75 ppb	15.8 ppb	Virginia City Hall
$PM_{2.5}$	24-hour	35 µg/m^3	13.2 µg/m^3 11.3 µg/m^3 9.8 µg/m^3	Leech Lake Nation Red Lake Nation Virginia City Hall
	Annual arithmetic mean	12 µg/m^3	5.8 µg/m^3 4.6 µg/m^3 4.6 µg/m^3	Leech Lake Nation Red Lake Nation Virginia City Hall
PM_{10}	24-hour	150 µg/m^3	13.7 µg/m^3	Virginia City Hall
Pb_2	3-month average	0.15 µg/m^3	–	–

Source: USEPA 2023b.

Notes:

[1] No CO or Pb monitors are located within Koochiching County or in nearby counties. The only CO and Pb monitors that are part of MPCA's ambient air quality monitoring network are located in the Minneapolis-St. Paul metropolitan area.

[2] Only the primary NAAQS are listed.

µg = micrograms; CO = carbon monoxide; m^3 = cubic meter; NO_2 = nitrogen dioxide; O_3 = ozone; Pb = lead; $PM_{2.5}$ = particulate matter of diameter 2.5 microns or less; PM_{10} = particulate matter of diameter 10 microns or less; ppb = parts per billion; SO_2 = sulfur dioxide

Populations that are more susceptible to the adverse effects of air pollution include children, elderly, and asthmatics. The locations where these sensitive receptors congregate are considered sensitive receptor locations for air pollutants. As such, sensitive receptor locations for air impacts analyses typically include schools, daycares, hospitals, nursing home facilities, and public recreational areas. Sensitive receptor locations for air pollutants and their distance from the LPOE are listed in Table 3.5-3.

Table 3.5-3. Sensitive Receptor Locations for Air Pollutants Within 1 Mile of the International Falls LPOE

Receptor Type	Receptor	Direction from LPOE	Distance (feet)
Park	Rainy Lake Bike Trail	South	0
Park	Burlington Park	West	0
Park	Smokey Bear Park	West	1,500
Park	Carson Lupie Park	South	1,900
Park	Eighth Avenue Park	Southwest	2,200
Park	Kerry Park Arena	Southwest	2,700
School	Baker School	West	2,800

Table 3.5-3. Sensitive Receptor Locations for Air Pollutants Within 1 Mile of the

Receptor Type	Receptor	Direction from LPOE	Distance (feet)
School	Forestland School	West	3,000
Park	Riverside Park	West	3,100
Daycare Center	Pearson's Daycare	Southwest	3,400
Park	Tony Rizzo Field	West	3,800
School - Athletic Fields	International Falls High School Football Field	West	3,800
Park	Green Acres Park	South	4,000
Park	Beyer Park	Southwest	5,000

Greenhouse Gases and Climate Change

GHGs are gases that trap heat in the atmosphere by absorbing outgoing infrared radiation (USEPA 2022a). GHG emissions occur from both natural processes as well as human activities. Water vapor is the most important and abundant GHG in the atmosphere; however, human activities produce only a small amount of the total atmospheric water vapor. The most common GHGs emitted from natural processes and human activities include CO_2, CH_4, and N_2O. The main source of GHGs from human activities is the combustion of fossil fuels such as oil, coal, and natural gas. Other examples of GHGs created and emitted primarily through human activities include fluorinated gases (e.g., perfluorocarbons) and sulfur hexafluoride. The main sources of these man-made GHGs are refrigerants and electrical transformers.

Numerous studies document the recent trend of rising atmospheric concentrations of CO_2. The longest continuous record of atmospheric carbon dioxide monitoring extends back to 1958 (Keeling 1960; Scripps 2020). These data show that atmospheric CO_2 levels have risen an average of 1.5 parts per million (ppm) per year over the last 60 years, with the growth rate accelerating from around 1 ppm per year in the 1960s to 2 ppm per year in the 2000s (NOAA 2023b). The global atmospheric CO_2 concentration has now passed 400 ppm, a level that last occurred about 3 million years ago when both global average temperature and sea level were significantly higher than today (USGCRP 2017). Rising atmospheric concentrations of CO_2 and other GHGs have been identified as the primary driver behind significant changes to global climate patterns. Observed changes to global climate include rising average temperatures, shrinking glaciers and sea ice, rising sea levels, increased drought and wildfires, increased flooding and other severe weather events, thawing permafrost, a lengthened growing season, and shifts in plant and animal ranges. International and national organizations independently confirm these findings and predict that these trends are likely to continue into the foreseeable future unless action is taken to reduce global GHG emissions (IPCC 2018; USGCRP 2017).

Each GHG has been assigned a global warming potential (GWP) by the USEPA (USEPA 2022a). The GWP is the ability of a gas or aerosol to trap heat in the atmosphere. The GWP rating system is standardized to CO_2, which is given a value of one. For example, CH_4 has a GWP of 25, which means that it has a global warming effect 25 times greater than CO_2 on an equal-mass basis. To simplify GHG analyses, total GHG emissions from a source are often expressed as a CO_2 equivalent, which is calculated by multiplying the emissions of each GHG by its GWP and adding the results together to produce a single, combined emission rate representing all GHGs. While CH_4 and N_2O have much higher GWPs than CO_2, CO_2 is emitted in such large quantities that it is the predominant contributor to global CO_2 equivalent emissions from both natural processes and human activities.

Increasing GHG concentrations in the atmosphere have been linked to a range of ongoing and potential changes to global climate including rising surface temperatures, changes in precipitation, rising sea levels

and an increase in extreme weather events. However, these changes are not geographically uniform across the planet, and some regions are likely to experience greater change than others (IPCC 2018). Further, projections of future climate change are strongly related to predicted trends in GHG emissions, which in turn depend on policy and other actions to reduce GHG emissions.

The Midwest region of the U.S. has already experienced a number of climate change-related impacts and these trends are likely to continue in the foreseeable future, as described below (USGCRP 2018):

- The Midwest is a major producer of food and animal feed. Increases in warm-season absolute humidity and precipitation have eroded soils, created favorable conditions for pests and pathogens, and degraded the quality of stored grain. Projected changes in precipitation, coupled with rising extreme temperatures before mid-century, are likely to reduce Midwest agricultural productivity.
- Climate change is interacting with existing stressors such as invasive species and pests to increase tree mortality and reduce forest productivity. Without adaptive actions, these interactions are likely to result in the loss of economically and culturally important tree species and are expected to lead to the conversion of some forests to other forest types or even to non-forested ecosystems by the end of the century.
- Climate stressors like temperature increase are interacting with land-use change, habitat loss, pollution, nutrient inputs, and nonnative invasive species to increase risks to species and ecosystems, including the important freshwater resources of the Great Lakes.
- Climate change is expected to worsen existing health conditions and introduce new health threats by increasing the frequency and intensity of poor air quality days, extreme high temperature events, and heavy rainfalls; extending pollen seasons; and modifying the distribution of disease-carrying pests and insects. By mid-century, the region is projected to experience substantial, yet avoidable, loss of life, worsened health conditions, and economic impacts estimated in the billions of dollars as a result of these changes.
- Stormwater management systems, transportation networks, and other critical infrastructure are already experiencing impacts from changing precipitation patterns and elevated flood risks. Green infrastructure is reducing some of the negative impacts by using plants and open space to absorb stormwater. The annual cost of adapting urban stormwater systems to more frequent and severe storms is projected to exceed $500 million for the Midwest by the end of the century.
- At-risk communities in the Midwest are becoming more vulnerable to climate change impacts such as flooding, drought, and increases in urban heat islands. Tribal nations are especially vulnerable because of their reliance on threatened natural resources for their cultural, subsistence, and economic needs. Integrating climate adaptation into planning processes offers an opportunity to better manage climate risks now.

3.5.2 Environmental Consequences

3.5.2.1 *Summary of Air Quality Impacts from the 2011 Final EIS*

GSA determined that the 2011 Preferred Alternative would have a slight beneficial effect on air quality and GHG emissions. Impacts to air quality and GHG emissions from the 2011 Preferred Alternative are discussed in Section 4.5 of the 2011 Final EIS and are summarized as follows:

- The 2011 Preferred Alternative would result in a slight positive impact on air quality as the proposed action would increase inspections and throughput capacity, decrease queuing time for vehicles entering and exiting the U.S. thereby decreasing vehicle emissions.

3.5.2.2 *Methodology*

To evaluate air quality impacts and GHG emissions, GSA reviewed the project alternatives to determine whether any activities have the potential to cause the following within the ROI:

- Increase in direct or indirect emissions from fixed and mobile sources such as stationary fuel combustion, construction equipment, and employee vehicles; or
- Increase in indirect offsite GHG emissions associated with electricity generation.

A major adverse impact to air quality or GHG emissions would occur if the project alternatives would:

- Result in emissions of criteria pollutants or HAPs that would exceed relevant air quality or health standards including the NAAQS;
- Violate any federal or state permits; or
- Conflict with local or regional air quality management plans to attain or maintain compliance with the federal and state air quality regulations.

When assessing significance, GSA also considered the potential for BMPs to reduce the severity or extent of these impacts.

3.5.2.3 *Alternative 1 – Full Build*

Construction

Air Quality

Alternative 1 would generate air pollutant emissions during construction activities, and would represent a direct, short term, minor adverse impact to local air quality. Construction emissions were estimated for on-road vehicles and non-road construction equipment. Since a detailed construction plan has not yet been developed for the project, the number and types of construction equipment needed were estimated based on available data for other, similar projects, and in coordination with appropriate GSA staff. Emissions rates from on-road vehicles such as POVs were estimated using industry standard emission rates (Argonne National Laboratory 2013). Emission rates for non-road vehicles such as excavators, cranes, graders, backhoes, and bulldozers were estimated using the USEPA's Motor Vehicle Emissions Simulator model. Fugitive dust emissions factors for PM_{10} and $PM_{2.5}$ were derived from USEPA's AP-42, *Compilation of Emission Factors*.

For purposes of analysis and to provide a conservative estimate of potential air emissions, the following assumptions were made:

- Fugitive dust emissions were primarily assumed to occur during demolition, grading, and site preparation activities.
- PM_{10} and $PM_{2.5}$ emissions estimates presented in Table 3.5-4 assume uncontrolled emissions of fugitive dust; in practice, these emissions would likely be lower because GSA would take steps to minimize fugitive dust, as discussed in Section 3.5.2.6.
- On-road vehicles would travel various distances. Worker vehicles were assumed to travel 20 miles per day, while vendor and waste trucks were assumed to travel 50 miles per day.
- Construction activities would mainly be limited to the 7-month period from April through October for each year of construction.

Estimated criteria air pollutant emissions are presented in Table 3.5-4. As discussed in Chapter 2, construction activities would occur over a 5-year period from 2025 to 2029. Therefore, the emissions presented in Table 3.5-4 would also occur over this 5-year period.

Table 3.5-4. Construction Air Emissions for Alternative 1

Source	Criteria Pollutant Emissions (tons)					
	CO	NO_2	PM_{10}	$PM_{2.5}$	SO_2	VOCs
Construction Equipment	0.66	1.22	0.09	0.09	0.00	0.12
Worker Vehicles	7.46	0.41	0.08	0.05	0.01	0.43
Delivery and Waste Trucks	7.35	7.23	0.76	0.39	0.05	0.56
Fugitive Dust	--	--	24.82	13.32	--	--
Total	**15.48**	**8.86**	**25.76**	**13.85**	**0.07**	**1.11**

Source: Argonne 2013; CalEEMod 2022; USEPA 2015; USEPA 2018
Note: Individual numbers may not sum to totals due to rounding.
CO = carbon monoxide; NO_2 = nitrogen dioxide; $PM_{2.5}$ = particulate matter of diameter 2.5 microns or less; PM_{10} = particulate matter of diameter 10 microns or less; SO_2 = sulfur dioxide; VOC = volatile organic compounds

Overall, the construction/demolition activities would cause short-term, minor adverse impacts to air quality locally. Individuals living or working in close proximity to the LPOE would be most affected. These impacts would occur during the estimated 5-year construction period and would end once construction is completed.

Activities under Alternative 1 would comply with all applicable federal, state, and local regulations relating to air quality, including any permitting and registration requirements. Table 3.5-5 provides an overview of the applicability of the federal CAA air regulations to Alternative 1.

Table 3.5-5. CAA Regulatory Review for Alternative 1

CAA Regulation	Description of the Regulation	Applicability to Alternative 1
New Source Review	New Source Review permitting protects air quality when air emissions sources are built or modified.	If new emergency generators are installed under Alternative 1, they would need to undergo the New Source Review permitting process.
PSD	PSD applies to new major sources or modifications at existing sources of air pollutants where the area the source is located is in *attainment* or unclassifiable.	PSD review would be required if new emergency generators are installed under Alternative 1.
Title V permitting requirements	A Title V Permit requires sources of air pollutants to obtain and operate in compliance with an operating permit. A permit is required if a source has actual or potential emissions greater than or equal to 100 tons per year.	A Title V Permit would likely not be required because any new emergency generators installed under Alternative 1 would be below the 100 tons per year threshold.
NESHAP	NESHAP are stationary source standards for HAPs. HAPs are those pollutants that are known or suspected to cause cancer or other serious health effects.	The use of Maximum Available Control Technology would not be required because the potential HAP emissions would likely not exceed NESHAP thresholds under Alternative 1.
NSPS	NSPS are technology-based emission standards which apply to new, modified, and reconstructed facilities in specific source categories such as manufacturers of glass, cement, rubber tires, and wool fiberglass.	The project would be exempt from NSPS permitting requirements because Alternative 1 would not involve construction or operation of any of these types of facilities.

Source: USEPA 2022b
CAA = Clean Air Act; HAP = Hazardous Air Pollutants; NESHAP = National Emission Standards for Hazardous Air Pollutants; NSPS = New Source Performance Standards; PSD = Prevention of Significant Deterioration

Greenhouse Gas Emissions

Alternative 1 would generate GHG emissions during construction activities, and would represent a negligible, incremental contribution to global GHG emissions and climate change. Short-term GHG emissions associated with Alternative 1 would primarily result from the use of fuel in construction equipment, worker vehicles, and delivery and refuse trucks. GHG emissions were estimated using USEPA emission factors (USEPA 2021a) and are presented in Table 3.5-6. Additionally, Table 3.5-7 provides estimates of annual construction GHG emissions for Alternative 1. Overall adverse impacts from increased GHGs would be negligible.

Table 3.5-6. Construction GHG Emissions under Alternative 1

Source	GHG Emissions (metric tons)			
	CO_2	CH_4	N_2O	CO_2-eq
Construction Equipment	563	0.03	0.01	568
Worker Vehicles	741	0.03	0.01	745
Delivery and Waste Trucks	8,813	0.21	0.09	8,844
Total	**10,118**	**0.27**	**0.11**	**10,157**

Source: Argonne 2013; CalEEMod 2022; USEPA 2015; USEPA 2018
Note: Individual numbers may not sum to totals due to rounding.
CH_4 = methane, CO_2 = carbon dioxide; CO_2-eq = carbon dioxide equivalent; N_2O = nitrous oxide

Table 3.5-7. Annual Construction GHG Emissions under Alternative 1

Year	GHG Emissions (metric tons)			
	CO_2	CH_4	N_2O	CO_2-eq
2025	1,307	0.04	0.01	1,312
2026	2,501	0.07	0.03	2,511
2027	2,501	0.07	0.03	2,511
2028	2,501	0.07	0.03	2,511
2029	1,307	0.04	0.01	1,312
Total	**10,118**	**0.27**	**0.11**	**10,157**

Source: Argonne 2013; CalEEMod 2022; USEPA 2015; USEPA 2018
Note: Individual numbers may not sum to totals due to rounding.
CH_4 = methane, CO_2 = carbon dioxide; CO_2-eq = carbon dioxide equivalent; N_2O = nitrous oxide

The CEQ's interim guidance on NEPA and climate change also directs agencies to provide estimates of the social cost of greenhouse gases (SC-GHG) associated with agency actions. Estimates of SC-GHG provide an aggregated monetary measure (in U.S. dollars) of the net harm to society associated with an incremental metric ton of emissions in a given year. These estimates include, but are not limited to, climate change impacts associated with net agricultural productivity, human health effects, property damage from increased risk of natural disasters, disruption of energy systems, risk of conflict, environmental migration, and the value of ecosystem services. In this way, SC-GHG estimates can help the public and federal agencies understand or contextualize the potential impacts of GHG emissions and, along with information on other potential environmental impacts, can inform the comparison of alternatives. GSA used data from the "Technical Support Document: Social Cost of Carbon, Methane, and Nitrous Oxide Interim Estimates under Executive Order 13990" released by the Interagency Working Group on Social Cost of Greenhouse Gases in February 2021 to estimate SC-GHG for this SEIS.

Table 3.5-8 provides estimates of annual SC-GHG values for a range of discount rates, as recommended by the Interagency Working Group on Social Cost of Greenhouse Gases (IWG 2021). Discount rates

provide a range of options for valuing future climate damages; higher discount rates lead to a lower SC-GHG value for damages occurring further in the future.

Table 3.5-8. Social Cost of Construction GHG Emissions under Alternative 1

Year	Discount Rate			
	3%	2.5%	5%	3% (95th percentile)
2025	$73,558	$108,995	$22,347	$221,827
2026	$143,245	$211,049	$42,761	$434,506
2027	$148,248	$216,078	$45,270	$442,043
2028	$150,782	$218,613	$45,276	$452,081
2029	$80,115	$115,570	$24,976	$240,220

Source: IWG 2021

Note: Individual numbers may not sum to totals due to rounding. SC-GHG values (in $) were calculated by multiplying annual emissions by the SC-GHG cost ($/metric ton) provided in IWG 2021.

CH_4 = methane, CO_2 = carbon dioxide; CO_2-eq = carbon dioxide equivalent; N_2O = nitrous oxide

Operations

Air Quality

Under Alternative 1, operations of the LPOE would have a beneficial long-term impact on air quality. Energy demand at the expanded and modernized LPOE would likely be higher than the existing facilities, due to the expansion of the facility by approximately 70,000 square feet of building space. However, as discussed in Chapter 2, GSA would use a number of sustainable building design features and technologies to offset this increase, to include the following:

- Designing the facility to meet a minimum of LEED Gold certification, and/or complying with the 2007 EISA requirements, whichever are more stringent;
- Using onsite renewable energy generation including solar PV arrays and solar hot water collectors; and
- Using geothermal systems to provide a portion of building heating and cooling needs.

The actual change in air emissions would depend on the extent to which these technologies are implemented in the final expanded and modernized LPOE. Direct (onsite) sources of air emissions would include:

- Onsite emergency generators, which would likely be fired by diesel or natural gas. If the number of emergency generators onsite increases, there could be a small, but long-term increase in air emissions from periodic testing and maintenance and potentially during emergency situations.
- Boilers for building heat and domestic hot water, either oil or gas fired, depending on final design.

Indirect (offsite) sources of air emissions associated with LPOE operations would include:

- Offsite generation of electricity used at the expanded and modernized LPOE, which could be higher than the emissions associated with the existing LPOE facility due to increased facility size. As discussed above, however, some or all of this increase would likely be offset by improved building efficiency and onsite renewable energy generation.
- Employee commuting would result in tailpipe emissions from employee POVs. GSA anticipates that no more than 30 additional employees would be needed to operate the expanded and modernized LPOE, in a worst-case scenario. Table 3.5-9 presents the estimated increase in air emissions that would occur from employee commuting.

Table 3.5-9. Annual Air Emissions from Employee Commuting

Source	Criteria Pollutant Emissions (tons per year)					
	CO	NO_2	PM_{10}	$PM_{2.5}$	SO_2	VOCs
Employee POVs	1.92	0.11	0.02	0.01	0.00	0.11

Source: Argonne 2013; CalEEMod 2022; USEPA 2015; USEPA 2018

CO = carbon monoxide; NO_2 = nitrogen dioxide; $PM_{2.5}$ = particulate matter of diameter 2.5 microns or less; PM_{10} = particulate matter of diameter 10 microns or less; SO_2 = sulfur dioxide; VOC = volatile organic compounds

Operations under Alternative 1 would also likely have some beneficial impacts on air quality from a reduction in the wait time for POVs to be processed by a CBP officer. The reduction in wait time would lower vehicle idling emissions, which offset the potential increase in emissions from employee commuting and increased building energy usage.

Greenhouse Gases

Under Alternative 1, operations of the LPOE would have a negligible, incremental contribution to GHG emissions. As discussed above, the new buildings would likely require more energy due to the larger building footprint; however, this increase would be minimized by using energy-efficient building design and technologies as part of LEED certification and compliance with the 2007 EISA requirements, and the use of fossil-fuel derived energy would be minimized by onsite renewable energy generation.

Similar to air emissions, onsite sources of GHGs include fuel use for building operations and emergency generators. Other sources of onsite GHGs include fugitive leaks of refrigerants from cooling and refrigeration equipment. Because of their larger size, the new buildings would likely require a larger-sized cooling system; therefore, fugitive GHG emissions could increase.

Operations of the new building would also require more purchased electricity since there would be considerably more gross square feet of building space. Therefore, indirect (offsite) GHG emissions may be higher than current conditions, but this increase would be minimized through onsite renewable energy generation.

GHG emissions would likely increase from employee commuting due to an increase in the number of onsite personnel. However, a decrease in POV idling times following the implementation of Alternative 1 would offset some of the increase in GHG emissions from other sources. Table 3.5-11 presents the net change in GHG emissions due to employee commuting and reduction in vehicle idling. This assumes an increase of 30 additional LPOE staff, assuming an average 20-mile commute distance. The change in idling emissions assumes that future average traffic volumes crossing the LPOE would be similar to recent historical averages (described in Section 3.7, Traffic and Transportation), and that LPOE expansion would lead to a 5-minute reduction in average vehicle wait times, based on other comparable LPOE projects.

Table 3.5-11. Annual Change in GHG Emissions from POV Use

Source	GHG Emissions (metric tons per year)			
	CO_2	CH_4	N_2O	CO_2-eq
Employee POVs (increase)	191	0.01	0.00	191
Vehicle Idling (decrease)	92	--	--	92
Net Change	**99**	**0.01**	**0.00**	**100**

Source: Argonne 2013; CalEEMod 2022; USEPA 2015; USEPA 2018

Note: Emissions factors for CH_4 and N_2O were not available. Calculations assume idling fuel consumption of 0.275 gal/hour (calculated as average of gas-fueled compact sedan and large sedan from DOE 2023b)

CH_4 = methane; CO_2 = carbon dioxide; CO_2-eq = carbon dioxide equivalent; N_2O = nitrous oxide

Table 3.5-12 summarizes the associated annual SC-GHG values from 2030 to 2050, for the net increase in operational GHG emissions. For simplicity, the table shows SC-GHG values at 5-year intervals.

Table 3.5-12. Social Cost of Annual GHG Emissions from Operations

Year	Discount Rate			
	3%	2.5%	5%	3% (95th percentile)
2030	$6,193	$8,887	$1,902	$18,652
2035	$6,693	$9,588	$2,202	$20,551
2040	$7,295	$10,289	$2,502	$22,450
2045	$7,895	$10,990	$2,805	$24,151
2050	$8,496	$11,592	$3,204	$25,951

Source: IWG 2021
CH_4 = methane, CO_2 = carbon dioxide; CO_2-eq = carbon dioxide equivalent; N_2O = nitrous oxide

Overall, construction and operation of Alternative 1 would support U.S. and State of Minnesota climate change and GHG reduction goals. Under Alternative 1, the existing facility would be replaced by a more energy-efficient building. Additionally, GSA would further reduce the facility's carbon footprint by implementing onsite renewable energy generation and capture through solar PV, solar capture, or geothermal technologies. Further, improved inspection capacity and traffic flow would likely lower GHG emissions from idling vehicles waiting to be processed through the LPOE.

3.5.2.4 *No Action Alternative*

Under the No Action Alternative, GSA would not expand or modernize the International Falls LPOE; current facilities and infrastructure at the existing LPOE would remain. No construction or changes to onsite operations would occur; therefore, there would be no changes to air quality and GHG emissions.

3.5.2.5 *Impacts of Climate Change on the Proposed Action*

CEQ requires federal agencies to consider the potential impacts of climate change on proposed projects as part of NEPA analysis (CEQ 2023). Accordingly, this section discusses the potential for projected climate change impacts to affect LPOE operations over the next several decades. Section 3.5.1.3 discusses the potential impacts of climate change in the Midwest. Of those impacts, the ones that have a reasonably foreseeable potential to affect operations at the LPOE are discussed below in Table 3.5-13. Proposed mitigation measures to reduce these impacts are discussed under Section 3.5.2.6. Note that these climate change-related impacts would affect LPOE operations in the future regardless of whether the proposed expansion is approved and implemented.

Table 3.5-13. Potential Impacts of Climate Change on the Proposed Action

Climate Change Impact	Description of Impact
Human Health and Safety	Climate change has the potential to adversely affect human health, through increased risk of exposure to extreme heat and by contributing to an increase in ground-level ozone, particulate pollution, airborne allergens. Personnel working at the LPOE, as well as with individuals crossing the border, would be exposed to these conditions. Individuals crossing through the LPOE on foot may be more exposed to higher temperatures and other adverse conditions, when compared to individuals inside vehicles and LPOE personnel working primarily within buildings.
Water Resources	Climate change is likely to lead to decreasing water availability and makes droughts more likely in the future. Drought conditions could affect the availability of water for personnel (domestic) uses and for building operations.
Energy	Rising temperatures are decreasing the efficiency of fossil fuel energy generation.

Source: USGCRP 2018

3.5.2.6 *Impacts Reduction Measures*

Construction activities within the project area would generate fugitive dust (non-toxic particulate matter) emissions. Precautions to prevent particulate matter from becoming airborne could include:

- Using water for dust control when grading roads or clearing land;
- Stabilize open storage piles and disturbed areas by covering and/or applying water or organic dust palliative where appropriate. This applies to both active and inactive sites during workdays, weekends, holidays, and windy conditions;
- Paving roadways and maintaining them in a clean condition;
- Covering open equipment when conveying or transporting material likely to create objectionable air pollution when airborne; and
- Promptly removing spilled or tracked dirt or other materials from paved streets.
- Install wind fencing and phase grading operations where appropriate and operate water trucks for stabilization of surfaces under windy conditions.
- When hauling material and operating non-earthmoving equipment, prevent spillage and limit speeds to 15 miles per hour (mph). Limit speed of earth-moving equipment to 10 mph.

The following source-specific controls could be considered to minimize emissions during construction activities:

- Reduce unnecessary idling from heavy equipment.
- Prohibit engine tampering to increase horsepower, except when meeting manufacturer's recommendations.
- Lease or buy newer, cleaner equipment using the best available emissions control technologies.
- Use lower-emitting engines and fuels, including electric, liquified gas, hydrogen fuel cells, and/or alternative diesel formulations, if feasible.
- On-Highway Vehicles - On-highway vehicles would meet, or exceed, the USEPA exhaust emissions standards for model year 2010 and newer heavy-duty on-highway compression-ignition engines (e.g., drayage trucks, long haul trucks, refuse haulers, shuttle buses, etc.).
- Nonroad Vehicles & Equipment - Nonroad vehicles and equipment would meet, or exceed, the USEPA Tier 4 exhaust emissions standards for heavy-duty nonroad compression-ignition engines (e.g., nonroad trucks, construction equipment, cargo handlers, etc.).

Finally, the following administrative controls could be considered during construction:

- Coordinate with appropriate air quality agencies to identify a construction schedule that minimizes cumulative impacts from other planned projects in the region, if feasible.
- Locate diesel engines, motors, and equipment staging areas as far as possible from residential areas and other sensitive receptors (e.g., schools, daycare centers, hospitals, senior centers, etc.).
- Avoid routing truck traffic near sensitive land uses to the fullest extent feasible.
- Prepare an inventory of all equipment prior to construction and identify the suitability of add-on emission controls for each piece of equipment before groundbreaking.
- Reduce construction-related trips of workers and equipment, including trucks.

- Develop a construction traffic and parking management plan that minimizes traffic interference and maintains traffic flow.
- To minimize operational emissions, GSA would consider the addition of electrical connections to power commercial vehicles such as refrigeration trucks, to prevent spoilage while discouraging engine idling during secondary inspections of commercially owned vehicles.
- GSA would also consider implementing measures to minimize idling emissions from cars waiting to cross the border, such as anti-idling policies.

Greenhouse Gases

Many of the mitigation measures for air quality identified above would also serve to reduce GHG emissions. GSA would take the following additional steps to minimize GHGs:

- Design the LPOE to be energy efficient, including achieving a minimum of LEED Gold certification, which would reduce energy use and the associated GHG emissions.
- Implement on-site renewable energy generation including solar PV, solar collectors, and geothermal.
- Use cement blended with the maximum feasible amount of fly ash or other materials that reduce GHG emissions from cement production.
- Recycle construction debris to the maximum extent feasible.

Climate Change Adaptation Measures

To minimize impacts of climate change on human health and safety, GSA would consider the following measures:

- Incorporate shaded areas wherever possible, particularly along pedestrian routes through the LPOE.
- Provide indoor cooling stations or waiting areas where pedestrians passing through the LPOE can seek relief from heat and other adverse conditions such as poor air quality.
- Provide indoor areas where individuals can wait, if required, while they are being processed by CBP officials.
- Implement design strategies to reduce urban heat islands, including using lighter-colored pavement where feasible, planting trees, and maintaining green spaces with native vegetation.

To minimize impacts of climate change on energy resources, GSA would:

- Seek a minimum of LEED Gold certification for the proposed facilities, which would include energy conservation and efficiency measures.
- Implement a geothermal heating and cooling system to minimize the use of fossil energy.
- Implement measures to maximize energy efficiency where possible, such as through automated building controls and the use of energy-efficient equipment.
- Implement onsite renewable energy generation, including solar PV systems and solar collectors.

To minimize impacts of climate change on water resources, GSA would seek a minimum of LEED Gold certification for the proposed facilities, which would incorporate water conservation and efficiency measures. GSA would implement measures to maximize water efficiency where possible, such as through native and drought-resistant plantings and the use of water-efficient fixtures and appliances. See Section 3.3, Water Resources, for more discussion on measures to reduce impacts to water resources, including stormwater impacts.

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3.6 NOISE

This section describes the baseline conditions for noise levels and potential impacts from increased noise levels that could result from implementing the Proposed Action and No Action Alternative as discussed in Chapter 2. Sensitive noise receptors evaluated include nearby residences, schools, libraries, hospitals, nursing home facilities, and public recreational areas.

This SEIS uses the following documents and data sources to characterize the affected environment and assess potential impacts regarding noise:

- The 2011 Final EIS Section 3.6 provides a description of noise conditions of the study area for the 2011 Preferred Alternative. The 2011 Final EIS Section 4.6 presents the anticipated noise impacts resulting from construction and operations of the 2011 Preferred Alternative.
- Primary data sources used to update and supplement the affected environment discussion regarding noise include: the MPCA's *A Guide to Noise Control in Minnesota*; the 2018 Feasibility Study; and Phase I ESAs conducted in 2021 and 2022 for the existing LPOE site and proposed expansion area, respectively; and the *City of International Falls Comprehensive Plan* adopted in 2020.

3.6.1 Affected Environment

3.6.1.1 *Region of Influence*

The ROI for the noise analysis includes areas of International Falls within 0.5 mile (2,640 feet) of the project area boundary, which includes the existing LPOE, proposed expansion area, and areas for potential connected actions necessitated by the LPOE expansion (see Section 2.2.1.1).

3.6.1.2 *Regulatory Setting*

Noise Principles. Noise measurements are quantified in terms of decibels (dB) and typically adjusted to dBA (decibels on an A-weighted scale). Table 3.6-1 presents sounds encountered in daily life, their dBA levels, and how they affect hearing.

Noise sources can typically be characterized as point sources and line sources. Point source noise is usually associated with a source that remains generally in one place for extended periods of time, for example most construction site activities. Line source noise is generated by moving objects along a linear corridor, for example highway traffic noise.

Potential noise levels at sensitive receptor locations resulting from stationary sources are usually evaluated for construction and normal operations by identifying sound levels from dominant noise-producing equipment, summing (using a logarithmic scale) anticipated equipment noise contributions, and applying fundamental noise attenuation principles. The standard reduction for point source noise is 6 dB per doubling of distance from the source.

Barriers, both manmade (e.g., sound walls) and natural (e.g., forested areas, hills, etc.), as well as other natural factors, such as temperature and climate, may reduce noise levels. Standard buildings typically provide approximately 15 dB of noise reduction between exterior and interior noise levels (USEPA 1978).

Table 3.6-1. Sound Levels and Human Response

Sound Level (dBA)	Effect	Outdoor	Indoor
30	Very quiet	Rustling leaves	Soft whisper (15 feet)
40	Quiet	Quiet residential area	Library
55	Ambient	Rainfall or light auto traffic (100 feet)	Refrigerator
60	Intrusive	Normal Conversation	Air conditioning unit (20 feet)
70	Telephone use difficult	Freeway traffic	Noisy restaurant or TV audio
80	Annoying	Downtown (large city)	Alarm clock (2 feet) or ringing telephone
90	Very annoying; hearing damage (8 hours)	Tractor, bulldozer, excavator	Garbage disposal
100	Very annoying	Garbage truck, motorcycle	Subway train
110	Strained vocal effort	Pile drivers	Power saw at 3 feet
120	Maximum vocal effort	Jet takeoff (200 feet) or auto horn (3 feet)	Rock concert
140	Painfully loud	Carrier deck jet operation	--

Source: USEPA 1981
dBA = A-weighted decibel

Noise Regulatory Framework. The Noise Control Act of 1972 (PL 92-574) directs federal agencies to comply with applicable federal, state, interstate, and local noise control regulations. In 1982, the USEPA transferred the primary responsibility of regulating noise to state and local governments.

MPCA enforces the state's noise rules (Minnesota Rules, Chapter 7030), which sets its primary noise limits by "noise area classifications" (NACs). The NACs are based on the land use at the location of a noise receptor. They are also based on the sound level in dBA over 10 percent (L_{10}), or 6 minutes, and 50 percent (L_{50}), or 30 minutes, of an hour. NAC-1 areas include areas typically regarded as noise-sensitive receptors including, but not limited to, residential housing, religious activities, camping and picnicking areas, health services, hotels, and educational services (MPCA 2015b). For these areas, the limits are L_{10} = 65 dBA and L_{50} = 60 dBA during the daytime (7:00 a.m. to 10:00 p.m.) and L_{10} = 55 dBA and L_{50} = 50 dBA during the nighttime (10:00 p.m. to 7:00 a.m.). This means that during a 1-hour period of monitoring, daytime noise levels cannot exceed 65 dBA for more than 10 percent of the time (i.e., 6 minutes) and cannot exceed 60 dBA more than 50 percent of the time (i.e., 30 minutes).

The project area is located within an area zoned as M-2A, which is provided for manufacturing and industrial land uses. The City of International Falls does not have any specific noise limits cited in their code of ordinances; therefore, it is assumed that the city adopts the state's noise standards.

Based on the Federal Railroad Administration (FRA) Rail Safety Act 2008 for statutory warning compliance, as well as State of Minnesota statutes regulating railroad operations, a train is required to sound its horn as it approaches a grade crossing until the train is into the crossing. FRA regulations further specify minimum testing requirements for train horns to be in compliance with safety regulations. To be in compliance, the horn sound level must be measured at 96 dB to 104 dB, at a point 15 feet in the air, 100 feet behind and 150 feet ahead of the horn.

The Occupational Health and Safety Act (OSHA's) noise standard (29 CFR 1910.95) establishes workplace standards for noise. The minimum requirement states that constant noise exposure must not exceed 90 dBA over an 8-hour period. The highest allowable sound level to which workers can be constantly exposed is

115 dBA; exposure to this level must not exceed 15 minutes within an 8-hour period. The standards limit instantaneous exposure, such as impact noise, to 140 dBA. If noise levels exceed these standards, employers are required to provide hearing protection equipment that reduces sound levels to acceptable limits (OSHA 2019).

3.6.1.3 *Existing Conditions*

In general, overall noise levels in the ROI since publication of the 2011 Final EIS have decreased due to changes in vehicle traffic volumes at the LPOE. Traffic data from the years 2000 through 2018 for the major thoroughfares in the City of International Falls show that average daily traffic volumes have been decreasing over time (see Section 3.7, Traffic and Transportation). The resulting decrease in overall traffic volumes has reduced traffic-related noise in the project area and throughout International Falls.

Dominant sources of noise at and near the LPOE typically stem from operations at the adjacent paper mill and from vehicles related to the paper mill, including the transport of materials via trains, and the LPOE. Train movements and horn blasts that occur when trains are crossing between the bridge and the LPOE cause high elevated noise levels and result in a distracting environment for CBP staff (GSA 2019). In 2010, a CBP occupational health inspector recorded sound levels at various points within the LPOE as trains were passing through and recorded outdoor sound levels ranging from 97 dB to 101 dB, levels above which sustained exposure can result in hearing loss (GSA 2019). Other major sources of noise from PCA facilities include an elevated pneumatic chip line machine that uses forced air to push the wood chips along a pipeline. This chip line runs from an area south of the project area across SR-11, along the eastern boundary of the proposed expansion area, and passes south of the existing LPOE before entering the PCA paper mill. In addition, trucks transporting material from a woodyard south of the project area, across SR-11, traverse the proposed expansion area and contribute to intermittent elevated noise levels. Occasional aircraft flying to and from the local airport located 2 miles south of the LPOE also contribute to elevated, intermittent noise levels in the ROI.

Table 3.6-2 lists the sensitive noise receptors within the ROI and distances to the closest project area boundary. The closest noise-sensitive receptors to the project area include the users of a 0.5-mile segment of the Rainy Lake Bike Trail that are adjacent the southern boundary of the proposed expansion area and users of a small city park adjacent MD&W Railway facilities on 2nd Street. The main source of noise along the segment of the bike trail is from vehicular traffic on SR-11, rail traffic, and trucks associated with the paper mill and the LPOE. Main noise contributors for the city park include vehicles, PCA machinery, and rail traffic.

The closest residential properties to the project area are mainly apartments located along 3rd Street, about 500 feet west of the closest project area boundary. This area is zoned for Commercial, with 3rd Street being the downtown business district of International Falls (see Figure 3.8-1). The predominant noise sources in this area are from vehicles and patrons accessing the businesses along the street. The closest area zoned for Residential is located at the intersection of 4th Street and 4th Avenue, 860 feet west of the closest project boundary (see Section 3.8 Land Use).

Other noise-sensitive receptors include areas that are zoned as Open Space or Public. The closest Open Space or Public area is 1,500 feet southwest of the LPOE at Smokey Bear Park.

Vehicles entering and exiting the existing LPOE often travel on US-53/2nd Avenue, Voyageur Highway (US-71), and SR-11, which are major thoroughfares providing access to many commercial and industrial facilities in the City of International Falls. SR-11 east of the city experiences relatively low volumes of COVs. Traffic on these roadways often contribute to elevated sound levels.

Table 3.6-2. Noise-Sensitive Receptors Within 0.5 Mile of the Project Area

Receptor Type	Receptor	Direction from Project Area Boundary	Distance[1] (feet)
Park	Rainy Lake Bike Trail[2]	South	0
Park	Burlington Park	West	0
Residence	Residential Areas[3]	West	500
Residence	Residential Areas[4]	West	860
Park	Smokey Bear Park	Southwest	1,500
Residence	Residential Areas[5]	South	1,600
Church	Zion Lutheran Church	Southwest	1,600
Park	Carson Lupie Park	South	1,900
Library	International Falls Public Library	Southwest	2,100
Park	Eighth Avenue Park	Southwest	2,200
Church	Holy Trinity Episcopal Church	Southwest	2,500
Church	St. Thomas Aquinas Catholic Church	Southwest	2,640

[1] Distance is between location of receptor and closest boundary of the project area.
[2] Along a 0.5-mile segment of the trail adjacent to the southern boundary of the proposed expansion area.
[3] Represents closest residential properties (in area zoned for Commercial use), west of project area boundary, in the downtown area.
[4] Represents closest residential area (in area zoned for Residential use), west of project area boundary, at intersection of 4th Avenue and 4th Street.
[5] Represents closest residential area (in area zoned for Residential use), south of project area boundary, located along 12th Street E between 3rd Avenue E and Main Avenue.

3.6.2 Environmental Consequences

3.6.2.1 *Summary of Noise Impacts from the 2011 Final EIS*

GSA determined that the 2011 Preferred Alternative would not have any significant adverse effects on noise levels. Impacts to baseline noise conditions resulting from the 2011 Preferred Alternative are discussed in Section 4.6 of the 2011 Final EIS and are summarized as follows:

- The 2011 Preferred Alternative would not add to the existing noise levels in the study area, but would shift some noise from the LPOE operations further east along the Rainy River and provide some noise reduction for inspection personnel.

3.6.2.2 *Methodology*

To evaluate the potential impacts from noise, GSA reviewed the project alternatives to determine whether any activities have the potential to cause the following within the ROI:

- Addition of new point and line noise sources;
- Conflict with any federal, state, or local noise ordinances; or
- Long-term perceptible increase in ambient noise levels above regulatory thresholds at sensitive receptors during operations.

A major adverse impact resulting from projected-related noise would occur if the project alternatives would result in:

- Harm or injury to adjacent communities or noise-sensitive receptors; or
- Exceedance of applicable environmental noise limit guidelines.

3.6.2.3 *Alternative 1 – Full Build*

Construction

Under Alternative 1, ambient noise levels within the vicinity of the International Falls LPOE would temporarily increase due to demolition and construction activities. The number of construction workers and truck trips required for peak construction is anticipated to be approximately 100 construction workers and 150 trucks per day during peak construction periods. During non-peak construction, there could be approximately 50 workers onsite and approximately 75 trucks per day. Depending on the project schedule, some construction activities may occur during the evenings and weekends.

The specific types of construction equipment and methods are anticipated to be typical of standard building construction activities. Table 3.6-3 presents typical construction equipment and corresponding noise levels.

Table 3.6-3. Estimated Noise Levels from Construction Activities

Equipment	Typical Noise Level at 50 feet (dBA)	Typical Noise Level at 500 feet (dBA)	Typical Noise Level at 1,000 feet (dBA)	Typical Noise Level at 1,500 feet (dBA)
Front Loader	80	60	54	50
Backhoe, excavator	80	60	54	50
Roller	85	65	59	55
Grader	85	65	59	55
Scraper	85	65	59	55
Truck	84	64	58	54
Concrete mixer	85	65	59	55

Source: Lamancusa 2009; USDOT 2018
dBA = A-weighted decibel

Depending on the phase of construction, equipment listed in Table 3.6-3 could be operated simultaneously. Table 3.6-4 presents typical noise levels during various construction activities, which could range from 78 to 89 dBA (at 50 feet), and would dissipate with distance. To estimate noise levels at nearby receptors, a conservative estimate of 89.9 dBA (at 50 feet) was used for the analysis by combining the noise levels of several pieces of construction equipment.

Table 3.6-4. Noise Levels Associated with Outdoor Construction

Construction Phase	dBA L_{eq} at 50 feet from Source
Ground Clearing	84
Excavation, Grading	89
Foundations	78
Structural	87
Finishing	89

Source: USEPA 1973
dBA = A-weighted decibels; L_{eq} = Equivalent Sound Level

As shown in Table 3.6-2, the closest noise-sensitive receptors to the project area would be the users of the Rainy Lake Bike Trail and a small city park (located at the corner of US-53 and 2nd Street), which are directly adjacent to the project area boundary. The trail may be temporarily closed and re-routed during

construction. The users of the trail and park could experience intermittent and highly elevated noise construction noise, which may cause annoyance and result in a direct, short-term, moderate local adverse impact.

Noise levels at the closest residential properties are estimated to be around 69.9 dBA (at 500 feet in area zoned as Commercial) and 65.2 dBA (at 860 feet in area zoned as Residential), which can be considered noisy and intrusive (see Table 3.6-1). Standard buildings with windows and doors shut would further reduce noise levels by approximately 15 dBA (USEPA 1978). Therefore, the estimated indoor noise level from the combined construction equipment could be reduced to approximately 54.9 dBA (at 500 feet) and 50.2 dBA (at 860 feet) indoors, which is considered tolerable and below the NAC-1 daytime thresholds and below or near nighttime thresholds for residential areas (MPCA 2015b). Although the City of International Falls does not have noise standards for land uses within areas zoned for Manufacturing, elevated noise levels during the evening hours could lead to a nuisance to the closest residential areas. These activities could be considered a "conditional" use, which means that such activities may be permitted by the city only after review by the planning commission with a specific recommendation to the council and approved by the council (City of International Falls 1979b). The construction noises emanating from the project area would result in direct, short-term, minor, adverse local noise impacts on the closest sensitive noise receptors.

Although construction would be temporary, potential adverse noise impacts would be minimized to the extent possible by standard noise control measures, such as project scheduling, noise barriers, and using noise controls on equipment (e.g., mufflers). Activities would be consistent with normal construction activities and would be conducted in accordance with the state's noise limits for areas designated NAC-1. Within the project area, OSHA regulations (e.g., wearing hearing protection and limiting exposure) would be followed to reduce the impact of noise on construction workers.

Ambient noise levels along US-53, SR-11, US-71, CR-332, and CR-155 within International Falls and possibly throughout Koochiching County would increase as a result of an increase in construction-related vehicles and construction workers commuting to and from the construction site. Direct and indirect, short-term, minor adverse, local and regional impacts on sensitive noise receptors along major roadway corridors would be expected from the construction traffic as truck transport would be intermittent and would generally occur during typical business hours; and commuter traffic would be limited to daily construction start and end times.

Operation

Under Alternative 1, ambient noise levels within the vicinity of the International Falls LPOE would generally remain the same as current conditions since LPOE operations at the new facility would be similar to current operations. However, operations of the LPOE would be extended into the proposed expansion area, which would contribute to noise levels from the vehicles and inspection activities in this area. Users of the Rainy Lake Bike Trail would experience increases in noise levels from COVs accessing/exiting the new LPOE and the new trailer parking for PCA vehicles. Additionally, intermittent, elevated noise levels could potentially be heard from the onsite firing range facility; however, this would generally be limited to the immediate area of the range, as the facility would be enclosed and resulting noise impacts to the trail users and LPOE employees would be minimal. In the surrounding area, traffic levels are projected to slightly increase but still remain at acceptable levels (see Section 3.7 Traffic and Transportation), which would result in indirect, negligible, adverse noise impacts on surrounding roadways. Improved traffic flows and relocation of the COV entry point would reduce traffic noise associated with congestion and trucks, and would have minor long-term, beneficial noise impacts for noise receptors within the City of International Falls' central business district. Overall, changes in noise levels during operations would result in direct, long-term, negligible to minor, local adverse and long-term, minor, local beneficial noise impacts.

Extending LPOE operations into the proposed expansion area would relocate many outdoor inspection activities away from the train crossing and, therefore, the elevated sound levels from the train horn blasts would be reduced for CBP personnel. Therefore, long-term, minor, beneficial impacts on LPOE inspection

employees and patrons would occur as a result of the LPOE extending into the proposed expansion area, away from PCA operations.

3.6.2.4 *No Action Alternative*

Under the No Action Alternative, GSA would not expand or modernize the International Falls LPOE; current facilities and infrastructure at the existing LPOE would remain. Therefore, there would be no new increases in noise levels, and impacts to the noise environment would not occur.

3.6.2.5 *Impacts Reduction Measures*

Noise impacts would be minimized to the extent possible through various measures, including:

- Implementation of noise control measures, such as project scheduling, noise barriers, and using noise controls on equipment (e.g., mufflers).
- Conducting construction activities within hours that are in accordance with local noise regulations and per discussions with adjacent landowners.
- Coordination with the City of International Falls if nighttime construction is required, and consideration of recommendations set forth by the local planning conditions should such activity be considered a "conditional" use.

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3.7 TRAFFIC AND TRANSPORTATION

This section describes the baseline conditions and potential impacts for transportation resources in the project area that could result from implementing the Proposed Action and No Action Alternative as discussed in Chapter 2.

This SEIS uses the following documents and data sources to characterize the affected environment and assess potential impacts regarding:

- The 2011 Final EIS Section 3.7 provides a description of transportation resources of the study area for the 2011 Preferred Alternative. The 2011 Final EIS Section 4.7 presents the anticipated transportation impacts resulting from operations of the 2011 Preferred Alternative.
- Primary data sources used to update and supplement the affected environment discussion regarding transportation resources include: the 2018 Feasibility Study; the *City of International Falls Comprehensive Plan* adopted in 2020; and the MnDOT Traffic Mapping Application.

3.7.1 Affected Environment

3.7.1.1 *Region of Influence*

The ROI for the traffic and transportation analysis includes the following roadway segments to assess the potential impacts of vehicle and truck traffic: International Bridge, US-53, US-71, SR-11, 3rd Avenue East (3rd Avenue E), CR-332, and County Route 155 (CR-155). The International Falls LPOE is directly served by US-53/2nd Avenue, although there are additional routes in the greater vicinity used by passenger vehicles and trucks to access the International Falls LPOE, and would be used with implementation of the Proposed Action.

3.7.1.2 *Regulatory Setting*

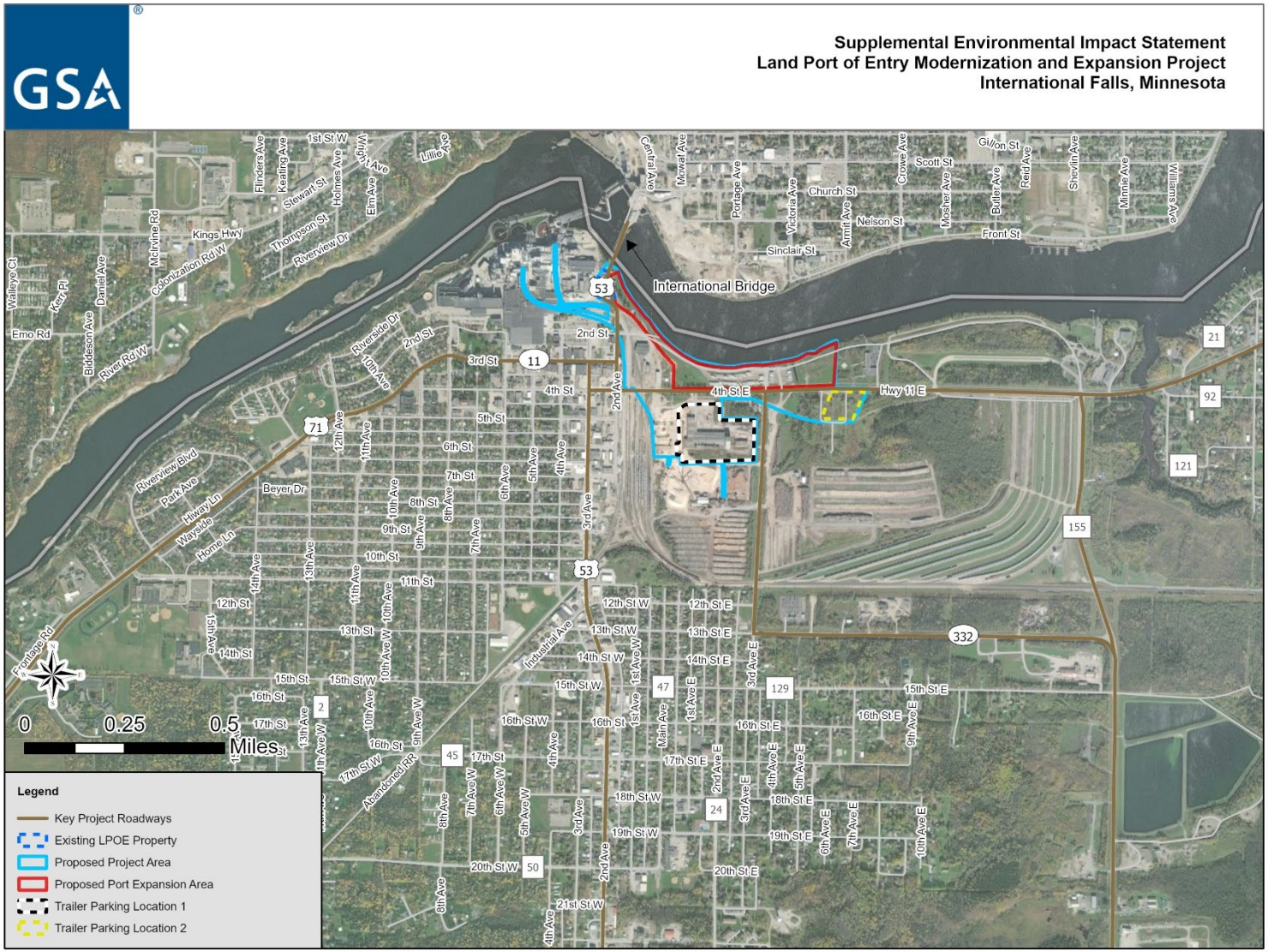
MnDOT is responsible for planning, designing, constructing, operating, and maintaining all state-owned roadways, which include interstate highways, U.S. highways, and state highways. County roadways in International Falls occur under the jurisdiction of Koochiching County. Any construction work done on U.S., state, and county highways would require coordination with MnDOT and Koochiching County, as well as with the City of International Falls Public Works office.

3.7.1.3 *Existing Conditions*

Existing conditions for transportation and traffic since publication of the 2011 Final EIS generally remain the same as current conditions for vehicular traffic. However, the Resolute paper mill located on the northern side of the International Bridge in Fort Frances has since closed and, therefore, no rail traffic currently crosses the bridge. Additionally, CR-155, located approximately a mile east from 3rd Avenue E, has since been improved to accommodate trucks on between SR-11 and CR-332.

Roadway Network

The primary transportation thoroughfares serving the City of International Falls are the International Bridge, US-53, US-71, and SR-11. CR-155 and CR-332 are primarily used by COVs to travel between SR-11 and US-53 south of International Falls (see Figure 3.7-1). These corridors are maintained by MnDOT or Koochiching County and connect International Falls to neighboring counties and Canada to the north.



Source: Google Earth 2022

Figure 3.7-1 Transportation Network Surrounding the International Falls LPOE Project Area

International Bridge is a 1,000-foot long two-span structure crossing the Rainy River that connects International Falls, Minnesota with Fort Frances, Ontario in Canada. The bridge consists of two adjacent bridges, a concrete bridge on the eastern span and a steel bridge on the western span. The concrete bridge provides two lanes of two-way vehicular traffic and is used exclusively by POVs and buses. The steel span carries COV traffic. Additionally, the western-most side of the steel span is used by pedestrians and bicycles. Although there are rail tracks within the steel span portion of the bridge, rail traffic ceased crossing the bridge since the closing of the Resolute mill in Fort Frances, Canada. In early 2022, the Aazhogan Limited Partnership obtained full ownership of the bridge. There are long-term plans to relocate the International Bridge, as discussed in Chapter 4.

US-53 is a north-south-aligned roadway classified as a Principal Arterial according to the MnDOT's Functional Classification Map (MnDOT 2023a) and is designated as an Oversize/Overweight Super Load Corridor between International Falls and Duluth, MN (MnDOT 2021). An Oversize/Overweight corridor is a designated roadway that can handle vehicles up to 16 feet tall, 16 feet side, 150 feet long, and 250,000 pounds in total weight. US-53 provides access into the center of the city and also access to many commercial businesses and the Falls International Airport. South of International Falls, US-53 and CR-332 intersect. Currently, traffic at the intersection is controlled by two-way stop signage, with US-53 as the major uncontrolled approach and CR-332 as the minor stop-controlled approach. North of its intersection with CR-332, US-53 becomes 3rd Avenue at 11th Street, turns east at 4th Street for a block, and then continues north as 2nd Avenue where it enters the International Falls LPOE and International Bridge. North of 8th Street, US-53 generally consists of a two-lane, undivided cross-section, with one lane in each direction separated by dashed yellow pavement markings. Most of the intersections along US-53 within the city operate under two-way stop control, with the intersections at 11th Street and 4th Street under signalization. The posted speed limit on US-53 near the project area is mph.

US-71 is the principal east-west route into the city from the west and generally parallels the Rainy River as it traverses east towards the LPOE. West of the International Falls LPOE, US-71 overlaps with SR-11 and is also referred to as Voyageur Highway. Functionally classified as a Principal Arterial, US-71, transitions from a four-lane to a two-lane undivided cross-section at its intersection with 14th Street, with a posted speed limit of 30 mph. US-71 operates under two-way stop control at most of its intersections, with signalized intersections at 6th Avenue and 3rd Avenue. US-71 traverses through the city's central downtown district, between 6th Avenue 3rd Avenue, and then connects with 2nd Avenue near the LPOE. Additionally, for traffic south of International Falls and traveling eastbound on US-71, there is signage that provides truck traffic the option to use CR-332 as a bypass to avoid traveling through the city's downtown area.

SR-11 is the primary east-west route into the city from the east side of the city. The eastern terminus of SR-11 is located at Voyageurs National Park, approximately 10 miles east of the city. SR-11 is part of the Waters of the Dancing Sky Scenic Byway for about 191 miles. SR-11 is functionally classified as a Minor Arterial from the intersection with 2nd Avenue to the CR-155 intersection and as a Major Collector east of CR-155. The typical cross-section includes two lanes with one lane each direction, along with paved shoulders. The posted speed limit within the study area varies from 30 mph within the downtown district to 0.12 miles east of the 2nd Avenue intersection, where the speed limit increases to 40 mph.

3rd Avenue E (also referred to as Burner Road) is a north-south road designated as a local street but serving an important function as an access road for trucks associated with PCA operations. This road is part of CR-332. The cross-section features one travel lane for each direction and includes paved shoulders. The posted speed limit for this corridor is 30 mph.

CR-332 is classified as a Minor Arterial and connects to US-53 and US-71 south of International Falls. At its intersection with 13th Street, the route continues west on 13th Street and then heads north on 3rd Avenue E. CR-332 also connects to CR-155, which then connects to SR-11. CR-332's intersection with 13th Street includes a median to control turning movements of traffic from CR-332 and CR-155 onto 13th Street. The typical cross-section includes two lanes with one lane each direction, along with paved shoulders and the typical speed limit is 55 mph. CR-332 is designated as a truck route and, as previously noted, serves as a

bypass option for trucks traveling eastbound on US-71 south of the city to avoid travel through the downtown area. COVs also travel on CR-332 to access the industrial center located on the east side of International Falls. Currently, the majority of PCA-related trucks (e.g., logging trucks) traveling on US-53 from south of the city (and heading northbound to PCA facilities), use CR-332/3rd Avenue E to access a woodyard. After unloading from the woodyard, these trucks use SR-11 to access CR-155 and CR-332.

CR-155 is classified as an Urban Local Collector within the ROI. Since publication of the 2011 EIS, CR-155 was improved for trucks accessing CR-332 via SR-11. A median is located at its intersection with 13th Street as it transitions from CR-332 to control turning movements onto 13th Street. A stop sign for CR-155 traffic is located at the connection with SR-11. The cross-section features one travel lane for each direction and includes paved shoulders. The posted speed limit for this corridor is 30 mph.

Pedestrian/Bike

Pedestrian/bike traffic enters the LPOE from a sidewalk located on the western side of the International Bridge and must cross lanes of traffic to enter the main building. Dedicated sidewalks are provided approaching and departing from the LPOE which connect with 2nd Avenue. Annual crossing volumes for pedestrians show a steady decline since 2012; pedestrian volumes totaled 16,202 and 9,837 in the years 2012 and 2019, respectively, representing a 39 percent decrease (BTS 2023).

Bicyclists typically use local streets and the Rainy Lake Bike Trail, a dedicated 13-mile path between International Falls and Ranier, for travel within the study area.

Railway

The MD&W Railway serves the PCA facilities at International Falls and formerly the Resolute paper mill in Fort Frances, which was closed in 2014 and demolished in 2022. The railway consists of four route miles of track and four locomotives, with a car and locomotive shop in International Falls.

Since the closing of the Resolute paper mill, there has been no rail traffic across the bridge. However, train crossings have remained fairly steady at the LPOE due to PCA operations. Based on recent data, rail crossings at the LPOE (in/out of the PCA mill) for an average day and busy day were 14 and 22 crossings, respectively; assuming 5 days per week, over 52 weeks in a year, the annual average rail crossings was approximately 3,640 at the LPOE (PCA 2023).

Roadways and Vehicular Traffic Volumes

As noted in the International Falls Comprehensive Plan, the traffic volumes on the city's major roadways are typically low to moderate, with no roadways exceeding 8,500 Annual Average Daily Traffic (AADT); most of the roadways are well below that level (City of International Falls 2020). The heaviest traveled roads are US-71, US-53, and SR-11 (east of the LPOE).

Historical traffic counts referenced from the MnDOT Traffic Mapping Application database were used to evaluate traffic trends in AADT volumes in the project area and are presented in Table 3.7-1. The AADT data was also used to establish traffic average growth rates for the roadway segments being analyzed. The growth rates were used to estimate AADT volumes for the current year (2023), since AADT data is not available for the years beyond 2018 for most of the segments analyzed in Table 3.7-1.

Table 3.7-1. International Falls LPOE Historical AADT (2000-2018)

Roadway	2000	2002	2004	2006	2008	2010	2012	2014	2016	2018	Average Bi-annual Growth Rate (percent)
US-53 (south of 4th Street)	8,500	9,100	10,100	10,100	8,600	8,900	8,500	8,200	8,000	8,400	0.1
US-71	6,400	7,500	5,800	5,800	6,200	6,400	6,500	6,400	6,100	5,700	-0.7
SR-11	4,800	5,200	5,600	5,600	5,400	5,300	5,500	5,000	5,200	5,300	1.2
US-53 (near LPOE)	3,900	3,250	3,150	3,150	3,450	3,550	3,350	4,250	3,500	2,500	-3.6
3rd Avenue E (formerly CR-332)	2,850	2,350	2,500	2,500	2,200	1,950	1,800	N/A[1]	1,100	N/A[1]	-7.0
CR-332 (between CR-155 and CR-24)	1,750	1,300	1,600	1,600	1,400	1,350	1,400	N/A[1]	1,200	1,300	-4.2

Source: MnDOT 2023b
[1] AADT Data Unavailable
AADT = average annual daily traffic; CR-24 = County Route 24; CR-332 = County Route 332; LPOE = land port of entry; US-53 = U.S. Highway 53; US-71 = U.S. Highway 71; SR-11 = State Route 11

AADT data for CR-155 is available only for the years 2012 and 2016; the AADT for CR-155 was 900 in 2012 and 1,150 in 2016 (MnDOT 2023b).

A review of annual total vehicular crossings at the International LPOE from 2012 through 2018 also confirm this downward trend in traffic volumes (BTS 2023). Table 3.7-2 presents the total annual vehicular crossings and percent of the annual crossings that were due to COVs during this timeframe. As indicated in the table, COV traffic crossings represent up to 5 percent of the total annual vehicular crossings at the LPOE. Therefore, it is conservatively assumed that the truck traffic volumes are generally 5 percent of AADT volumes of the roadways, except for 3rd Avenue E, CR-332, and CR-155, which are assumed to experience a higher percentage of COVs as these roadways serve nearby industrial operations and CR-332 is a designated truck bypass route.

Table 3.7-2. Total Annual POV and COV Crossings at International Falls LPOE, 2012 - 2018

Traffic Type	2012	2014	2016	2018
POV	542,265	511,600	440,195	372,614
COV	20,221	16,528	17,317	17,529
Percent of Total Vehicular Crossings Attributed to COVs	**4%**	**3%**	**4%**	**5%**

Source: BTS 2023
COV = commercially owned vehicles; LPOE = land port of entry; POV = privately owned vehicles

Total crossing volumes at the International Falls LPOE for the years 2020, 2021, and 2022 were not evaluated as these years are not considered representative of normal operating conditions of the LPOE due to travel restrictions imposed by the U.S. Department of Homeland Security over COVID-19.

Based upon the growth rates estimated in Table 3.7-1, the following annual growth rates were used to grow historical counts to the current year, 2023, which is considered the existing conditions for this analysis.

- Annual 0.5 percent increase for US-53, US-71, 3rd Avenue E, and CR-332 – Although these roadways experienced decreased or very low increased AADT volumes since 2000, for purposes of the SEIS, an annual 0.5 percent growth rate was used to provide a conservative analysis for predicting traffic volumes.
- Annual 0.6 percent increase for SR-11 (east) – Following the historic trend on SR-11, an annual 0.6 percent growth rate was used to predict traffic volumes on this roadway.

Table 3.7-3 displays the estimated AADT volumes for the year 2023, which represents existing conditions.

Table 3.7- 3. International Falls LPOE AADT for 2023

Roadway	Classification	Latest Available AADT (2018)[1]	Existing AADT (2023)[2]
US-53 (south of 4th Street)	Principal Arterial	8,400	8,610
US-71	Principal Arterial	5,700	5,843
SR-11	Minor Arterial	5,300	5,459
US-53 (near LPOE)	Principal Arterial	2,500	2,563
3rd Avenue E	Major Collector	1,100[3]	1,128
CR-332 (between CR-155 and CR-24)	Minor Arterial	1,300	1,333

[1] Source: MnDOT 2023
[2] Projected based on 0.5 or 0.6 percent average annual growth rate.
[3] AADT from year 2016.
AADT = average annual daily traffic; CR-24 = County Route 24; CR-332 = County Route 332; LPOE = land port of entry; US-53 = U.S. Highway 53; US-71 = U.S. Highway 71; SR-11 = State Route 11

The roadway segments were evaluated for operational deficiencies by determining a Level of Service (LOS) rating for each segment. In order to calculate the LOS ratings, volume-to-capacity (V/C) ratios were estimated by calculating hourly volumes as "V" and assuming a capacity volume as "C":

- Hourly volume (V) – The AADT volumes for 2023 shown in Table 3.7-3 were converted into hourly volumes by multiplying the AADT volume by a conservative peak hour factor, referred to as "K." K is the proportion of an AADT volume on a roadway segment occurring during the peak hour of traffic. For this analysis, a conservative value of 10 percent was used for K.
- Capacity (C) – The capacity volume was determined based on the functional classification and number of through-lanes for a road segment. According to the Highway Capacity Manual, the base capacity is 1,700 passenger cars per hour per one-direction lane for a two-lane roadway. Since each of the study roadways are two-lane facilities near the LPOE, 1,700 passenger cars per hour was used as "C" (HCM 2016).

The 2023 hourly volumes were divided by the capacity volume of 1,700 passenger cars per hour to determine a roadway segment's V/C ratio. LOS ratings were then determined based on the V/C thresholds. LOS for a roadway segment is graded from A to F, with LOS A through D representing adequate operating conditions and LOS E or F representing unacceptable operating conditions, as shown in Table 3.7-4. The segments were then classified by their LOS as a measurement of congestion and operation. The LOS estimates for each roadway segment are summarized in Table 3.7-5.

Table 2.7-4. Level of Service (LOS) Definitions and Correlated V/C Ratios

LOS	Traffic Condition	V/C Ratio
A	Free Flow	<0.60
B	Light congestion	0.61-0.70
C	Stable flow with lower speeds	0.71-0.80
D	High density with stable flow	0.81-0.90
E	Severe congestion	0.91-1.00
F	Total breakdown	>1.00

Source: Afrin et al. 2020
LOS = Level of Service; V/C = volume-to-capacity

Table 3.7-5. Levels of Service (LOSs) for 2023 AADT at International Falls LPOE

Roadway	# Thru Lanes	Classification	Two-Lane Highway Hourly Capacity	AADT	Hourly Volume	V/C Ratio (HCM)	LOS
US-53 (south of 4th Street)	2	Principal Arterial	1,700	8,610	861	0.51	A
US-71	2	Principal Arterial	1,700	5,843	584	0.34	A
SR-11	2	Minor Arterial	1,700	5,459	546	0.32	A
US-53 (near LPOE)	2	Principal Arterial	1,700	2,563	256	0.15	A
3rd Avenue E (formerly CR-332)	2	Major Collector	1,700	1,128	113	0.07	A
CR-332 (between CR-155 and CR-24)	2	Minor Arterial	1,700	1,333	133	0.08	A

AADT = average annual daily traffic; C = capacity volume; CR-24 = County Route 24; CR-332 = County Route 332; LOS = Level of Service; LPOE = land port of entry; SR-11 = State Route 11; US-53 = U.S. Highway 53; US-71 = U.S. Highway 71; V = hourly volume

The results shown in Table 3.7-5 indicate that the roadways are operating below their design capacities, with V/C ratios of 0.51 or less. The LOS for all roadway segments are operating at an LOS of A, which means that traffic is usually free-flowing and without congestion or delays.

3.7.2 Environmental Consequences

3.7.2.1 *Summary of Transportation Impacts from the 2011 Final EIS*

GSA determined that the 2011 Preferred Alternative would not have any significant adverse effects on transportation resources. Impacts to vehicle traffic, railroads, and pedestrians from the 2011 Preferred Alternative are discussed in Section 4.7 of the 2011 Final EIS and are summarized as follows:

- The 2011 Preferred Alternative would improve the transportation deficiencies associated with the existing LPOE by providing additional queuing space and removing vehicles from city streets without removing passenger vehicles and buses from the central business district of International Falls.
- The 2011 Preferred Alternative would result in a slight increase in commercial and passenger vehicle traffic along SR-11 between the entrance/exit to the LPOE and US-53.
- The 2011 Preferred Alternative would eliminate conflicts between commercial vehicle inspections and railway operations and reduce the conflicts involving passenger vehicles and bus traffic.

3.7.2.2 *Methodology*

To evaluate the impacts on transportation resources, GSA reviewed the project alternatives to determine whether any activities have the potential to cause the following within the ROI:

- Change in vehicular traffic congestion, delays, or safety risks on roadways;
- Change in the LOS on roadways;
- Reducing the capacity of the International Falls LPOE; and
- Change in pedestrian and bicycle activity.

A major adverse impact to transportation facilities would occur if the project alternatives would result in:

- Increase in traffic volumes that would exceed the capacity of local roadways and intersections within the study area (i.e., significant degradation of LOS);
- Increase in traffic volumes resulting in deficient operations at the International Falls LPOE;
- Increase in traffic resulting in traffic hazards to workers and users at the International Falls LPOE; or
- Disruption or interference with existing pedestrian and bicycle facilities.

3.7.2.3 *Alternative 1 – Full Build*

Construction

Under Alternative 1, construction traffic is anticipated to result in direct and indirect, short-term, minor, local impacts to roadways within the ROI. Demolition and construction are anticipated to begin in 2025 with substantial completion in 2029. Peak construction is expected to occur during the months of April through October each year with approximately 100 construction workers and 150 trucks on a daily basis. Regular construction is expected to result in 50 construction workers and 75 trucks on a daily basis.

Increases in traffic volumes due to commuting workers and truck deliveries to and from the project area are expected to occur on the major roadways in the city. The AADT and hourly volumes (V) for the peak construction months for years 2026 and 2029 were estimated using the same growth rates established to previously calculate the 2023 volumes. Approximately 500 new daily vehicle trips could be generated on the major surrounding roadways (i.e., 250 trips entering and 250 trips exiting the project area) during peak construction conditions. Therefore, an additional 120 traffic trips were added to the hourly volumes to conservatively account for commuters and truck traffic during a peak traffic hour (assuming 20 percent of workers may carpool, resulting in 80 vehicular trips, and 40 truck trips could occur within a peak hour). Based on the hourly volumes, V/C ratios and LOS ratings for the peak construction years were estimated (assuming a capacity volume, C, of 1,700 vehicles per hour) and are summarized in Table 3.7-6.

Table 3.7-6. 2026 and 2029 LOS Results for Alternative 1 During Peak Construction Months

Roadway	2026				2029			
	AADT	Hourly Volume[1] (V)	V/C	LOS	AADT	Hourly Volume[1] (V)	V/C	LOS
US-53 (south of 4th Street)	8,742	994	0.58	A	8,874	1,007	0.59	A
US-71	5,932	713	0.42	A	6,021	722	0.42	A
SR-11	5,560	676	0.40	A	5,660	686	0.40	A
US-53 (near LPOE)	2,602	380	0.22	A	2,641	384	0.23	A
3rd Avenue E (formerly CR-332)	1,154	235	0.14	A	1,175	237	0.14	A
CR-332 (between CR-155 and CR-24)	1,353	255	0.15	A	1,373	257	0.15	A

[1] Includes 120 vehicular trips due to commuters and trucks.

AADT = average annual daily traffic; C = capacity volume; CR-24 = County Route 24; CR-332 = County Route 332; LOS = Level of Service; LPOE = land port of entry; SR-11 = State Route 11; US-53 = U.S. Highway 53; US-71 = U.S. Highway 71; V = hourly volume

As a result of increased traffic volumes during the peak construction years, there would be some degradation to the operating conditions of the major roadways in the city and at the LPOE, especially during the summer months when the local roadways experience higher POVs due to recreational travel. However, as indicated in Table 3.7-6, the LOS is expected to remain at LOS A and operating conditions of the roadways are expected to handle the additional traffic demand resulting from the construction activities. Furthermore, the majority of commuter traffic would be limited to the peak morning and afternoon commuting hours, near the start and end of the workday.

Improvements to existing roadways could also impact local traffic conditions. Portions of 2nd Avenue near the proposed new non-commercial access point to the LPOE would require widening to allow for POV and bus traffic to enter and exit to and from downtown International Falls. SR-11 would be widened at the proposed commercial entry/exit, including acceleration and deceleration lanes. The International Bridge approach would be widened at the LPOE to provide a radius appropriate for COV traffic at the LPOE, including oversize loads. Construction in these areas could result in increased congestion, traffic delays, and safety hazards. Where appropriate, proper signage would be placed and construction flaggers may be used to direct traffic and to alert drivers to reduce adverse impacts to the public and construction workers. Implementing standard safety construction measures on these roadways would result in short-term minor local impacts. Additionally, GSA would coordinate with Koochiching County, the International Falls Public Works office, and MnDOT prior to construction work for 2nd Avenue, near the International Bridge, and SR-11.

Utility and rail line work within the project area could lead to congestion, traffic delays, and safety hazards within and around the LPOE. The International Falls LPOE is expected to remain open and operational during construction; however, construction traffic is not expected to substantially affect daily throughput or general operations of the existing LPOE due to careful phasing of the construction. To reduce adverse impacts, GSA would coordinate with utility providers, MD&W Railway, and PCA on construction phasing to minimize the risk of safety hazards and to prevent operational disruptions. Therefore, impacts are anticipated to be direct, short-term, minor, adverse, and local.

Construction would involve temporary pedestrian sidewalk closures and re-routing of walkways. Closing of sidewalks may result in pedestrians being re-directed to use alternate sides of the roadway or alternate areas of the LPOE permitted to maintain connectivity per the Americans with Disabilities Act. Users of the Rainy Lake Bike Trail would be re-routed because of temporary closures for parts of the trail during

construction. Thus, direct, short-term, minor, adverse local impacts would occur on pedestrian facilities along the project frontage and on the bike trail during construction.

Operation

Under Alternative 1, the expanded and modernized LPOE is anticipated to be operational by 2029. There are no current plans for an increase in staffing at the LPOE; however, slight increases in new employees could occur due to operational changes from new programs and new equipment and technologies being introduced during operations. GSA estimates that there would be no more than 30 new workers hired to support the new facilities at the LPOE. Table 3.7-7 summarizes predicted traffic volumes and LOS ratings for 2030 and 2035, using an assumption of 30 new vehicle trips to add to the hourly volume. Similarly, as discussed under *Construction*, the AADT and hourly volumes (V) were estimated using the same growth rates established to previously calculate the 2023 volumes (i.e., 0.6 percent growth rate applied to AADT on SR-11 and 0.5 percent growth rate applied to AADT on remaining roadways).

Table 3.7-7. 2030 and 2035 LOS Results for Alternative 1 During Operations

Roadway	2030				2035			
	AADT	Hourly Volume[1]	V/C	LOS	AADT	Hourly Volume[1]	V/C	LOS
US-53 (south of 4th Street)	8,918	922	0.54	A	9,143	944	0.56	A
US-71	6,052	635	0.37	A	6,204	650	0.38	A
SR-11	5,694	599	0.35	A	5,867	616	0.36	A
US-53 (near LPOE)	2,654	295	0.17	A	2,721	302	0.18	A
3rd Avenue E (formerly CR-332)	1,182	148	0.09	A	1,218	152	0.09	A
CR-332 (between CR-155 and CR-24)	1,380	168	0.10	A	1,415	172	0.10	A

AADT = average annual daily traffic; CR-24 = County Route 24; CR-332 = County Route 332; LOS = Level of Service; LPOE = land port of entry; SR-11 = State Route 11; US-53 = U.S. Highway 53; US-71 = U.S. Highway 71; V/C = volume-to-capacity

[1] – Includes 25 trips due to new workers.

As shown in Table 3.7-7, V/C ratios are expected to return to pre-construction levels and all the roadway segments would remain at LOS A. Therefore, any new traffic demand from additional workers during operations would result in direct and indirect, long-term, negligible, local impacts.

Under Alternative 1, all commercial traffic would enter and exit the LPOE from SR-11, east of downtown International Falls (see Figure 2-2). Additionally, a new trailer parking lot would be located south of SR-11 for PCA trailers at one of two proposed locations. The proposed COV entry/exit point would be located within the 40-mph speed zone. The new COV access point on SR-11 would increase traffic hazards on this roadway and users on the Rainy Lake Bike Trail, which would cross this access point. It is expected that new acceleration and deceleration lanes, as well as a new traffic signal and new signage would reduce the risk of traffic hazards at this conflict point. Prior to construction, GSA would coordinate with the City of International Falls, Koochiching County, and MnDOT on traffic studies that might be required to support planning of any improvements and/or changes in traffic control on SR-11.

COVs heading south from the new LPOE facility may utilize CR-155 and CR-332 via SR-11 to avoid the majority of the central business district, although could use SR-11 to US-53 depending on final route selection. The additional volume of heavy vehicles on SR-11 is expected to be small as commercial vehicles make up on average only 5 percent of the annual traffic (see Table 3.7-2) and, therefore, would result in direct and indirect, long-term, minor, local impacts to traffic flows as this roadway operates well under

capacity as shown in Table 3.7-7. Traffic heading west would most likely travel along SR-11 through the downtown area to access US-71. Another route option for COVs would be a route heading south along CR-332 to its western terminus at US-71 southwest of International Falls, but due to the length of this route, it is not expected to be the route of choice for most COVs.

Potential redirection of some commercial vehicles away from the central business district would represent an indirect, long-term, beneficial impact to portions of the city's downtown area due to a reduction in noise levels, air pollutants, and traffic hazards associated with trucks. Additionally, dedicating the new COV access point away from the downtown area would better align with the city's land use plans as the downtown area is designated as Commercial and SR-11 (east of 2nd Avenue) is within an area zoned for Manufacturing (see Section 3.8, Land Use). Commercial traffic flows would be reconfigured to remove conflicts with railway crossings and PCA traffic, resulting in a beneficial impact to COVs.

All non-commercial traffic would enter and exit the LPOE downtown at the terminus of US-53. Proposed new circulation patterns would eliminate any vehicular/railway crossings as well as conflicts with PCA traffic within the LPOE (see Figures 2-3 and 2-4), resulting in a direct, long-term, negligible to minor, beneficial impact due to improved safety for vehicles and pedestrians. However, POV entry and exit drives would cross the MD&W Railway rail lines west of the LPOE. Pedestrians would be processed in a satellite building, a short walk from the bridge, exiting directly into International Falls without crossing any of the vehicular lanes in the LPOE.

Alternative 1 would result in additional indirect, long-term, negligible to minor, beneficial local impacts by providing more queuing space and removing vehicles from city streets, thus improving overall traffic safety for the general public and the workers at the new LPOE. Because POV entry/exit point would be located on 2nd Avenue, no change in traffic patterns to and from the central business district in the city is expected for POV traffic.

3.7.2.4 *No Action Alternative*

Under the No Action Alternative, GSA would not expand and modernize the International Falls LPOE. Therefore, traffic volumes and distribution of traffic on the local and regional roadways would remain unchanged from baseline conditions and would be similar to those presented in Table 3.7-7. However, direct and indirect, long-term, minor, adverse impacts would remain as congestion and queueing issues would continue and result in traffic safety issues, with the continued railway conflicts exacerbating such issues.

3.7.2.5 *Impacts Reduction Measures*

Measures that would mitigate the impacts associated with transportation during construction and operations are discussed below.

- Minimize construction truck movement during peak traffic hours;
- Place construction staging areas where they would least interfere with local traffic and parking;
- Minimize impacts to pedestrians during construction activities by providing appropriate information and signage to pedestrians and motorists who are traveling throughout the area;
- Develop a construction traffic and parking management plan that minimizes traffic interference and maintains traffic flow and safety;
- Develop and implement Transportation Demand Management strategies to reduce single occupancy vehicles (e.g., encourage carpooling);
- Coordinate with the utility providers, MD&W Railway, and PCA on the phased construction plans to minimize traffic safety issues and potential disruptions;

- Coordinate with local, county, and state transportation authorities when planning access to the International Falls LPOE site; and
- Follow all local, state, and federal planning guidelines and regulations when maintaining or upgrading roadway infrastructure.

3.8 LAND USE AND VISUAL RESOURCES

This section describes the baseline conditions for land use and visual resources surrounding the project areas, and assesses the potential for existing land use patterns and development trends within the project area to affect, or be affected by, implementing the Proposed Action and the No Action Alternative as discussed in Chapter 2. Land use is described by land activities, ownership, and the governing entities' management plans. Local zoning defines land use types and regulates development patterns. This section also describes the visual landscape within the project ROI. Visual resources consist of all visible features (natural and man-made, moving, and stationary) that give a particular environment its aesthetic characteristics and can influence the visual appeal of that landscape for a viewer.

This SEIS uses the following documents and data sources to characterize the affected environment and assess potential impacts regarding land use and visual resources:

- The 2011 Final EIS Section 3.8 provides a description of land use and the visual environment of the project area for the 2011 Preferred Alternative. The 2011 Final EIS Section 4.8 presents the anticipated land use impacts resulting from construction and operations of the 2011 Preferred Alternative.
- Primary data sources used to update and supplement the affected environment discussion regarding land use and visual resources include: the 2018 Feasibility Study; Phase I ESAs conducted in 2021 and 2022 for the existing LPOE site and proposed expansion area, respectively; and the *City of International Falls Comprehensive Plan* adopted in 2020.

3.8.1 Affected Environment

3.8.1.1 *Region of Influence*

The ROI for land use and visual resources focuses on the International Falls LPOE, the proposed expansion area, and areas for potential connected actions necessitated by the LPOE expansion (see Section 2.2.1.1). The ROI also includes adjacent properties, and primary roadways leading up to the project area, including US-53/2nd Avenue, US-71 (Voyageur Highway), and SR-11 (east of the existing LPOE).

3.8.1.2 *Regulatory Setting*

City Planning and Zoning. The LPOE and proposed expansion area are located within the city limits of International Falls and are under the jurisdiction of the city's ordinances. Per Minnesota Statutes (462.351-.365), the Municipal Planning Act grants cities in the state the authority to regulate land use. The Act provides three basic tools to help cities regulate land use: the comprehensive plan, zoning ordinance, and subdivision ordinance (LMC 2022). The *City of International Falls Comprehensive Plan* was adopted in January 2020 and includes community-based recommendations to provide guidance on the development and growth of the city over the next twenty years (City of International Falls 2020).

Because the project area is adjacent to the shoreline of the Rainy River, the shoreland management ordinance would be applicable, which is outlined in the International Falls, Minnesota, Code of Ordinances, Section 11-50, *Shoreland Management* (City of International Falls 2022).

Regional Haze Rule. In 1977, Congress amended the CAA to include provisions to protect the scenic vistas of Class I federal lands, including national parks, national wilderness areas, and national monuments. These areas are granted special air quality protections under Section 162(a) of the CAA to protect visibility. As such, the Regional Haze Rule requires states to develop and implement a regional haze plan to address visibility impairment resulting from manmade pollution, including vehicle emissions. The state of Minnesota is home to two mandatory Class I federal areas: the Boundary Waters Canoe Area Wilderness and Voyageurs National Park, located in the northeastern portion of the state.

National Scenic Byways Program. The Federal National Scenic Byways Program establishes All-American Roads and National Scenic Byways. Additionally, the Minnesota Scenic Byways Commission was established to oversee Minnesota's Scenic Byway Program. A scenic byway is typically recognized through legislation as a unique resource worth preserving. SR-11 in International Falls is part of a scenic byway.

GSA Facilities Standard. GSA has a series of policy guides that address a variety of planning issues for federal facilities, including site security, site selection, project planning, and facility design standards. This includes GSA's mandatory facilities standard, *PBS-P100 Facilities Standards for the Public Buildings Service*, which applies to the design and construction of new federal facilities (as well as major repairs and alterations of existing buildings) (GSA 2021a), the *Whole Building Design Guide* (GSA 2022b), and the *U.S. Land Port of Entry Design Guide* standard, which specifically applies to LPOE designs (Conway 2021). In addition, GSA has programs in place related to community planning to help create federal facilities that are consistent with good neighbor principles and that support positive community development and neighborhood urban design goals. Key principles of GSA's *Urban Development/Good Neighbor Program* (GSA 2020) include:

- Locate new owned and leased federal facilities in places that support public plans;
- Design new facilities to create outstanding federal workplaces and support neighborhood urban design goals;
- Renovate existing federal properties to improve their public spaces, create positive first impressions, and encourage stakeholders to improve neighborhood conditions;
- Manage federal properties to encourage public use and openness; and
- Participate in neighborhood physical and management improvement efforts around federal properties.

With respect to the aesthetics, GSA considers the following design objectives when designing a land port of entry (Conway 2021):

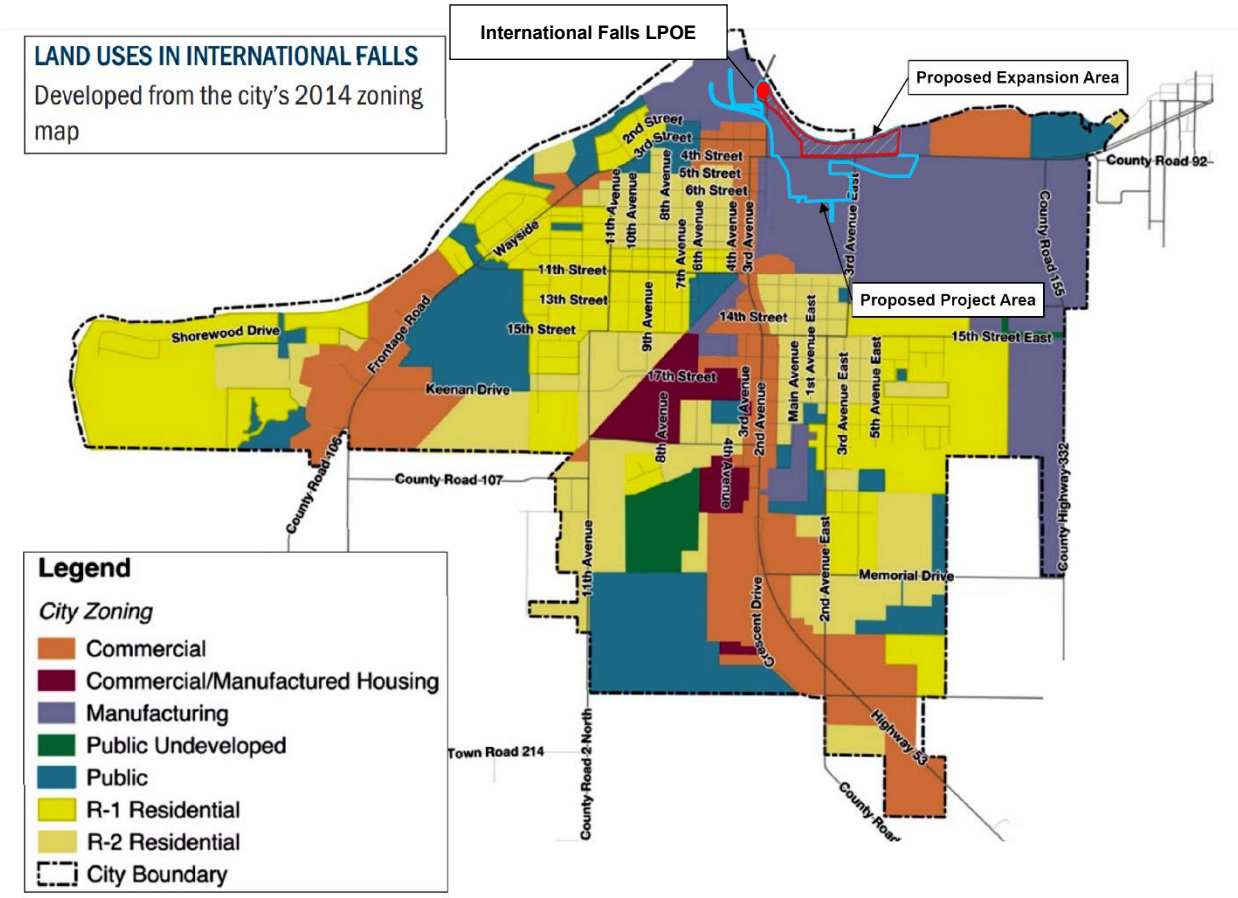
- Welcoming, but formal;
- Compatible with regional and local styles;
- Integrated with GSA's Art-in-Architecture program;
- Sensitive to existing historic structures; and
- Respectful of local landscape and climate considerations.

3.8.1.3 *Existing Conditions*

Existing conditions for land use and visual resources since publication of the 2011 Final EIS generally remain similar to current conditions. PCA has acquired Boise, Inc. which has resulted in changes to PCA activities on adjacent lands near the project area, though the property boundaries and facilities remain the same. Additionally, the Resolute paper mill across the International Bridge in Fort Frances, Ontario has closed since the 2011 Final EIS. The *International Falls Comprehensive Plan* was adopted in January 2020, which introduced new zoning and land use regulations; however, the zoning designation for the LPOE, the proposed expansion area, and adjacent areas remain unchanged.

Land Use

Figure 3.8-1 presents current land uses in the City of International Falls. About a third of International Falls' land parcels are occupied by manufacturing and industrial uses, with commercial corridors extending through the middle of the city along US-53/2nd Avenue and along the western entrance to the city on US-71 (shown as 3rd Street in Figure 3.8-1; also referred to as Voyageur Highway). The downtown district on 3rd Street located just south of the existing LPOE is zoned as Commercial and includes a variety of recently rehabilitated buildings, as well as a number of vacant buildings and empty lots.



Source: City of International Falls 2020

Figure 3.8-1. Land Uses in the City of International Falls

US-53 and US-71 are the two main roadways into the city, located in the central and western areas of the city, respectively, and provide the organizing structure for the city's commercial uses. US-53 is the principal north-south access into the city, bringing visitors and trade into the city and Canada. SR-11 is part of the Waters of the Dancing Sky Scenic Byway with an eastern segment that begins in Voyageurs National Park and continues west, traversing along the southern boundary of the project area and passing through the downtown district of International Falls, then finally ending in Hallock, Minnesota.

The International Falls LPOE and the PCA facilities occupy the northernmost location of International Falls, along the Rainy River, in an area zoned as M-2A (Manufacturing) as shown in Figure 3.8-1. The purpose of the M-2A district is to create industrial areas to accommodate a wide variety of industries. The existing 1.6-acre LPOE is located within a highly developed area with site constraints imposed by PCA facilities on the west and south, International Bridge on the north, and Rainy River on the east (see Figure

1-2). The M-2A designation of the project area excludes the shoreline of the Rainy River, which is zoned as a resource protection zone governed by International Falls' shoreland management ordinance. Shorelands of the city are designated as a Shoreland Overlay District, which aims to protect environmental resources or safeguard natural hazard areas. Additional land use restrictions apply in these areas. Development within these areas require coordination with local agencies and may require permits from the state (see Section 3.3, Water Resources).

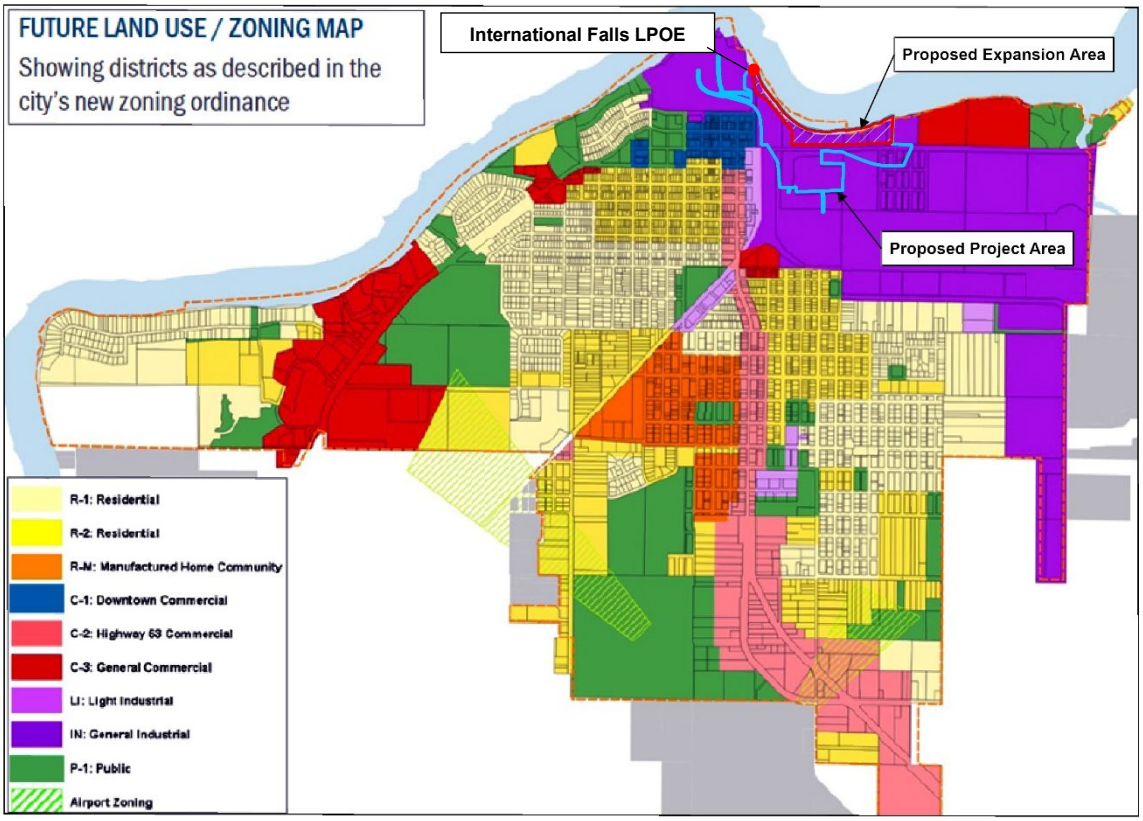
Pedestrian traffic enters the LPOE from a sidewalk located on the west side of the metal span of the International Bridge. The LPOE is adjacent to PCA facilities on the western and southern boundaries, including an elevated pneumatic chip line that transports wood chips from PCA property located south of SR-11 over to PCA facilities located west of the existing LPOE. The LPOE is also crisscrossed by railroad tracks and utility easements. The MD&W Railway rail lines traverse the LPOE to service the PCA facilities and formerly the Resolute paper mill until it was closed in 2014. A duty-free pick-up building is located between the northeast boundary of the LPOE and Rainy River. This building is a leased operation by MD&W Railway and serves as a location where customers can collect their items purchased at the duty-free store in downtown International Falls.

The 20.5-acre proposed expansion area extends south and east from the existing LPOE between the Rainy River and SR-11 (see Figure 2-5). The western portion of the proposed expansion area is owned by PCA (approximately 16.4 acres), while the portion just east of First Creek is owned by RLD (approximately 4.1 acres). The parcels owned by PCA consist of PCA facilities; paved roads; a gravel parking lot used for trailer storage; undeveloped, landscaped areas; and the elevated pneumatic chip line previously mentioned. The RLD parcel consists mainly of previously disturbed, landscaped areas. A mixed asphalt and gravel road runs adjacent to the river on the north side of these parcels.

The area directly west of the proposed expansion consists of developed land with MD&W Railway facilities and rail lines. South of the western portion of the proposed expansion area (referred to as Trailer Parking Location 1 in Figure 2-5), the land is mostly disturbed or developed and consists mainly of a woodyard and facilities associated with a closed plant that manufactured fiberboard (known as the BildRite property). Trucks from the PCA facility drive through the proposed expansion area and cross SR-11 to access the woodyard area. Southeast of the proposed expansion area (referred to as Trailer Parking Location 2 in Figure 2-5), the area consists of previously disturbed, landscaped land with some trees and unpaved roads.

Downtown International Falls is located less than half a mile southwest from the existing LPOE. Other properties near the project area consist of a gift shop, a gas station, a duty-free store, a small city park, and the International Falls Convention and Visitor's Bureau. A U.S. Border Patrol Station is located directly east of the proposed expansion area. The Rainy Lake Bike Trail runs adjacent to the southern boundary of the proposed expansion area. The trail is approximately 13 miles in length and is open to bicyclists and pedestrians.

The *International Falls Comprehensive Plan* identifies recommendations for how the type and location of land uses should change over the next 20 years based on the community's long-term vision and growth. Figure 3.8-2 presents the city's future land use and zoning map. This map summarizes the guidance offered by the Comprehensive Plan for the city's future land uses and development.



Source: City of International Falls 2020

Figure 3.8-2. City of International Falls Future Land Use and Zoning Map

Visual Resources

The visual landscape of the project area can be characterized as predominantly industrial with a strong natural environment presence due to the proximity of the Rainy River and some open, landscaped areas with minimal vegetation. The grounds of the existing International Falls LPOE include concrete paved roads, parking areas, and sparse amounts of shrubs located east of the building. The main LPOE facility was built in 1993 and has had a few alterations, including an exterior façade replacement in 2005. None of the existing LPOE's assets are currently listed in or eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places (NRHP) (see Section 3.11, Cultural Resources). Figures 3.8-3 and 3.8-4 provide images of the LPOE facilities and surrounding viewpoints from the LPOE, respectively.

For motorists on SR-11 and users of the adjacent bike trail, the viewshed of the proposed expansion area mainly comprises the trailers located on a storage lot, landscaped areas with scattered vegetation, utility poles and lines, and views of PCA facilities in the background. Minimal vegetation consists of some shrubs and trees along the Rainy River and SR-11. Figures 3.8-5 and 3.8-6 provide images of the proposed expansion area.

Viewsheds of the connected action footprint are comparable to the proposed expansion area, and includes additional disturbed, vegetated areas, and facilities associated with PCA facilities.

The state of Minnesota is home to two mandatory Class I federal areas: the Voyageurs National Park and Boundary Waters Canoe Area Wilderness, located along the state's border with Canada and approximately 10 miles and 75 miles east of the International Falls LPOE, respectively. In compliance with the CAA's Regional Haze Rule, the MPCA submitted an update to the state's Regional Haze SIP to the USEPA in 2022 to meet the goal of restoring Class I areas to natural visibility conditions by 2064. According to the

SIP, visibility continues to improve at these Class I areas (MPCA 2022c). The state's two main sector contributors to overall visibility impairment at Boundary Waters Canoe Area Wilderness and Voyageurs National Park, in order of importance, are industry and vehicle emissions.

View of LPOE southern façade

LPOE entrance booths looking north

East side of LPOE with MD&W Railway rail track and PCA transport structure at boundary

Duty-free pick-up building at eastern edge of property

Source: PHE 2022

Figure 3.8-3. International Falls Land Port of Entry Buildings

Typical view of elevated pneumatic chip line, west border of parcel

Typical view along shoreline, north edge of parcel

Trailer storage lot on parcel

View of First Creek, looking north

Source: PHE 2022

Figure 3.8-5. Proposed Expansion Area (PCA Parcel)

Typical view of southern portion of parcel

Typical view of northern portion of parcel

Source: PHE 2022

Figure 3.8-6. Proposed Expansion Area (RLD Parcel)

3.8.2 Environmental Consequences

3.8.2.1 *Summary of Land Use and Visual Impacts from the 2011 Final EIS*

GSA determined that the 2011 Preferred Alternative would not have any significant adverse effects on land use and visual resources. Impacts to land use and visual resources from the 2011 Preferred Alternative are discussed in Section 4.8 of the 2011 Final EIS and are summarized as follows:

- The 2011 Preferred Alternative would require the acquisition and conversion of property owned by Boise Inc. (currently PCA), along the Rainy River (the 2011 Final EIS did not identify the landowner of the parcel currently owned by RLD).
- The 2011 Preferred Alternative would result in a less-than-significant adverse impact on the operations of the Duty-Free Americas-International Falls store. To re-stock additional merchandise for customers at the outbound pick-up location before departing the U.S., employees at the duty-free store would be required to take a longer path to drop off the purchases at the pick-up building.
- The 2011 Preferred Alternative would result in an overall beneficial impact to the visual environment of the study area by replacing the existing LPOE buildings with new facilities. New lighting would be introduced, though would be designed in accordance with CBP requirements to provide sufficient lighting to intended areas and reduce the amount of light to unintended areas.

3.8.2.2 *Methodology*

To evaluate the impacts to land use and visual resources, GSA reviewed the project alternatives to determine whether any activities have the potential to cause the following within the ROI:

- Changes in land use and zoning;
- Changes in land ownership;
- Changes in public use of recreational areas or special interest areas;
- Changes in the scenic view or character of the landscape; or
- Changes in the amount of open space in an undeveloped area.

A major adverse impact to land use would occur if the project alternatives would result in:

- A conflict with land use or a land use restriction on adjacent properties;
- Conflicts with regional or local land use plans and zoning;
- A major alteration of the aesthetic character and use of the land in relation to surrounding uses;
- Degradation of the visual appeal of an area, especially an area that most observers would consider a scenic view; or
- Elimination of a large area of undeveloped open space.

3.8.2.3 *Alternative 1 – Full Build*

Construction

Under Alternative 1, the buildings and structures within the existing 1.6-acre International Falls LPOE would be demolished and replaced with new facilities and infrastructure. Additionally, GSA would acquire approximately 20.5 acres of land from PCA and RLD, and would convert these parcels to buildings, paved surfaces, and landscaped areas. Acquisition, to include negotiations and fair reimbursement, would be conducted similar to as described in the 2011 Final EIS. Outside of the proposed expansion area, 2nd Avenue and SR-11 would require widening and some PCA facilities would be relocated, including the relocation

of the existing trailer lot to one of two potential locations near the proposed expansion area and south of SR-11 (see Figure 2-5). Alternative 1 may also include renewable energy technologies, including the use of solar and geothermal energy technologies, which would be within the new LPOE site boundary, with the exception of some infrastructure associated with the RWC technology which would require placement within the Rainy River.

Demolition and construction activities are estimated to begin in 2025, with substantial completion anticipated in 2029. Depending on the project schedule, some construction activities may occur during nighttime and weekends. The closest residential areas, which are located less than 0.5 miles from the project area could experience intermittent, minor disturbances from construction noise (see Section 3.6, Noise). Construction activities could also disturb PCA operations; however, GSA would coordinate closely with PCA on developing construction phasing to minimize potential operational disruptions. As such, direct, adverse impacts on PCA operations and adjacent land uses are expected to be short-term and minor.

Construction of the Proposed Action, especially widening of portions of SR-11 and construction of a new storage lot for PCA's trailers, could result in some intermittent traffic conflict and delays along SR-11 (see Section 3.7, Traffic and Transportation). Since SR-11 is part of a byway, disturbance to recreational users on this road may occur, though impacts are expected to be direct, short-term, minor, adverse and local. GSA would coordinate with MnDOT, Koochiching County, and the International Falls Public Works for construction on SR-11.

Construction activities could temporarily disturb users of the Rainy Lake Bike Trail and cause annoyance from increased noise levels, dust, and traffic conflicts. To minimize conflicts, temporary re-routing of portions of the trail could occur and result in direct, short-term, minor, adverse, local impacts.

The widening of 2nd Avenue near its intersection with 2nd Street could cause temporary disturbances to nearby businesses and traffic leaving/accessing the LPOE, due to increased fugitive dust, traffic delays, and/or noise levels. Similar impacts would occur from the widening of SR-11 near the access point of the new COV entrance, though impacts would be limited to the vehicular traffic on SR-11 and users of the Rainy Lake Bike Trail. Increases in construction-related vehicles could result in increased traffic delays, accessibility issues to land uses, elevated noise, and traffic hazards at these road widening locations and along primary roadways leading to the project area, including US-71 (Voyageur Highway), SR-11, and US-53/2nd Avenue. The intensity of any adverse impact would depend on the extent and duration of the access limitation or extent of potential traffic detours but is expected to be direct and indirect, short-term minor, adverse and local.

The project would encroach on the banks of the Rainy River from potential construction of riverbank structures used to support a new access road and piping associated with the potential use of a geothermal energy system that may use RWC technology. The Shoreland Overlay District prohibits development between 50 and 75 feet from the Rainy River. However, all permitted and conditional uses of the M-2A areas are allowed within this area but would require coordination with local government offices and state/federal agencies to obtain the necessary permits (see Section 3.3, Water Resources).

Since the majority of the project area and surrounding areas are industrial in nature, construction activities would not result in a substantial contrast to the surrounding viewshed. Construction would degrade the viewshed near the Rainy Lake Bike Trail along the southern boundary of the proposed expansion area if the trail is temporarily re-routed, though the construction activities would not contrast greatly with the existing trailer storage lot, and impacts would be direct, short-term, minor, adverse and local.

Operations

Under Alternative 1, 20.5 acres of newly acquired property would be converted from primarily open, landscaped and paved areas to the expanded and modernized LPOE facility with proposed buildings, roadways, parking lots, and landscaped areas (see Section 2.2.1.1). New lights, fencing, and other perimeter

security barriers would be introduced into the proposed expansion area, similar to as described in the 2011 Final EIS.

Since the land use of newly acquired property and a relocated trailer parking location would retain similar or better qualities than those qualities of a manufacturing land use, the project would not conflict with its current zoning designation of M-2A (Manufacturing). Operations of new facilities associated with connected actions would likewise not result in any land use conflicts, as they would remain on existing PCA-owned land and would be consistent with ongoing activities in these areas. As shown in Figure 3.8-3, the project area is located within an area planned and zoned for industrial use. Therefore, there would be no conflict with the City of International Falls' future land use plans under Alternative 1.

Direct, long-term, minor, adverse, local impacts to users of the Rainy Lake Bike Trail and SR-11 would occur at a new crossing at the proposed COV entrance from increased traffic safety hazards. PCA trucks entering and exiting the new parking lot south of SR-11 would potentially conflict with traffic on SR-11 and users of the bike trail. Traffic safety hazards would be minimized with installation of a new traffic signal, proper signage, and new acceleration and deceleration lanes.

Routing of non-commercial traffic through downtown would be maintained as the access/exit point of the proposed LPOE for POVs would still occur on 2nd Avenue and, therefore, is not expected to adversely impact local businesses located on US-53/2nd Avenue.

The new LPOE facility would be constructed to be consistent with GSA design standards as noted in Section 3.8.1.2, which would result in a direct, long-term, minor, beneficial, local impact to the overall visual quality of the existing LPOE and proposed expansion area from the replacement of old facilities and removal of trailers in the existing trailer lot. Introduction of new facilities as a result of PCA connected actions, particularly the removal of the existing pneumatic chip line and construction of two new elevated conveyor chip lines, would result in changes to local viewsheds; however, new facilities would be consistent with the existing industrial character of the area and would result in negligible impacts to visual resources.

Indirect, long-term, negligible to minor, beneficial, regional impacts to regional haze conditions are expected as the new LPOE facility would operate more efficiently and reduce idling times, thereby reducing vehicle emissions, which can contribute to haze and degrade scenic vistas.

3.8.2.4 *No Action Alternative*

Under the No Action Alternative, GSA would not expand or modernize the International Falls LPOE. Therefore, land acquisition would not occur and impacts to land use would not occur. Current facilities and infrastructure at the existing LPOE would remain and long-term minor local and regional adverse impacts to visual resources would be expected as existing structures would continue to deteriorate and degrade the aesthetic quality of the LPOE. Further, long term increases in idling time could contribute to regional haze. Additionally, PCA trailer storage on the parking lot adjacent to the Rainy Lake Bike Trail and SR-11 would likely remain.

3.8.2.5 *Impacts Reduction Measures*

Measures to reduce construction impacts on land use-related concerns, such as increased fugitive dust, noise levels, and traffic volumes are discussed in Sections 3.5, Air Quality and Climate Change; 3.6, Noise; and 3.7, Traffic and Transportation, respectively.

GSA would consider local zoning laws for construction and operation of the proposed LPOE and all design requirements of state and local governments to the extent practicable. This would include both the incorporation of exterior design elements to reflect the unique character of the area and the emphasis on pedestrian circulation and amenities, such as landscaped plazas and walkways, to the extent practicable and consistent with GSA design standards.

To ensure minimal conflicts with land use, GSA would continue coordination efforts during the design process with city and county governments, MnDOT, and other relevant stakeholders including PCA, MD&W Railway, Aazhogan, CentraGas and other utility providers.

GSA would implement the following measures to minimize impacts to visual resources:

- Consult with local officials, consider local requirements for new building construction, and comply with state and local building codes to the maximum extent practicable.
- Integrate its programs of design/architecture and construction excellence into the new facility in order to optimize building performance and aesthetics, including adherence to P100 Standard which establishes design criteria and standards for new government buildings.
- Design exterior lighting to meet physical security requirements but controlled to minimize light trespass (e.g., direct light downward and minimize glare). Fixtures for the security fence would be a similar style.
- Incorporate landscaping and screening (trees and vegetation) into the exterior design to provide aesthetic benefits to the surrounding community, consistent with GSA's *Urban Development/Good Neighbor Program.*

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3.9 INFRASTRUCTURE AND UTILITIES

This section describes the baseline conditions for infrastructure and utility resources and assesses the potential impacts of or to infrastructure and utilities that could result from implementing the Proposed Action and No Action Alternative as discussed in Chapter 2. Infrastructure refers to the roadway network and facilities at the International LPOE; utilities refer to the water and sewer, natural gas, electricity, stormwater systems, and communication systems that serve the project area.

The *International Falls Land Port of Entry Improvements Study* 2011 Final EIS did not discuss existing conditions nor did it evaluate impacts to infrastructure and utilities. This SEIS uses the following documents and data sources to characterize the affected environment and assess potential impacts regarding infrastructure and utilities:

- Primary data sources used to discuss the affected environment for infrastructure and utilities: the 2018 Feasibility Study; and Phase I ESAs conducted in 2021 and 2022 for the existing LPOE site and proposed expansion area, respectively; the City of International Falls Department of Public Works Water and Wastewater websites; the *City of International Falls Comprehensive Plan,* adopted in 2020*;* and internal utility consumption data of the existing LPOE provided by GSA.

3.9.1 Affected Environment

3.9.1.1 *Region of Influence*

The ROI includes utilities and infrastructure utilized by the International Falls LPOE and any other utilities located on or adjacent to the project area, to include the proposed expansion area and areas for potential connected actions necessitated by the LPOE expansion (see Section 2.2.1.1).

3.9.1.2 *Regulatory Setting*

GSA's P100 Standards outline criteria for the following: general requirements; urban development and landscape design; architecture and interior design; structural and civil engineering; mechanical engineering; electrical engineering; fire protection; and design standards for specialty spaces. GSA has adopted the technical requirements of the International Codes published by the International Code Council. Facilities built on federal property are exempt from state and local building codes. GSA recognizes that the national building codes are typically the foundation of state and local building codes, and that state and local codes represent important regional interests and conditions. In keeping with federal law (including the Public Buildings Amendments of 1988 and the Federal Urban Land Use Act of 1949), it is GSA's policy to comply with state and local building codes to the maximum extent practicable; however, GSA has the final authority to accept or reject any recommendation from state and/or local government officials.

Section 438 of the 2007 EISA specifies that federal agencies are required to reduce stormwater runoff from federal development and redevelopment projects to protect water resources. Federal agencies can comply using a variety of stormwater management practices often referred to as "green infrastructure" or "low impact development" practices, including reducing impervious surfaces and using vegetative practices, porous pavements, cisterns, and green roofs.

LEED certification is a third-party green building certification program and the globally recognized standard for the design, construction and operation of high-performance green buildings and neighborhoods. LEED Gold certification requires at least 60 points across any combinations of carbon, energy, water, waste, transportation, materials, health, and indoor environmental quality credits in the LEED Green Building Rating System for New Construction & Major Renovations, Version 4.

CEQ's Guiding Principles for Sustainable Federal Building provides guidance for federal building construction to ensure federal buildings:

- Employ Integrated Design Principles;

- Optimize Energy Performance;
- Protect and Conserve Water;
- Enhance the Indoor Environment;
- Reduce the Environmental Impact of Materials; and
- Assess and Consider Building Resilience.

3.9.1.3 *Existing Conditions*

Infrastructure and utilities were not included as resource areas for analysis in the 2011 Final EIS; therefore, existing conditions were not discussed. However, existing conditions since the time of the 2011 Final EIS are generally believed to be unchanged.

Facilities

The International Falls LPOE consists of a main operations building, a mobile gamma-ray inspection technology (GRIT) shed, public restrooms, a secure storage shed, and a toll booth. The LPOE main operations building was originally constructed in 1993 and has since had minor alterations, including an exterior façade replacement in 2005 (GSA 2011). The main operations building is a two-story structure consisting of slab-on grade construction (GSA 2021b).

GSA evaluated the existing conditions of the International Falls LPOE and the existing and future needs of the CBP and other inspection agencies in feasibility studies conducted in 2011 and 2018 (GSA 2011; GSA 2019a). Evaluations confirmed that the existing building, although well maintained, did not meet GSA's minimum requirements for LPOEs and provided only a small percentage of the total building area and land required to meet the needs of the CBP and other agencies (GSA 2011). Since the publication of the 2011 Final EIS, the space and facility requirements for CBP have changed and additional project updates have occurred, which are summarized in Section 1.1.2 of this SEIS.

The proposed expansion area consists of a small PCA-owned building containing electrical equipment that supports the control tower and air blower for the elevated pneumatic chip line located on the property. The building is located on the northwest portion of the property along the elevated pneumatic chip line just southeast of the existing LPOE site. The date of construction is unknown. Additionally, at the far northwest end of the proposed expansion area there is a building referred to as the duty-free pick-up building. The building is associated with a main duty-free shop located in town with its primary property located at 200 2nd Avenue. A nearby trailer is located near this building and is abandoned, with its condition unknown. There is also a large vertical structure associated with the elevated pneumatic chip line, referred to as the chip cyclone, located along the elevated pneumatic chip line near the southwest corner of the proposed expansion area; however, the structure is just beyond the proposed expansion area boundary (GSA 2022a).

An asbestos-containing material (ACM) and lead-based paint (LBP) survey has not been conducted for the buildings associated with the International Falls LPOE or the PCA buildings adjacent to the proposed expansion area. Based on the date of construction of the LPOE buildings, they are not expected to contain ACM or LBP. Further information on ACM and LBP is provided in Section 3.12, Human Health and Safety.

Roadways

The primary U.S. highways that serve the project area include US-71, SR-11, and US-53. Additional details on the major thoroughfares serving the project area are discussed in Section 3.7, Traffic and Transportation. The LPOE facility includes two primary and two secondary passenger vehicle inspection lanes, one primary commercial inspection lane, and a visitor parking lot (GSA 2019a). A mixed asphalt and gravel road runs along the river on the far north side of the proposed expansion area. The road continues northwest towards the MD&W Railway railyard and connects to 2nd Street just north of the railyard and south of the International Falls LPOE (GSA 2022a).

The International Bridge consists of two adjacent bridges; a concrete bridge on the east with two lanes for inbound/outbound passenger vehicle traffic; and a steel bridge on the west that is shared by rail and commercial vehicle traffic. Additionally, pedestrians enter the LPOE from a sidewalk located on the west side of the metal span of the bridge. All traffic from the International Bridge crosses over existing railroad tracks which traverse between the LPOE facility and the bridge in an east-west direction. Although railcars actively cross the LPOE, they no longer cross the bridge because of the closing of the Resolute paper mill, just across the border in Fort Frances, Ontario. Incoming traffic to the LPOE currently queues in the limited space available between the bridge and LPOE facilities in a north-south orientation (GSA 2019a). The 2018 Feasibility Study identifies the limited queuing space and inadequate number of inspection lanes as a deficiency, resulting in congestion during peak hours and poor circulation of traffic, especially when more than one commercial truck or trains come through for inspection, causing blockage and queuing to be pushed back to the bridge.

Water and Sewer

The City of International Falls' water treatment plant provides water service to approximately 5,700 people in the city (including the existing LPOE) and is sourced from the Rainy River (USCB 2023; City of International Falls 2023a). The International Falls water plant is located on SR-11, approximately 1.5 miles east of the International Falls LPOE and adjacent to Second Creek. The system, designed in 2010, withdraws raw water through a screened intake opening from the Rainy River at a location about 1,500 feet upstream to prevent contamination from Second Creek. The screened intake prevents large solids from entering the facility, where water is filtered and then treated. The treated water is then pumped to a 500,000-gallon ground storage reservoir. High service pumps transfer the water from the ground storage reservoir to the distribution system (City of International Falls 2023a). The water plant has the capacity to provide up to 2 million gallons of water per day. Currently, the plant runs at under one-third of its capacity, producing around 600,000 gallons per day. Daily production has been reduced to match decreased local demand as the city's population has decreased and as new water-saving measures in homes have been implemented, including modern appliances and plumbing systems. The *City of International Falls Comprehensive Plan* states that the water treatment plant has ample capacity to accommodate more than twice the current need and use (City of International Falls 2020). The City of International Falls also sells its water to other municipalities and to individuals living outside of the city with cisterns, and residents of unincorporated areas of Koochiching County.

Wastewater from International Falls, Ranier, and the NKASD is processed at the NKASD wastewater treatment facility located on US-71, approximately 1 mile southwest of the International Falls LPOE. The wastewater treatment plant is operated by the NKASD, but utility services are provided by the City of International Falls. Currently, the wastewater treatment plant provides a treatment capacity of 3 million gallons per day in wet weather and 1.34 million gallons per day in dry weather. The 10-year average annual flow through the plant is 383 million gallons, or 1.05 million gallons per day (City of International Falls 2020). Wastewater generated at the International Falls LPOE consists of typical domestic wastewater and is treated at the NKASD facility.

Based on water use data provided by GSA, annual water usage at the International Falls LPOE from 2022 was 99,000 gallons (GSA 2023a). Since water and sewer services are both provided by the City of International Falls, water usage metering accounts for both water and sewage. Both water and sewer utilities near the project area are located underground within the rights of way (ROWs) associated with adjacent roadways (GSA 2019a).

Electrical and Natural Gas

Electrical service in International Falls and its surrounding area is provided by Minnesota Power. The company operates the regional power system that provides electricity for a 26,000-square-mile electric service area in northeastern Minnesota. Minnesota Power supplies retail electric service to 145,000 customers and wholesale electric service to 16 municipalities (City of International Falls 2020). The

proposed expansion area contains several large overhead high-tension power lines and associated poles/towers, as well as smaller utility poles. The lines run along SR-11, just south of the expansion area, then traverses across the proposed expansion area in a northerly direction towards the Rainy River (GSA 2022a). The overhead lines then continue northwest along the Rainy River towards the International Falls LPOE where they eventually cross a utility easement between the existing LPOE and the International Bridge.

Natural gas is provided to the existing International Falls LPOE by Minnesota Energy Resources (GSA 2021b). The 2022 Phase I ESA for the proposed expansion area states that the area contains subsurface natural gas utilities (GSA 2022a). Centra Pipelines has a high-pressure natural gas pipeline that crosses the International Bridge, feeding facilities that provide service to the City of International Falls and the PCA facilities.

Based on energy use data provided by GSA, annual electricity consumption for the International Falls LPOE from 2022 was 349,030 kilowatt hours. Annual natural gas consumption for the LPOE from 2022 was 1,529,575 cubic feet (GSA 2023a).

Electric and gas utilities near the project area are located above ground within the ROWs associated with adjacent roadways (GSA 2019a).

Stormwater Drainage

Municipal stormwater is managed by the City of International Falls and provided by storm drains that discharge directly into surface water sources (primarily the Rainy River) without treatment (MPCA 2023f). Stormwater also enters the Rainy River directly through surface runoff. The City of International Falls is not currently covered under a MS4 permit, although it is expected to be subject to such permitting requirements in the future as it is a city with a population greater than 5,000 people that drains to an impaired water (USEPA 2021b).

According to the 2021 Phase I ESA, the surface and stormwater from the existing LPOE site flows toward the municipal stormwater sewers that discharge into the Rainy River, and the topography of the site has a gradual overall down slope to the east toward the Rainy River (GSA 2021b). Sewer services for the LPOE are maintained by the City of International Falls Water and Sewer Department. According to the 2022 Phase I ESA for the proposed expansion area, multiple stormwater inlets and outfalls were observed on the proposed expansion area, primarily located on the far southern edges along SR-11 as well as along the northern edge along and adjacent to the Rainy River. No clogged units were observed. Topography at this site also slopes downward towards the north in the direction of the Rainy River (GSA 2022a).

Communications Systems

Four firms supply communication broadband services in the City of International Falls, including Frontier Telephone Company, Paul Bunyan Communications, MidContinent Communications, and the Northeast Service Cooperative. Fiber lines are located throughout the city (City of International Falls 2020).

Miscellaneous Utilities

The proposed expansion area contains two other additional utility lines, including a leachate line and an elevated pneumatic chip line for wood chip transport.

Approximately 20 to 30 feet east of First Creek, a subsurface leachate collection line enters the proposed expansion area, running in a north-south direction from SR-11 to the far north edge of the site near the Rainy River. The line then turns left, running along and adjacent to the Rainy River on the PCA property and terminating at the PCA facility. A small section of the line runs aboveground where it crosses First Creek. At this crossing, the line is supported by a series of round, concrete culverts. The leachate line collects leachate from an offsite former landfill known as Moonlight Rock Landfill. The leachate is collected and piped to the PCA facility for treatment prior to discharge. The line typically only contains flow during the warmer time of the year (i.e., approximately April through October) to avoid potential

freezing of the leachate. The line formerly entered the proposed expansion area from the east and ran entirely along the Rainy River, however it was relocated when the U.S. Border Patrol facility was constructed to the east of the project area. A series of manholes along the line mark its location (GSA 2022a).

An elevated pneumatic chip line transports wood chips via forced air from the PCA property south of the proposed expansion area, across SR-11, and to the PCA plant west of the existing LPOE. The line runs along the western boundary of the proposed expansion area just outside of the footprint and crosses to the PCA plant just south of the existing LPOE (GSA 2022a).

3.9.2 Environmental Consequences

3.9.2.1 *Summary of Infrastructure and Utility Impacts from the 2011 Final EIS*

Infrastructure and utilities were not included as resource areas for analysis in the 2011 Final EIS; therefore, no determination of impacts was provided.

3.9.2.2 *Methodology*

To evaluate the impacts on utilities and infrastructure, GSA reviewed the project alternatives to determine whether any activities have the potential to cause the following within the ROI:

- Alteration of intended use and/or placement of facilities;
- Disruption to utility operations during construction activities; or
- An increase or decrease in demand for utility services during construction or operations.

A major adverse impact to utilities and infrastructure would occur if the project alternatives would result in:

- Substantial damage to nearby facilities;
- Long-term disruption of utility operations;
- Negatively affect local and regional utility supplier's ability to meet customer demands; or
- Require substantial public utility system updates.

3.9.2.3 *Alternative 1 – Full Build*

Construction

Under Alternative 1, expansion and modernization of the International Falls LPOE would result in direct, short-term, moderate, adverse, site-specific impacts on facilities during construction to meet the LPOE's design and operation needs. The new LPOE facilities would be constructed to GSA and CBP standards within the proposed expansion area while the existing LPOE remains operational; following completion of construction the existing LPOE facilities would be demolished. The proposed LPOE design layout would have new, improved roadway and facility layouts. Roadway widening would be required at 2nd Avenue (US-53) at the new LPOE facility's POV access point (International Bridge at the LPOE approach) and SR-11 at the proposed access location for COVs. This would result in short-term, moderate impacts on roadways, and would require coordination with International Falls Public Works office and MnDOT. Construction would occur in a phased approach while the LPOE continued to operate, which could adversely affect facility functioning; however, the same phased approach would also minimize overall adverse impacts on service capabilities, vehicle and pedestrian wait times, and traffic compared to intermittent closure/disruption of the LPOE operations.

Construction at the International Falls LPOE would have direct, short-term, minor, adverse, local impacts on public utility providers from increasing the demand on services. Onsite water usage may include use

from construction workers for restroom and potable water purposes. In addition, water usage would be required for construction-related activities such as dust suppression, soil compaction, concrete work, or equipment washing, resulting in an increase in demand on the public water utility. There would also be an increase in demand for wastewater services from the hauling of portable toilets and other wastewater generated offsite. The demand at the International Falls water treatment plant and the NKASD wastewater treatment facility are currently well below their capacities, and both plants are expected to have the capacity to handle any increases in demand from the project. Electricity for construction may require tie-ins into nearby sources.

In order to prepare the proposed expansion area for development, some existing PCA facilities and other utilities would need to be accommodated in a new way within the LPOE via easements or moved off site to the west or south. The following infrastructure may require relocation: chip line booster building, PCA storage building, leachate line, MD&W Railway rail lines, PCA private truck road and trailer parking, natural gas line, and power line. Relocation and site work outside of the proposed expansion area would primarily occur on land both west of the LPOE and south of SR-11 (see Section 2.2.1.1). GSA would coordinate with PCA to conduct activities, such as shifting operations from the current to the new chip line booster building and moving electrical lines from current to new poles, during shutdown periods to limit impacts to PCA operations. Site preparation would be coordinated as needed with PCA, MD&W Railway, and utility providers to minimize disruption to operations to the extent practicable.

In general, the potential relocation and reconnection of utilities, including connection of any renewable energy utilities built as part of Alternative 1, could require temporary or intermittent shut offs resulting in direct, short-term, minor, adverse, local impacts to services. Existing utility maps would be reviewed and, where needed, utility companies would be contacted to identify any locations where construction activities have the potential to affect utility lines. Potential impacts would be avoided by coordinating with responsible utility providers in advance of such activities and by either implementing measures to protect existing utility lines or by arranging for their temporary or permanent relocation.

Operation

Alternative 1 would result in a direct, long-term, major, beneficial, site-specific impact on facilities and infrastructure for the CBP. Newly constructed facilities would provide new utilities and infrastructure built and maintained to GSA standards that would support CBP's updated operational needs. The new facilities and updated layout, improved inspection lanes, and roadway designs would improve the efficiency of the processing of pedestrian, COVs, and POVs and relieve incoming traffic congestion from the International Bridge. The creation of a GRIT facility and additional parking would provide improved conditions for CBP personnel as well as enhancing traveler comfort.

There would be direct, long-term, negligible to minor, local, adverse impacts to water, wastewater, electricity, natural gas, and telecommunication services from the operation of the new LPOE facility resulting from the increase in personnel and square footage of the buildings. The increased demand on most of these utility services would be offset by a more efficient, sustainable facility design. New buildings would be designed to comply with current building codes and P100 Standards and would have LEED Gold certification at a minimum. Increases in utility demand from an increase in employees working on site would be partially offset with efficiency improvements associated with the LEED design. The extent of impacts on utility providers would depend on overall usage and extent of efficiency improvements, but operations of the International Falls LPOE is not anticipated to noticeably affect utility providers' ability to deliver service.

Additionally, GSA is considering the use of renewable energy technology, including solar technology and geothermal systems, which would further reduce the LPOE's energy demand. PV panels or solar hot water collectors would require some water use for the cleaning of the panels but the quantity is expected to be small. Generally, solar power technologies use a modest amount of water for cleaning solar collection and reflection surfaces; approximately 26 gallons per megawatt hour (U.S. Army 2012).

Stormwater would be managed on site under city and county stormwater management requirements (see Section 3.3, Water Resources). Additional stormwater management measures may be implemented to achieve LEED Gold certification. Additionally, per Section 438 of the 2007 EISA guidance, GSA would consider green infrastructure and low impact development practices, such as reducing impervious surfaces and using vegetated swales and revegetation and using porous pavements. Therefore, there would be direct, long-term, minor, local, adverse impacts to stormwater management systems.

3.9.2.4 *No Action Alternative*

Under the No Action Alternative, GSA would not expand or modernize the International Falls LPOE; current facilities and infrastructure at the existing LPOE would remain. Therefore, no construction, renovation, or demolition activities would occur. Additionally, the LPOE would not benefit from updated facilities and infrastructure with LEED certification, which would be designed to accommodate renewable energy sources and achieve sustainable standards.

3.9.2.5 *Impacts Reduction Measures*

Impacts on infrastructure and utilities would be reduced through the following:

- Adherence to GSA P100 Standards (GSA 2021a) including:
    - New parking and road networks must use low-embodied carbon concrete and environmentally preferable asphalt.
- Coordinating with utility providers in advance of such activities to determine the best course of action to avoid or minimize impacts, either by implementing measures to protect utility lines or by arranging for their temporary or permanent relocation.

The expanded and modernized LPOE would utilize energy- and water-efficient technology, which would further reduce demands on utility providers. GSA would also seek a minimum of a LEED Gold certification for construction of new facilities, and steps to achieve this would likely include measures that would reduce demand for energy and water.

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3.10 SOCIOECONOMICS

This section describes the baseline conditions for the social and economic environment within the region of the project area and assesses the potential for socioeconomic impacts from implementing the Proposed Action and No Action Alternative as discussed in Chapter 2. Socioeconomics encompasses a range of aspects of the human environment. Socioeconomics analysis looks at conditions such as population, housing, employment, public services, and quality of life, and informs the relationship between these factors. Population is influenced by natural birth and death rates, as well as immigration for reasons such as job opportunities, family, and studies. Local and regional economies describe the driving economic forces surrounding the project area. Socioeconomics analysis uses historical and current data trends and takes into consideration future projections and plans for the area.

This SEIS uses the following documents and data sources to characterize the affected environment and assess potential impacts regarding socioeconomic conditions:

- The 2011 Final EIS Section 3.9 provides a description of the community characteristics and resources of the project area including population and demographics; community characteristics and conditions; community facilities and resources; parks and recreational facilities; employment and industry trends. The 2011 Final EIS Sections 4.9.1 through 4.9.5 present the anticipated impacts resulting from the construction and operations of the new LPOE facility, as considered in the 2011 Final EIS, for the population and demographics; community characteristics and conditions; community facilities and resources; parks and recreational facilities; employment and industry trends.
- Primary data sources used to update and supplement the affected environment discussion regarding socioeconomic conditions include federal agencies such as the U.S. Census Bureau, Bureau of Labor Statistics, and Bureau of Economic Analysis; state agencies such as the Minnesota State Demographic Center and Minnesota Department of Employment and Economic Development; and local agencies such as the Koochiching Economic Development Authority.

3.10.1 Affected Environment

3.10.1.1 *Region of Influence*

The ROI for socioeconomic analysis focuses on the county (i.e., Koochiching County) in which the project area is located. Socioeconomic impacts would be felt most by individuals, residents, and workers in Koochiching County, especially residents in International Falls, Minnesota and areas adjacent to the project area. Data are presented for Koochiching County and compared to the state of Minnesota overall. Data for International Falls is included where available and appropriate. Koochiching County is located within the Arrowhead Economic Development Region and the Northeast Planning Region for Minnesota, along with six other counties. Socioeconomic data is provided for the Arrowhead Economic Development Region and Northeast Planning Region where applicable.

3.10.1.2 *Existing Conditions*

Conditions described for socioeconomics in the 2011 Final EIS generally remain the same with respect to community facilities and resources; and parks and recreational facilities. There have been changes to population and demographics; community characteristics and conditions; and employment and industry trends since the publication of the 2011 Final EIS.

Population

International Falls holds the county seat and is Koochiching County's largest city by population. The city and county have historically experienced similar population trends since the area began industrialization (City of International Falls 2020). Table 3.10-1 shows population data from 2000 through 2021, and future

population estimates for 2030 through 2050 for International Falls, Koochiching County, and the state of Minnesota.

Despite the fact that the population of Minnesota increased from 2000 to 2021, the populations of International Falls and Koochiching County both decreased during the same time period. Since a peak in the 1960s, the city and county have seen population declines (City of International Falls 2020).

Table 3.10-1. Population Growth for International Falls, Koochiching County, and Minnesota

Metric	International Falls	Koochiching County	Minnesota
Historical and Current Population			
2000	6,775	14,355	4,919,479
2010	6,424	13,311	5,303,925
2021	5,859	12,203	5,670,472
Average Annual Growth Rate (2010-2021)	-0.80%	-0.76%	0.63%
Average Annual Growth Rate (2000-2021)	-0.64%	-0.71%	0.73%
Projected Population[a]			
2030	N/A[b]	10,867	6,034,892
2040	N/A [b]	9,351	6,288,522
2050	N/A [b]	7,775	6,462,700
Average Annual Growth Rate (2030-2050)	N/A [b]	-1.42%	0.35%

Source: USCB 2000; USCB 2010; USCB 2023; Minnesota State Demographic Center 2021

[a] Population projections are from the Minnesota State Demographic Center and are based on 2017 Census projections that are not entirely consistent with the 2021 American Community Survey Results.

[b] Population projections are not available for International Falls because the Minnesota State Demographic Center only prepares projections for the state and designated regions such as by county.

Koochiching County had the slowest population growth rate of any county in Minnesota in 2021. Since 2010, the county's population has declined at an average rate of about 0.8 percent per year, compared to Minnesota's annual population growth rate of approximately 0.6 percent per year during the same time period. Similar to the county, the population of International Falls declined at an average rate of approximately 0.8 percent per year between 2010 and 2021.

From 2030 to 2050, Koochiching County's population is projected to decline at a steeper rate of 1.4 percent per year, and the state of Minnesota's population growth is expected to slow to a rate of 0.4 percent per year. Koochiching County's declining population can be attributed to a negative natural increase (i.e., more deaths than births per year) caused by an aging population, as well as migration out of the county.

While there was a net out-migration from Koochiching County in 2021 (i.e., residents moving out of the county), the county increased its international immigrant population at a faster rate than the state of Minnesota (Minnesota Employment and Economic Development 2023).

Housing

A housing unit refers to a house, an apartment, a mobile home or trailer, a group of rooms, or a single room occupied as separate living quarters or, if vacant, intended to be occupied as separate living quarters. The total housing unit inventory includes both occupied and vacant housing units. If a housing unit is occupied, it is the usual place of residence of a person or group of people; conversely, if a housing unit is vacant, it is not the usual place of residence of a person or group of people. The rental vacancy rate is the percentage of available rental inventory that is vacant (USCB 2020a).

The total housing units, occupied housing units, rental vacancy rates, and homeowner vacancy rates for International Falls, Koochiching County, and Minnesota are shown in Table 3.10-2.

Table 3.10-2. Housing Characteristics for International Falls, Koochiching County, and Minnesota, 2021

Location	Total Housing Units	Occupied Housing Units	Rental Vacancy Rate (%)[a]	Homeowner Vacancy Rate (%)
International Falls	3,120	2,846	0.0	0.0
Koochiching County	7,459	5,663	1.6	1.6
Minnesota	2,470,483	2,229,100	4.7	0.7

Source: USCB 2021b

[a] The rental vacancy rate is computed by dividing the number of vacant units for rent by the sum of the number of renter-occupied units, the number of vacant units for rent, the number of rented not yet occupied units, and then multiplying by 100 (USCB 2020b).

Similar to population trends, International Falls and Koochiching County have been experiencing declines in housing at approximately 1 percent per year (Community Partners Research, Inc. 2019). As shown in Table 3.10-2, rental vacancy rates in International Falls and Koochiching County are low compared to the state of Minnesota, with International Falls having virtually no vacant units available to rent or buy.

To combat the shortage of vacant housing in the area, the Koochiching Economic Development Authority released a Housing Study in 2019 that focuses on housing needs for Koochiching County and its respective cities, including International Falls. International Falls was identified as the city with the greatest need for rental housing development, with a target of 60 to 70 additional housing units including market rate units, subsidized/moderate rent units, affordable market rate conversion units, and senior with services units, as well as a mixed-use downtown project. To stimulate increased homeownership, the Housing Study also recommended 15 to 19 new single-family homes to be constructed in International Falls by 2024, and for housing initiatives to be implemented, such as the promotion of employer involvement in housing programs (Community Partners Research, Inc. 2019).

Labor Force

The size of a county's civilian labor force is measured as the sum of those currently employed and unemployed. People are classified as unemployed if they do not have a job, have actively looked for work in the prior 4 weeks, and are currently available for work (BLS 2022). As shown in Table 3.10-3, from 2000 to 2021 Koochiching County's labor force declined at an average of approximately 1 percent per year, and the state's labor force grew at an average of approximately 0.4 percent per year. There was a more substantial decline in Koochiching County's labor force between 2010 and 2021 at a rate of 1.8 percent per year, and the state's labor force grew at a slower rate of 0.2 percent in the same time period. International Falls is omitted from comparison of labor statistics with Koochiching County and Minnesota, as the Bureau of Labor Statistics does not provide data for cities.

Table 3.10-3. Civilian Labor Force Trends for Koochiching County and Minnesota

Metric	Koochiching County	Minnesota
Historical and Current Labor Force		
2000	7,221	2,799,111
2010	6,945	2,940,696
2021	5,582	3,021,360
Average Annual Growth Rate (2010-2021)	-1.8%	0.2%
Average Annual Growth Rate (2000-2021)	-1.1%	0.4%
Projected Labor Force[a]		
2030	4,694	3,132,697
2040	N/A[b]	3,243,867
2050	N/A[b]	3,384,905
Average Annual Growth Rate (2030-2050)	N/A[b]	0.4%

Source: BLS 2000; BLS 2010; BLS 2021; BLS 2023; Minnesota State Demographic Center 2017a, b

[a] Projected labor force estimates are based on Census 2017 population projections using the Census 2010 results. The county level analysis is an extrapolation of current labor force participation rates measured with the American Community Survey 2011-2015 dataset.

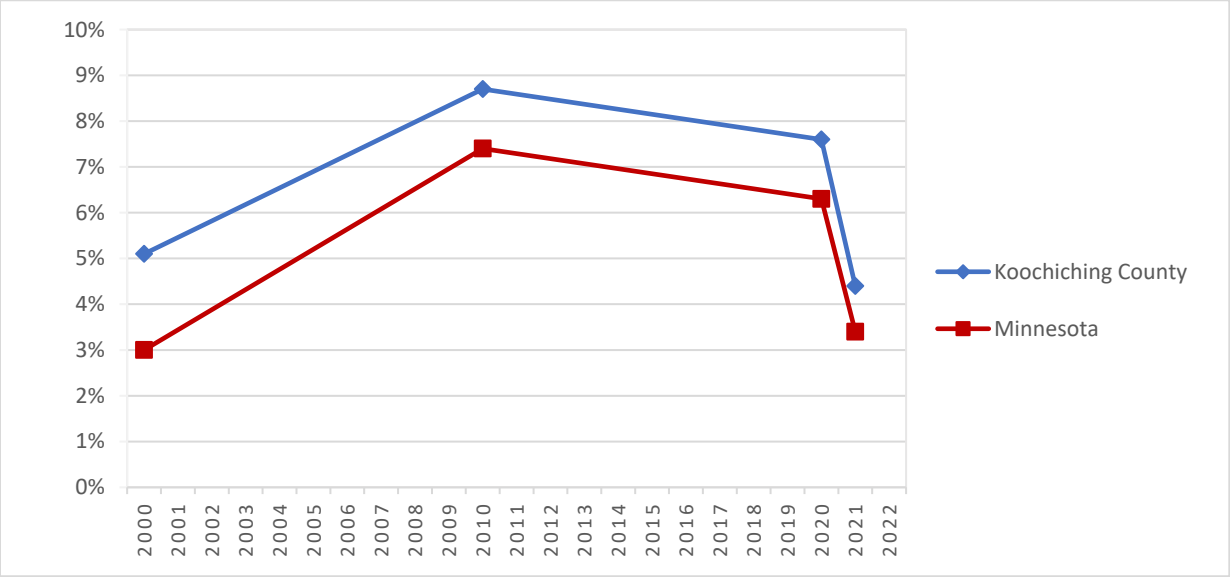
[b] Labor force projections are not available for Koochiching County beyond 2030 because the Minnesota State Demographic Center only projected county labor force for each five-year interval from 2015 to 2030.

Comparable to the rest of the U.S., Minnesota experienced slowed economic growth from the COVID-19 pandemic recession. Unlike Minnesota, Koochiching County had been trending toward a declining civilian labor force since before the pandemic. The average annual labor force decline of approximately 2 percent can largely be attributed to the aging population of Koochiching County.

Unless worker productivity increases significantly, slowing labor force growth may result in a decline in standard of living and slower growth of income tax revenues. Maintaining a capable and growing labor force is important for Koochiching County to be able to pay for necessary public services (Minnesota State Demographic Center 2013).

Unemployment

The unemployment rate is calculated based on the number of unemployed persons divided by the labor force. Figure 3.10-1 shows the annual unemployment rates for Koochiching County and Minnesota in 2000, 2010, 2020, and 2021. Throughout this time, unemployment rates were consistently higher in Koochiching County than in the state of Minnesota. The sharp increase between 2000 and 2010 can be attributed to the 2008 economic crisis, which was part of the global financial downturn. As of 2022, unemployment rates decreased after the pandemic recession in the county and state, with Koochiching County experiencing among its lowest unemployment rates in the past two decades (BLS 2021).



Source: BLS 2000; BLS 2010; BLS 2020, BLS 2021

Figure 3.10-1. Unemployment Rates in Koochiching County and Minnesota, 2000 - 2021

Koochiching County's historically low unemployment rate may in part be attributed to a shrinking labor force, as there are less civilians to account for in calculating the rate. In conjunction with a smaller labor force and lower unemployed percentage of Koochiching County's population, there have also been less unemployed workers actively seeking employment (Minnesota Employment and Economic Development 2023).

Koochiching County is part of the Northeast planning region, where there were 11,742 job vacancies by employers in the fourth quarter of 2021. The region's abundant job vacancies, along with a projected 5.5 percent increase in employment levels over the next decade signal opportunity for further reduction in unemployment in Koochiching County (Minnesota Employment and Economic Development 2023).

Employment by Industry

Employment statistics by industry in Koochiching County for 2018 are shown in Table 3.10-4. As Koochiching County has not disclosed employment statistics for the natural resources and manufacturing industries since 2018, this section uses the most recent, complete data available. The leading classified industries in the county were trade, transportation, and utilities; local government; manufacturing; and leisure and hospitality. These four industries accounted for more than 70 percent of total employment in Koochiching County (BLS 2018). The International Falls Comprehensive Plan cites manufacturing as the leading industry sector in the city by number of employees (City of International Falls 2020).

Table 3.10-4. Employment by Industry in Koochiching County, 2018

Industry	Establishments	Employment
Trade, Transportation, and Utilities	108	898
Local Government	24	663
Manufacturing	11	653
Leisure and Hospitality	57	615
Education and Health Services	43	605
Construction	36	217
Federal Government	11	183
Financial Activities	24	176
Natural Resources and Mining	24	120
Professional and Business Services	30	114
Other Services	35	111
State Government	12	86
Information	9	58
Total	424	16,132

Source: BLS 2018

Table 3.10-5 shows the top ten employers in Koochiching County. PCA is the largest employer in the county and city and is located adjacent to the existing International Falls LPOE with several PCA trailers located on the proposed expansion area. Falls High School and Falls Elementary School, which fall under School District 361, are located within 1.4 miles of the existing International Falls LPOE. Rainy Lake Medical Center and Good Samaritan are located within 1.6 miles of the existing International Falls LPOE site. Notably, the CBP employs 150 people in Koochiching County, with approximately 75 staff supporting operations at the existing International Falls LPOE (City of International Falls 2020).

Table 3.10-5. Top Ten Employers in Koochiching County, 2020

Rank	Company	Activity	Employment
1	Packaging Corporation of America	Manufacturing	582
2	School District 361	Education	250
3	Local Governments (County and City)	Government	207
4	Rainy Lake Medical Center	Health Care	181
5	United Health Group	Health Care	150
6	U.S. Customs and Border Protection	Government	150
7	Good Samaritan	Health Care	100
8	Menards	Retail	85
9	Wagner Construction	Construction	69[a]
10	Littlefork Medical Center	Health Care	67
Total			**1,841**

Source: City of International Falls 2020

[a] Employment total represents the baseline number of employees. Seasonal employment for Wagner Construction is reported as totaling about 100 employees.

Earnings

Several measures are used to describe earnings in the ROI, including per capita personal income (PCPI) and compensation by industry. International Falls is omitted from comparison of earnings statistics with Koochiching County and Minnesota, as the Bureau of Labor Statistics does not provide data for cities.

Per Capita Personal Income

Personal income is the income received by all persons from all sources, or the sum of net earnings by a place of residence, property income, and personal current transfer receipts. This includes earnings from work received during the period, interest and dividends received, and government transfer payments, such social security checks. It is measured before the deduction of personal income taxes and other personal taxes and is reported in current dollars. PCPI is the personal income for county residents divided by the county's total population (BEA 2022).

Table 3.10-6 contains annual PCPI in 2000, 2010, and 2021 for Koochiching County and Minnesota. All dollar estimates are in current dollars (not adjusted for inflation). Since 2000, the state of Minnesota has consistently had a higher PCPI than Koochiching County by 22 to 32 percent. Koochiching County and Minnesota's respective PCPI more than doubled from 2000 to 2021, with Koochiching County's growing about 8 percent faster.

Table 3.10-6. Annual Per Capita Personal Income in Koochiching County and Minnesota (in dollars)

	Per Capita Personal Income			
	2000	2010	2021	Percent Change 2000 - 2021
Koochiching County	24,592	35,026	52,256	112.5
Minnesota	32,448	42,724	66,280	104.3

Source: BEA 2022

Industry Compensation

Compensation data are measured and reported for the county of work location and are typically reported on a per job basis. Compensation data indicate the wages and salaries for work done in a particular place (e.g., a county), but if the worker does not live in the county where the work occurred (e.g., a person from a neighboring county may cross county lines to go to work), then a sizeable portion will be spent elsewhere. These expenditures will not remain in or flow back to that county's economy. Total industry wages account for the wages and salaries, but do not include employer contribution for employee retirement funds, social security, health insurance, and life insurance. 'Total industry compensation' includes these additional forms of compensation. This section uses total wages as a metric to understand the relative sizes of market-related economic activity, or business activity, performed in Koochiching County because the county does not disclose total industry compensation for certain sectors to the Bureau of Economic Analysis.

As shown in Table 3.10-7, income is generated by economic activity in Koochiching County through a variety of sectors, including various types of business as well as government. Government and government enterprises; manufacturing; educational services; and retail trade accounted for approximately 71.5 percent of the approximately $37.4 million compensated to employees working in Koochiching County in the fourth quarter of 2021.

Table 3.10-7. Wages by Industry, Fourth Quarter of 2021

Industry Description	Wages ($000)	Percent
Government and Government Enterprises	14,642	28.0
Manufacturing	14,561	27.9
Educational Services	4,281	8.2
Retail Trade	3,879	7.4
Finance and Insurance	3,259	6.2
Accommodation and Food Services	2,407	4.6
Construction	2,226	4.3
Transportation and Warehousing	1,800	3.4
Agriculture, Forestry, Fishing and Hunting	1,337	2.6
Wholesale Trade	1,105	2.1
Information	707	1.4
Arts, Entertainment, and Recreation	479	0.9
Administrative and Support and Waste Management and Remediation Services	456	0.9
Utilities	320	0.6
Other Services (Except Government and Government Enterprises)	319	0.6
Professional, Scientific, and Technical Services	278	0.5
Real Estate and Rental and Leasing	148	0.3
Total wages	**52,204**	**100**

Source: Minnesota Employment and Economic Development 2021

Koochiching County is located within the Arrowhead Economic Development Region, which has lower wages compared to the state of Minnesota (Minnesota Employment and Economic Development 2023). Compared to the state of Minnesota's median household income of $77,706 in 2021, Koochiching County had a lower median household income at $54,708 and a higher proportion of households with incomes below $50,000. However, the cost of living in Koochiching County is lower than in the state of Minnesota. A single person living alone in Koochiching County requires an hourly wage of $12.53 to meet basic needs, while a three-person family requires an hourly wage of $14.32 (Minnesota Employment and Economic Development 2023).

Local Economy of International Falls

International Falls is a largely rural community in Northeast Minnesota that shares a border with Canada. Residents enjoy a high quality of life, recreational activities, a low cost of living, and collaboration with sister city Fort Frances, Ontario, located across the Rainy River (Arrowhead Regional Economic Development 2015).

International Falls is named after the falls that were harnessed to provide hydropower to the town's paper mill starting in the early 1900s. Historically, International Falls has had close economic ties to the business of the paper mill, bringing employment, commerce, and population growth to the area (Koochiching Economic Development Authority Undated). With two changes in mill ownership in the last two decades, the city has experienced large shifts in economic fortunes as a result of larger trends and consolidation in

the manufacturing industry. The paper mill was purchased from local owners by Boise, Inc. in 2008 and has since been purchased by PCA in 2013. Despite the loss of 265 jobs prior to the paper mill's sale in 2013, PCA remains the largest employer in International Falls and Koochiching County (City of International Falls 2020). To anticipate and combat potential economic challenges caused by layoffs at the paper mill, residents of International Falls established the organization Voyage Forward. The project focuses on strengthening connections between Fort Frances and International Falls by facilitating border crossings (Arrowhead Regional Development Commission 2015).

Forest products, such as timber, are the number one industry for International Falls and the surrounding area. Tourism is the second leading industry, offering a historical destination, lake views, and the only national park in the state of Minnesota at Voyageurs National Park. International Falls is a border city that Canadians access primarily by crossing the International Bridge and processing through the International Falls LPOE. Canadian tourists cross the border to take advantage of a greater variety of available products, better quality of certain products and lower costs of goods. In 2015, International Falls received $28 million from Canadian travelers and $7.2 million from seasonal spending (Voyage Forward 2015).

As International Falls has some of the coldest winter temperatures in the U.S., cold weather testing of major industrial and manufactured products, such as automobiles, has become a staple to the winter economy (City of International Falls 2020). Minnesota North College - Rainy River is another vital pillar of the local economy, aligning its programs and services with the needs of area businesses and the community, attracting students and visitors, and providing industry worker training (Koochiching Economic Development Authority 2017).

International Falls is a major transportation and trade hub, with a convergence of main roadways US-53, SR-11, and US-71; Falls International Airport; the Ranier Rail Port; and the International Falls LPOE. The Ranier Rail Port is a major international rail port of entry for the Canadian National Railway. The port is one of the busiest in North America and is considered a key location for future development. The convergence of high-quality highways and rail service offer a strategic location for a distribution center, warehousing, or importing and exporting through Free Trade Zone #259. The 700-acre Free Trade Zone offers duty and logistics benefits for eligible businesses. The International Falls Business Park is also under development on a 25-acre parcel (Koochiching County Development Authority Undated).

International Falls has identified issues with the current International Bridge connected to the LPOE that affect economic hindrances to businesses and residents. The city's Comprehensive Plan cites expensive tolls as a potential economic hindrance to the community, costing some households thousands of dollars per year and slowing the integration between International Falls and Fort Frances. Congestion from tourists processing through the LPOE also negatively impacts local businesses (City of International Falls 2020).

The City of International Falls conducted public engagement efforts for its 2020 Comprehensive Plan. Survey participants expressed strong dissatisfaction with the variety of employment opportunities available in the city, and identified economic development, including the availability of careers and well-paying employment opportunities, as the city's top priority. The second most common response category was expanding and improving the city's park and recreation system, as well as improving walking and biking in the city (City of International Falls 2020). In the Voyage Forward Retail Market Analysis conducted in 2015, owners of vacation homes in International Falls also cited strengthening the economy and increasing development as the most important change to improve quality of life in the city (Voyage Forward 2015).

Quality of Life and Community Services

Quality of life can be characterized as a person's well-being and happiness. Quality of life is a subjective measure and cannot be solidly defined. For this analysis, quality of life considerations focus on those elements in International Falls that the public generally associates with a high quality of life: education, safety, recreation opportunities, and a positive and affordable general living environment. Other factors,

such as air quality, noise, and traffic could also contribute to a person's sense of quality of life and are addressed in Sections 3.5, Air Quality and Climate Change; 3.6, Noise; and 3.7, Traffic and Transportation.

Recreational Resources

Natural resources can link residents to an area or attract new residents to an area. Outdoor recreation can also help to revitalize communities, protect air and water quality, create jobs, support economic growth and diversification, and provide new ways for people to connect with nature (USEPA 2022c). Life-long residents of Koochiching County enjoy the proximity to Rainy Lake and other abundant natural areas, and recreational opportunities attract new residents and second homeowners. Koochiching County includes several environmental amenities, including the only national park in the state of Minnesota, Voyageurs National Park. These locations contribute to the region's identity, as well as area quality of life. The recreational area closest to the International Falls LPOE is the Rainy Lake Bike Trail that runs adjacent to the proposed expansion area along SR-11. Residents also enjoy boating, picnic areas, playing fields, hiking, and fishing.

Police, Fire and Medical Services

The International Falls Police Department is located at 715 4th Street. Law enforcement consists of 12 full-time personnel, including a chief, a deputy chief, an investigator, a school resource officer, 4 shift commanders, and 5 patrol officers. Additionally, seven fully licensed part-time officers and an administrative assistant support operations (City of International Falls 2023b).

The International Falls Fire, Rescue, and EMS Department is located at the Municipal Building Firehall at 600 4th Street and provides emergency services 24 hours per day, 7 days per week. The combination department employs 4 firefighter engineers, 6 full-time paramedics, and 20 Emergency Medical Technicians. The International Falls Fire Department consists of 28 firefighters, 5 of which are full-time, and the remainder are volunteers. These 28 firefighters respond to International Falls, Ranier, and surrounding areas. Some of the responsibilities of the department include firefighting operations, vehicle extrications, fire inspections, and fire prevention throughout the community (City of International Falls 2023b).

The closest medical center is the Rainy Lake Medical Center, located at 1400 US-71. The Rainy Lake Medical Center is a Level IV trauma designated center, offering physician-staffed emergency services 24 hours per day, 7 days per week. Trauma rooms are also connected to a virtual emergency care system that provides access to supplementary trauma experts to support Rainy Lake Medical Center's staff (Rainy Lake Medical Center 2023).

Schools

Students in International Falls attend schools in School District 361 (two total) or at St. Thomas Aquinas Catholic School. All three schools are located within 1.5 miles of the existing International Falls LPOE, with St. Thomas Aquinas Catholic School located 0.6 mile from the site.

The average student-to-teacher ratio in Minnesota public schools is approximately 16 students to 1 teacher. This student-to-teacher ratio is slightly above the U.S. average of 15 students to 1 teacher. Falls Elementary School is below the state and national average ratio, while Falls Secondary School is above both (NCES 2022). Total enrollment and student-to-teacher ratios for the three schools in International Falls are presented in Table 3.10-8.

Table 3.10-8. Schools in International Falls, 2021-2022

School	Enrollment	Student-to-Teacher Ratio
Falls Secondary School	511	17:1
Falls Elementary School	388	12:1
St. Thomas Aquinas Catholic School	37	8.4

Source: NCES 2022

The 2-year public institution, Minnesota North College - Rainy River, in International Falls had an enrollment of 121 students in 2021.

3.10.2 Environmental Consequences

3.10.2.1 *Summary of Socioeconomic Impacts from the 2011 Final EIS*

GSA determined that the 2011 Preferred Alternative would not have any significant adverse effects on community characteristics and resources. Impacts to population, demographics, and labor force; community characteristics and conditions; community facilities and services; parks and recreation facilities; and employment and industry trends from the 2011 Preferred Alternative are discussed in Sections 4.9.1 through 4.9.5 of that EIS and are summarized as follows:

- The 2011 Preferred Alternative would not substantially alter the area's population or demographics. No major staffing level changes would occur.
- The 2011 Preferred Alternative would not impact community characteristics and conditions of the study area.
- The 2011 Preferred Alternative would not have adverse impacts to community facilities and services. Congestion reduction would result in a positive impact to community services.
- The 2011 Preferred Alternative would not impact parks and recreation facilities.
- The 2011 Preferred Alternative would not substantially alter the employment and industry trends in the area. Construction would result in short-term economic stimulus through the creation of direct and indirect jobs.

3.10.2.2 *Methodology*

The effects analysis considers aspects of the social and economic environment that are sensitive to changes and that may be adversely or beneficially affected by activities associated with Alternative 1. As noted earlier, the ROI for the socioeconomic analysis is defined as Koochiching County, but social impacts to population, housing, and quality of life and community services focus on International Falls, which is the area most likely to be affected by Alternative 1.

To evaluate the impacts on socioeconomic resources, GSA reviewed the project alternatives to determine whether any activities have the potential to cause the following within the ROI:

- Alter the local economy;
- Change housing characteristics (types of units, occupancy, housing values, etc.) or residential development patterns;
- Alter population growth or demographic patterns;
- Displace populations, residents, or businesses to accommodate construction;

- Require an amount of public or private resources (time and/or money) that interferes with the performance of other local government functions or the viability of proposed projects; or
- Induce growth without adequate supporting community services (e.g., education, public health and safety).

A major adverse impact to socioeconomics would occur if the project alternatives:

- Alters the local economy on a substantial basis without the capacity to absorb a decrease or increase;
- Changes housing characteristics or residential development patterns in a substantial way;
- Places a demand on suitable housing that exceeds availability;
- Alters population growth or demographic patterns in ways that change the overall character of communities;
- Requires an amount of public or private resources (time and/or money) that substantially interferes with the performance of other local government functions or the viability of proposed projects; and
- Induces growth that exceeds the capacity of supporting community services, including:
  - Change in the number of users of community services that exceed existing capacity;
  - Change in the demand for emergency and public protection services that would increase response times based on existing personnel resources and equipment; or
  - Change in the funding needed to sustain services or to increase access to services.

3.10.2.3 *Alternative 1 – Full Build*

Construction

Peak demolition and construction activities are anticipated to occur during the months of April through October during construction in the years of 2025 through 2029. Peak construction would require a potential maximum of 100 workers locally; non-peak construction would require approximately 50 workers. GSA anticipates that most construction workers would be drawn from the region and commute daily to the project area from their current residences within Koochiching County. Non-local workers are not expected to relocate semi-permanently or permanently to International Falls; however, they may find temporary lodging in the region. Therefore, GSA anticipates that the number of workers who would temporarily relocate would be a smaller percentage of non-peak and peak employment estimates. Although housing vacancy rates in the region are relatively low (see Section 3.10.1.2), the demand for local housing would not be expected to increase substantially during the construction phase. Overall impacts on population and housing locally and regionally would be direct, short-term, adverse, negligible to minor during construction. Project construction is not expected to affect the ability of individuals in Koochiching County living on a fixed income to pay rent; Koochiching County's tax base; and Koochiching County's ability to provide funding for social services, health services, or schools. As the LPOE would remain fully operational throughout construction, there are no anticipated impacts to CBP staff.

There would be a direct, short-term, minor, beneficial impact on unemployment and income locally in International Falls and communities associated with construction of the new LPOE facilities. Because workers would be hired locally or regionally, most of their expenditures (e.g., rent, property taxes) for the duration of their employment would remain in or flow back into Koochiching County's economy.

The PCPI and compensation of employees in the construction sector in Koochiching County would be expected to increase slightly during the approximately 5-year construction period. During this time, the unemployment rate in Koochiching County would likely decrease slightly. Short-term, moderate,

beneficial, and indirect socioeconomic impacts would result from directly affected industries purchasing supplies and materials from other industries. The estimated project cost of Alternative 1 is $263.2 million, including the cost to keep the current facility operational 24 hours per day, 7 days per week. A substantial portion of the project cost would be spent within the local International Falls economy on construction labor and materials. Materials and equipment would be purchased from local vendors when applicable. Indirect jobs would be created when the construction firm makes purchases from local vendors and retail stores and at establishments where workers would shop. Induced impacts would occur when employees of the directly and indirectly affected industries spend the wages they receive. The types of indirect and induced jobs that would be created during the construction phase would likely be relatively low-wage jobs, such as restaurant workers or convenience store clerks.

PCA plant operations may be affected during construction of the new LPOE facilities and connected actions including the PCA chip line booster building demolition and relocation, PCA chip line replacement, PCA leachate line relocation, rail line relocations, roadway improvements, utility relocations, and relocation of the PCA trailer parking area and trailers to one of two alternative sites as described in Section 2.2.1.1. Because the PCA plant typically shuts down for 5 to 7 days approximately every 18 months, GSA would coordinate with PCA to conduct activities, such as shifting operations from the current to the new chip line booster building and moving electrical lines from current to new poles, during shutdown periods to limit impacts to PCA operations. Site preparation would be coordinated as needed with PCA, as well as MD&W Railway and utility providers in the area, to minimize disruption to operations to the extent practicable. As such, the phased construction of the new LPOE facilities and connected actions would have direct, short-term, minor to moderate, adverse impacts on the operations of PCA, MD&W Railway, and utility providers in the project area. Construction of connected action components would not otherwise affect local population, housing, social services, health services, or schools.

Construction would result in direct, short-term, minor, adverse impacts associated with decreased quality of life for residents in close proximity to the project area due to increased air emissions, noise levels, and traffic congestion as discussed in Sections 3.5, Air Quality and Climate Change; 3.6, Noise; and 3.7, Traffic and Transportation. For detailed discussion of disproportionate effects to vulnerable populations, see Section 3.13, Environmental Justice and Protection of Children's Safety. Users of the Rainy Lake Bike Trail may experience disturbances from construction activities. Residents adjacent to the International Falls LPOE may be delayed in reaching emergency and urgent care facilities during construction activities due to traffic detours or delays. The response time of ambulances, fire trucks, and police may similarly increase slightly when attempting to access areas surrounding the project area. Because no additional students would be expected to relocate to Koochiching County during construction, no impacts on the student-to-teacher ratio or quality of education would be expected at Koochiching County schools.

The construction of renewable energy technologies at the LPOE would be integrated into the construction of new facilities and would not change anticipated effects on socioeconomic conditions.

Operation

Operation of the new LPOE would have direct, long-term, negligible to minor, adverse impacts to population and housing locally. Following construction of the new facilities for the International Falls LPOE, CBP does not expect to add more full-time employees to the current staff of approximately 75 workers. Employment by new tenants may add a maximum of 30 full-time workers at the new LPOE, although some may already be local residents. While it is difficult to estimate the exact amount of in-migration, it is assumed that a maximum of 30 workers may relocate to International Falls and the surrounding communities. Any in-migration may have long-term, beneficial, indirect impacts on the aging labor force of International Falls and Koochiching County if incoming workers have family members of working age. Any influx of new workers would have a long-term, negligible to minor beneficial impact on labor and earnings locally.

The reduced traffic times resulting from the redirection of commercial traffic away from downtown would have direct, minor to moderate, beneficial effects on personal travel expenditures, which would create indirect beneficial economic impacts on International Falls. Shorter wait times at the expanded and modernized LPOE for tourists has the potential to increase spending in the area. As a result, there would be long-term, minor to moderate, beneficial, direct and indirect impacts on unemployment in all industries in Koochiching County.

Alternative 1 could induce potential opportunities for further economic and social connection between International Falls and Fort Frances. Additional staffing and services and new technology would improve connectivity between International Falls, which is in line with the city's goals.

Operations of the expanded and modernized LPOE facilities are expected to result in direct and indirect, long-term, minor to moderate, beneficial, impacts to quality of life locally. Because connected actions are expected to improve traffic flow by reducing or eliminating roadways and rail crossings in the vicinity of the LPOE, Alternative 1 would have a local, long-term, minor to moderate, beneficial impact on quality of life for residents. The reduced congestion and improvements are expected to result in safer roads for residents and tourists, improve access of emergency services, and indirectly improve access to the Rainy River and Rainy Lake by expanding more opportunities for pedestrian and bike infrastructure.

The conversion of the proposed expansion area to LPOE facilities would permanently restrict public access along this portion of the Rainy River, as the riverfront would be secured by CBP. Because this area is currently the private property of PCA, public access is already limited. Increased traffic safety risks at a new crossing at the proposed COV entry, particularly on the users of the Rainy Lake Bike Trail would be minimized with installation of a new traffic signal, proper signage, and new acceleration and deceleration lanes.

Any additional CBP personnel and their families that may relocate to International Falls would contribute to a permanent population increase and raise demand locally on the school system. Given that the student-to-teacher ratio at Falls High School already exceeds the state and national averages, additional students would contribute to unfavorable student-to-teacher ratios at the school. However, the potential maximum influx of workers with school-age children is expected to have a negligible adverse impact on the school system. Because the local population has declined since 2000, school infrastructure would be adequate to accommodate the increased enrollment.

The implementation of renewable energy technologies at the expanded and modernized LPOE would be integrated into the new facilities operations and would not change anticipated effects on socioeconomic conditions. Social cost of carbon from GHG emissions are discussed in Section 3.5, Air Quality and Climate Change.

3.10.2.4 *No Action Alternative*

Under the No Action Alternative, GSA would not expand or modernize the International Falls LPOE; current staffing at the existing LPOE would remain essentially unchanged. No new facility or infrastructure construction would occur; therefore, there would be no impacts on existing population and housing, labor and income, the local economy, and public services in International Falls.

3.10.2.5 *Impacts Reduction Measures*

Measures to reduce construction impacts on quality of life-related concerns, such as fugitive dust, noise, or traffic from construction activities are discussed in Sections 3.5, Air Quality and Climate Change; 3.6, Noise; and 3.7, Traffic and Transportation, respectively. Measures described in Section 3.8, Land Use, may also benefit socioeconomic conditions and community services. In addition, GSA intends to coordinate with Koochiching County Public Works during site planning to accommodate snow storage associated with maintenance for the Rainy Lake Bike Trail along SR-11.

No additional impact reduction measures would apply for socioeconomics under the Proposed Action.

3.11 CULTURAL RESOURCES

This section describes baseline conditions for cultural resources within the ROI, as defined below, and assesses historic and archaeological resources within the ROI to affect, or be affected by, implementation of the Proposed Action or the No Action Alternative, as detailed in Chapter 2. This SEIS uses the following terms related to cultural resources:

- Historic properties are defined as: any prehistoric or historic district, site, building, structure, or object included in, or eligible for inclusion in, the NRHP maintained by the Secretary of the Interior. This term includes artifacts, records, and remains that are related to and located within such properties. This term also includes properties of traditional religious and cultural importance to an Indian tribe or Native Hawaiian organization and that meet the NRHP criteria (listed in Section 3.11.1.2).
- Traditional cultural properties are a type of historic property eligible for the NRHP because of their association with cultural practices or beliefs of a living community that: (1) are rooted in that community's history or (2) are important in maintaining the continuing cultural identity of the community.
- Cultural resources include the remains and sites associated with human activities, such as prehistoric and ethno-historic Indian archaeological sites, historic archaeological sites, historic buildings, structures, objects, and elements or areas of the natural landscape. Cultural resources determined to be NRHP-eligible are historic properties.

The SEIS uses the following documents and data sources to characterize the affected environment and assess potential impacts regarding cultural resources:

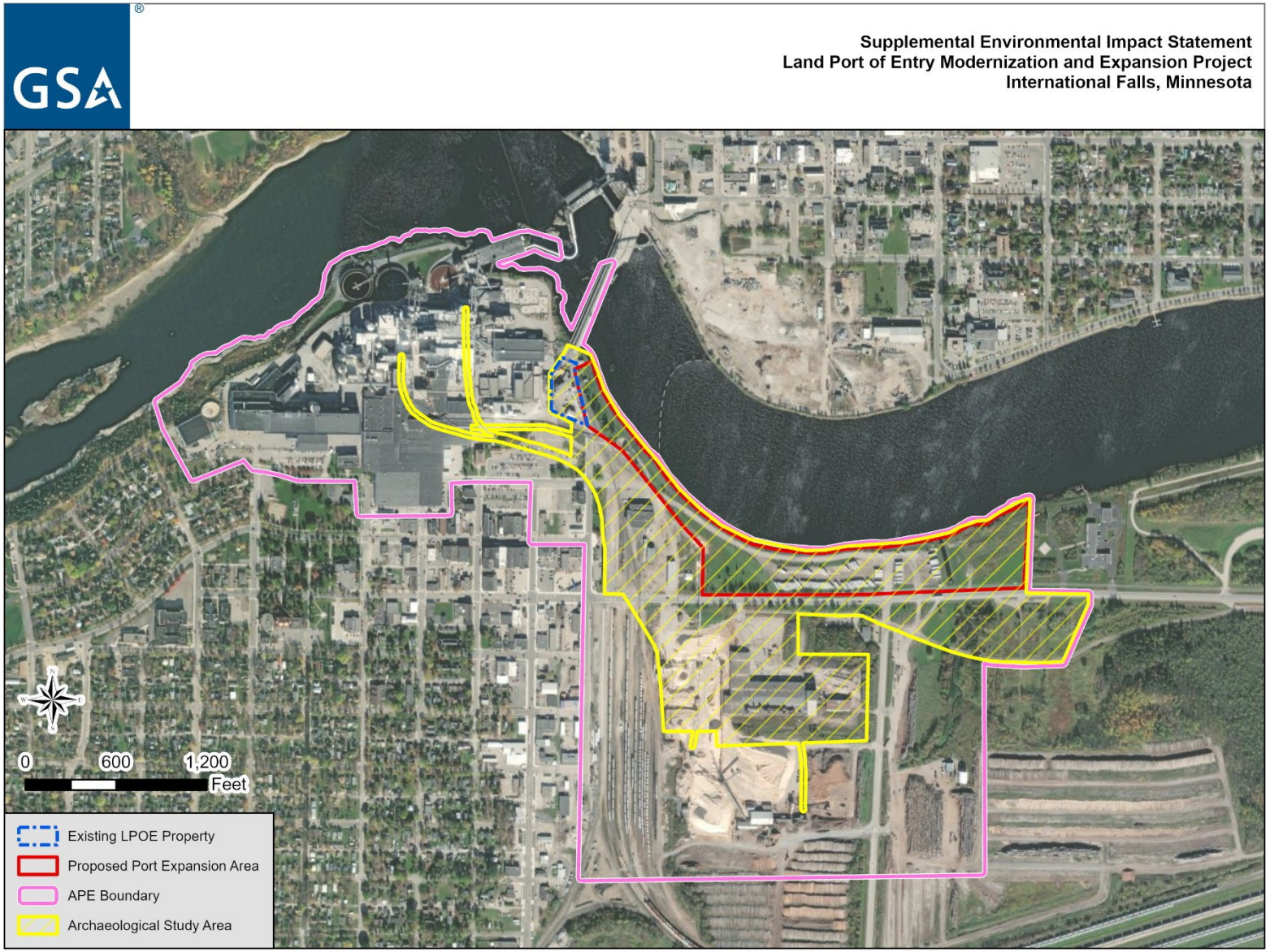
- The 2011 Final EIS Section 3.10 provides a description of cultural resources within the project area, including Native American resources, Historic Resources, and Archaeological Resources. The 2011 Final EIS Sections 4.10.1 through 4.10.3 present the anticipated effects resulting from the construction and operations of the new LPOE facility, as considered in the 2011 Final EIS.
- *An Archaeological Literature Search for the International Falls Land Port of Entry Modernization and Expansion Project in Koochiching County, Minnesota* (SEARCH 2023a) provides a summary of the potential for archaeological resources to occur within the project area.
- *A Historic Architectural Survey for the International Falls Land Port of Entry Modernization and Expansion Project, Koochiching County, Minnesota* (SEARCH 2023b) provides a summary of the potential for aboveground historic-age resources to occur within the project area.

3.11.1 Affected Environment

3.11.1.1 *Region of Influence*

The ROI for cultural resources is referred to as the APE. The APE defines the geographic area or areas within which an undertaking may disturb archaeological resources, if present, and/or directly or indirectly cause alterations in the character or use of historic properties, if such properties exist. In this context, an undertaking is defined as a project, activity, or program funded in whole, or in part, under the direct or indirect jurisdiction of a federal agency, including, among other things, processes requiring a federal permit, license, or approval. For this project, the undertaking is synonymous with the Proposed Action and Connected Actions and includes any demolition and construction activities occurring within the APE.

The APE, displayed in Figure 3.11-1, is defined as the project area encompassed by the Proposed Action as well as adjacent parcels to the west beyond 2nd Avenue to include the PCA facility, to the south towards the PCA timber unloading operation, and to the north towards the United States-Canada border to encompass the U.S. half of the International Bridge, International Falls Power Company Dam, and two railroad spur lines that terminate at the Rainy River.



Source: SEARCH 2023a, SEARCH 2023b

Figure 3.11-1. APE for International Falls LPOE Modernization and Expansion Project

The APE is defined by the tax parcel boundaries of all adjacent parcels that can reasonably be expected to be within the project viewshed based on proposed three-story building heights. The APE for this project includes the archaeological study area which is defined as all areas of potential ground disturbance and where changes to land use and public access might take place as shown in Figure 3.11-1.

Adverse effects to archaeological resources are generally the result of impacts from ground-disturbing activities. The APE for such resources therefore coincides with those areas where impacts from the construction and operation of a proposed facility would occur (i.e., the project footprint). Adverse effects to architectural resources may occur through impacts that could change the character of a property's use or the physical features within a property's setting that contribute to its historic significance, or through impacts that could introduce visual, atmospheric, audible, or vibration elements that diminish the integrity of a property's significant historic features.

3.11.1.2 *Regulatory Setting and Requirements*

National Environmental Policy Act. NEPA establishes guidelines to "preserve important historic, cultural, and natural aspects of our national heritage, and to maintain, wherever possible, an environment that supports diversity and a variety of individual choice" [42 U.S.C. 4331 (b)(4)]. Impacts considered under NEPA include those on cultural and historic-age resources (40 CFR 1508.8).

National Historic Preservation Act. The NHPA (16 U.S.C. 470), as amended, establishes a program for the preservation of historic properties throughout the nation and sets forth guidelines to determine the eligibility of historic properties for inclusion in the NRHP. Under the law, federal agencies must approach historic properties in the spirit of stewardship and must appropriately involve the public. The two portions of the law most often applied to projects on GSA properties are: Section 110, which mandates proactive identification and management of cultural resources actions; and Section 106, which requires agencies to consider the effects of their actions on historic properties.

National Register of Historic Places. The NRHP is authorized by the NHPA and is the nation's official list of buildings, structures, objects, sites, and districts worthy of preservation because of their significance in American history, architecture, archeology, engineering, and culture. The NRHP recognizes resources of local, state, and national significance that have been documented and evaluated according to uniform standards and criteria. The NRHP is part of a national program managed by the National Park Service to coordinate and support public and private efforts to identify, evaluate, and protect America's historic and archaeological resources.

The following criteria are used to identify resources that qualify for listing in the NRHP. The quality of significance in American history, architecture, archaeology, engineering, and culture is present in districts, sites, buildings, structures, and objects that possess integrity and:

- Criterion A – Are associated with events or activities that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history; or
- Criterion B – Are associated with the lives of persons significant in our past; or
- Criterion C – Embody distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction, or that represent the work of a master, or that possess high artistic values, or that represent a significant and distinguishable entity whose components may lack individual distinction; or
- Criterion D – Have yielded, or may be likely to yield, information important in prehistory or history.

Multiple reference sources were used during the evaluation process to determine significance under the above criteria for archaeological and architectural resources within the APE. Specifically, two NRHP Multiple Property Documentation Form (MPDFs) Railroads in Minnesota, 1862-1956, and Iron and Steel Bridges in Minnesota, were utilized for guidance in evaluating various railroad related infrastructure and bridge infrastructure. Phase II Evaluations conducted in 2017 and 2019 by Mead and Hunt were considered for evaluating trunk highways in the project area.

Ordinarily, cemeteries, birthplaces, or graves of historical figures; properties owned by religious institutions or used for religious purposes; structures that have been moved from their original locations; reconstructed historic buildings; properties primarily commemorative in nature; and properties that have achieved significance within the past 50 years are not considered eligible for the NRHP. However, such properties will qualify if they are integral parts of districts that do meet the criteria or if they fall within the following categories:

- A religious property deriving primary significance from architectural or artistic distinction or historical importance; or
- A building or structure removed from its original location, but which is significant primarily for architectural value, or which is the surviving structure most importantly associated with a historic person or event; or
- A birthplace or grave of a historical figure of outstanding importance if there is no appropriate site or building directly associated with his productive life; or
- A cemetery which derives its primary significance from graves of persons of transcendent importance, from age, from distinctive design features, or from association with historic events; or
- A reconstructed building when accurately executed in a suitable environment and presented in a dignified manner as part of a restoration master plan, and when no other building or structure with the same association has survived; or
- A property primarily commemorative in intent, if design, age, tradition, or symbolic value has invested it with its own exceptional significance; or
- A property achieving significance within the past 50 years if it is of exceptional importance.

In order to be eligible for listing in the NRHP, a property must retain sufficient integrity to convey its significance. The NRHP publication How to Apply the National Register Criteria for Evaluation establishes how to evaluate the integrity of a property: "Integrity is the ability of a property to convey its significance" (NPS 1995). The evaluation of integrity must be grounded in an understanding of a property's physical features and how they relate to the concept of integrity. Determining which of these aspects are most important to a property requires knowing why, where, and when a property is significant. To retain historic integrity, a property (or properties) must possess several, and usually most, aspects of integrity:

- **Location** is the place where the historic property (or properties) was/were constructed or the place where the historic event(s) occurred.
- **Design** is the combination of elements that create the form, plan, space, structure, and style of a property (or properties).
- **Setting** is the physical environment of a historic property (or properties) and refers to the character of the site and the relationship to surrounding features and open space. Setting often refers to the basic physical conditions under which a property was built and the functions it was intended to serve. These features can be either natural or manmade, including vegetation, paths, fences, and relationships between other features or open space.
- **Materials** are the physical elements that were combined to create the property (or properties) during any given period in history or prehistory.
- **Workmanship** is the physical evidence of crafts of a particular culture or people during any given period of history or prehistory and can be applied to the property (or properties) as a whole or to individual components.

- **Feeling** is a property's (or properties') expression of the aesthetic or historic sense of a particular period of time. It results from the presence of physical features that, when taken together, convey the property's (or properties') historic character.
- **Association** is the direct link between the important historic event(s) or person(s) and a historic property (or properties).

NRHP-eligible districts must possess a significant concentration, linkage, or continuity of sites, buildings, structures, or objects united historically or aesthetically by plan or physical development. NRHP-eligible districts, buildings, and structures must also possess historic significance, integrity, and context.

Section 106 Consultation. Section 106 of the NHPA (36 CFR 800) requires GSA to consult with the SHPO on the determination of eligibility on any property within the APE and on any determination of effect on historic properties. Further, it allows the ACHP an opportunity to comment on any finding of effects on historic properties. If Native American properties have been identified, Section 106 also requires that GSA consult with interested tribes who might attach religious or cultural significance to such properties.

Archaeological and Historic Preservation Act of 1974. The purpose of the Archaeological and Historic Preservation Act (54 U.S.C 312501-312508) is to preserve significant historical and archeological data which might otherwise be irreparably lost or destroyed as a result of a number of incidents or developments, including federal construction projects. These data may include sites, buildings, objects, and antiquities of national significance. Protection of these resources may include surveys and recovery efforts when deemed appropriate.

Archeological Resources Protection Act of 1979. The Archaeological Resources Protection Act (16 U.S.C. 470aa-mm) governs the excavation of archaeological sites on federal and tribal lands and the removal and disposition of archaeological collections from those sites. This Act provides legal penalties and establishes a permitting system to authorize excavation or removal of archaeological resources by qualified applicants.

Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act of 1990. The Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act (NAGPRA) (25 U.S.C. 3001 et seq.) provides for ownership and control of Native American cultural items which are excavated or discovered on federal or tribal lands since the passage of the Act. The Act provides a process for museums and federal agencies to return certain Native American cultural items to lineal descendants and culturally affiliated Indian tribes.

3.11.1.3 *Existing Conditions*

In compliance with Section 106 of the NHPA, cultural resources studies were conducted to determine the presence or absence of historic properties within the project APE and to determine the project's potential to impact identified cultural resources. The study comprised separate archaeological records literature search and historic architectural survey. Findings from the studies are used by GSA to assess potential impacts to cultural resources and to provide data to aid in consultation with the Minnesota Historic Preservation Officer (MnHPO), ACHP, federally recognized Indian tribes, and other consulting parties.

Archaeological Resources

The archaeological literature search included records held at the MnHPO, the Office of the State Archaeologist, and additional background information held by GSA, including records of previous archaeological investigations. Three previously recorded archaeological sites were returned from a query of the MnHPO's archaeological site file database and were identified as occurring within the vicinity of the archaeological study area without intersecting the archaeological study area, and are approximately 2 miles away.

In addition to the three sites located within the vicinity of the archaeological study area, a 2010 literature review conducted by the Duluth Archaeological Center (Mulholland & Mulholland) mentions archival evidence of two potential archaeological resources in the vicinity of the project area which was obtained through consultation with Edgar Oerichbauer of the Koochiching County Historical Society:

- An American Fur Company outpost operated on the southern banks of the Rainy River between 1821 and 1831. Available evidence suggests the outpost was located on a river terrace either upstream or downstream from the modern dam at International Falls, likely placing it above present water levels in the northwestern portion of the study area.
- The 19th century historic manifestation of the city of International Falls, referred to as "Old Town," was centered west of the APE evaluated as part of the 2011 Final EIS. As depicted on the 1882 General Land Office survey plat, archaeological deposits related to "Old Town" may intersect the project area.

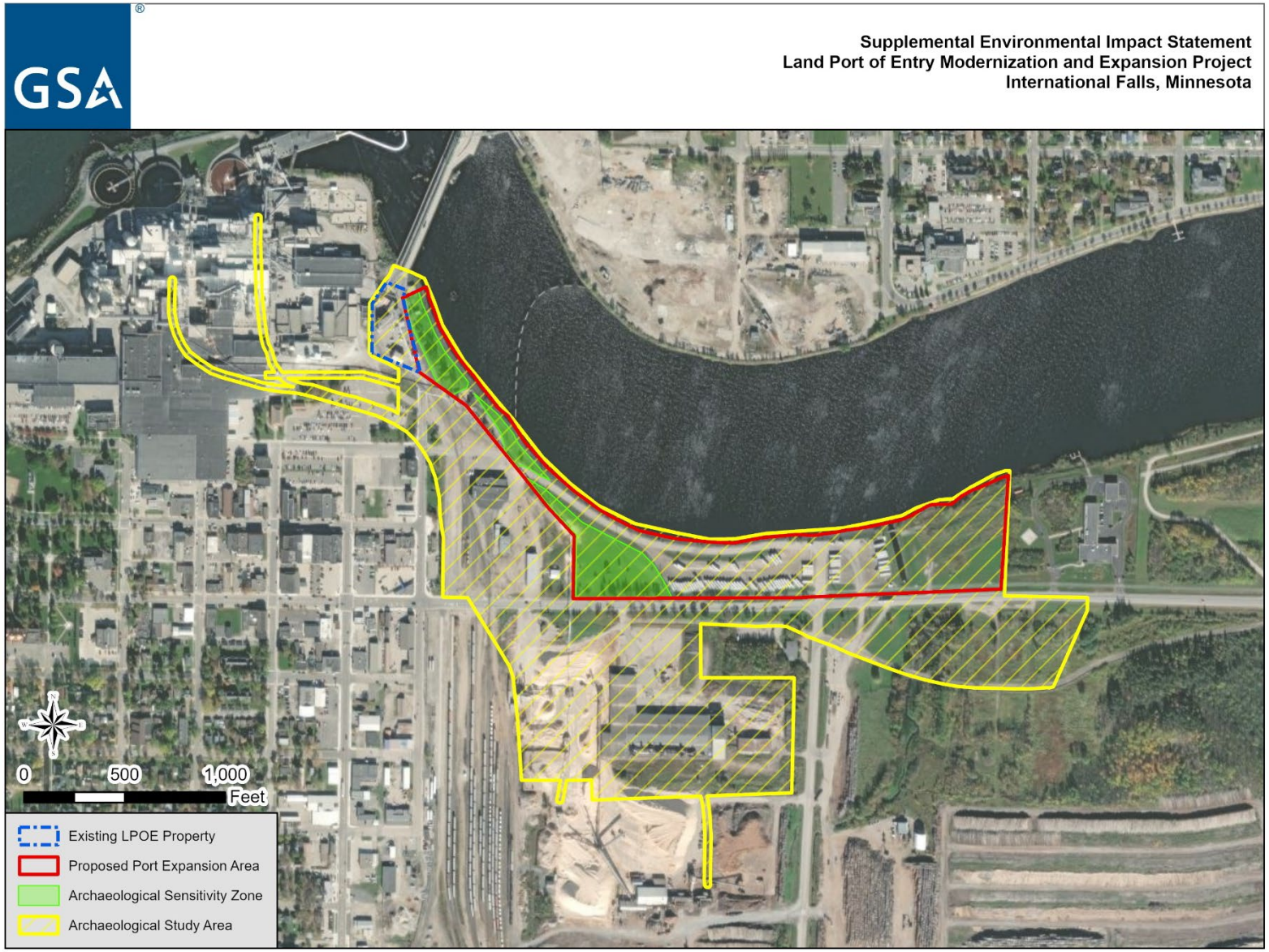
Based on a review of previous archaeological investigations and known archaeological sites, as well as U.S. Department of Agriculture soils data, LiDAR elevation models, and historic maps, the archaeological literature search conducted in support of this SEIS identified three zones within the APE with elevated potential to yield intact archaeological deposits. These areas appear to be minimally disturbed by surrounding commercial and industrial development and may retain subsurface integrity. See Figure 3.11-2 for the archaeological sensitivity zones identified within the archaeological study area.

The two northern sensitivity zones encompass approximately 1.8 acres east of the existing LPOE. Aerial imagery indicates the area consists of an undeveloped grassy lot with a narrow grassy spur extending southward along the shoreline. The grassy track is split into two segments by a gravel turnaround. The area overlaps the southern portion of the potential American Fur Company outpost and the eastern portion of "Old Town" International Falls, as described in Mulholland & Mulholland (2010).

The southern sensitivity zone encompasses approximately 3 acres in an undeveloped grassy lot between a rail yard and an active truck staging area in the southwestern portion of the project area. A narrow drainage channel bisects the northern portion of the sensitivity zone. No evidence of past construction or railroad activity is illustrated on historic topographic maps, nor is landscape modification visible in LiDAR elevation models.

Aboveground Historic-Age Resources

In June 2023, a reconnaissance-level historic architectural survey was conducted in compliance with MnHPO survey guidance, specifically the 2017 *Historic and Architectural Survey Manual* (MnHPO 2017), which provides survey procedures for the location, investigation, and recordation of historic-age resources 45 years old or older. In addition to a search of the Minnesota Statewide Inventory for previously recorded historic-age resources within the APE and NRHP database for NRHP-listed resources, architectural historians reviewed USGS quadrangle maps and historic aerial photographs. Architectural historians reviewed construction dates available through site maps, historic topographic maps, and aerial photograph review, to determine which resources were surveyed for this project. Architectural historians photographed historic-age architectural resources with a digital camera, and recorded pertinent information regarding architectural style, distinguishing characteristics, and condition. Field survey covered 100 percent of the approximately 231-acre APE.



Source: SEARCH 2023a

Figure 3.11-2. Archaeological Sensitivity Zones within the Archaeological Study Area

The historic architectural survey identified 17 historic-age resources within the APE, as presented in Table 3.11-1, 11 of which were previously recorded and 6 were newly recorded historic-age resources. The identified resources are divided into two categories: 1) the Minnesota and Ontario (MANDO) Mill Complex and historically associated resources; and 2) resources not directly associated with the MANDO Mill Complex. KC-IFC-027, KC-IFC-039, KC-IFC-040, KC-IFC-043, KC-IFC-059, KC-IFC-060, KC-IFC-061, KC-IFC-062, KC-IFC-063, KC-FC-064, and KC-IFC-065 were evaluated individually and considered for potential as a historic district associated with KC-IFC-028.

Of the 17 identified resources, GSA recommends three resources as individually NRHP-eligible, as denoted in Table 3.11-1. Figure 3.11-3 displays the historic-age resources identified within the APE, and brief discussions follow.

Table 3.11-1. Surveyed Historic-Age Buildings/Structures within the APE

Inventory Number	Historic Name	Address	Build Date	Previous NRHP Recommendation	NRHP Recommendation
MANDO Mill Complex (KC-IFC-028) and Historically Associated Resources					
KC-IFC-027	MANDO Office	400 2nd St.	1911	Eligible (Salkin 1993)	Eligible
KC-IFC-028	MANDO Mill Complex	400 2nd St.	1910	Not eligible (Salkin 1993)	Not eligible
KC-IFC-039	Fort Frances-International Falls International Bridge	Crosses Rainey River	ca. 1910	Unknown (Inventoried by MnHPO 1982, no evaluation listed)	Not eligible
KC-IFC-040	MANDO Research Building	400 2nd St.	1946	Unknown (Inventoried by MnHPO 1982, no evaluation listed)	Not eligible
KC-IFC-043	International Falls Power Company Dam	Crosses Rainey River	1905	Eligible (Salkin 1993)	Eligible
KC-IFC-059[1]	MD&W Railway Engine House	101 2nd St.	ca. 1955	N/A	Not eligible
KC-IFC-060[1]	PCA Storage Building	100 4th St. E	ca. 1970	N/A	Not eligible
KC-IFC-061[1]	PCA Cold Storage Building	100 4th St. E	ca. 1970	N/A	Not eligible
KC-IFC-062[1]	International Bildrite, Inc.	101 4th St. E	ca. 1966	N/A	Not eligible
KC-IFC-063[1]	PCA Processing Center	3rd Ave. E	ca. 1970	N/A	Not eligible
KC-IFC-064[1]	PCA Chip Line	N/A	ca. 1970	N/A	Not eligible
KC-IFC-065	MD&W Railway	N/A	1907	N/A (for this segment)	Eligible
Resources Not Historically Associated with the MANDO Mill Complex (KC-IFC-028)					
KC-IFC-014	Northern Pacific Depot	301 2nd Ave.	ca. 1947	Unknown (Inventoried by MnHPO 1982, no evaluation listed)	Not eligible
KC-IFC-052	Riverside Hotel	200 2nd Ave.	ca. 1907	Not eligible (Kellner 2011)	Not eligible
KC-IFC-054	Bronko Nagurski's Servicenter	242 3rd St.	1952	Not eligible (Kellner 2011)	Not eligible

Inventory Number	Historic Name	Address	Build Date	Previous NRHP Recommendation	NRHP Recommendation
XX-ROD-013	Trunk Highway 11	N/A	1933	Not eligible (Mead & Hunt 2017)	Not eligible
XX-ROD-023	Trunk Highway 53	N/A	1933	Not eligible (Mead & Hunt 2019)	Not eligible

1 – Newly recorded historic-age resource.
APE = Area of Potential Effect; MANDO = Minnesota and Ontario (Paper Company); MD&W = Minnesota, Dakota, & Western; NRHP = National Register of Historic Places; N/A = not applicable; PCA = Packaging Corporation of America
Source: SEARCH 2023b

Minnesota and Ontario Paper Co. (MANDO) Mill Complex and Historically Associated Resources

MANDO Mill Complex (KC-IFC-028)

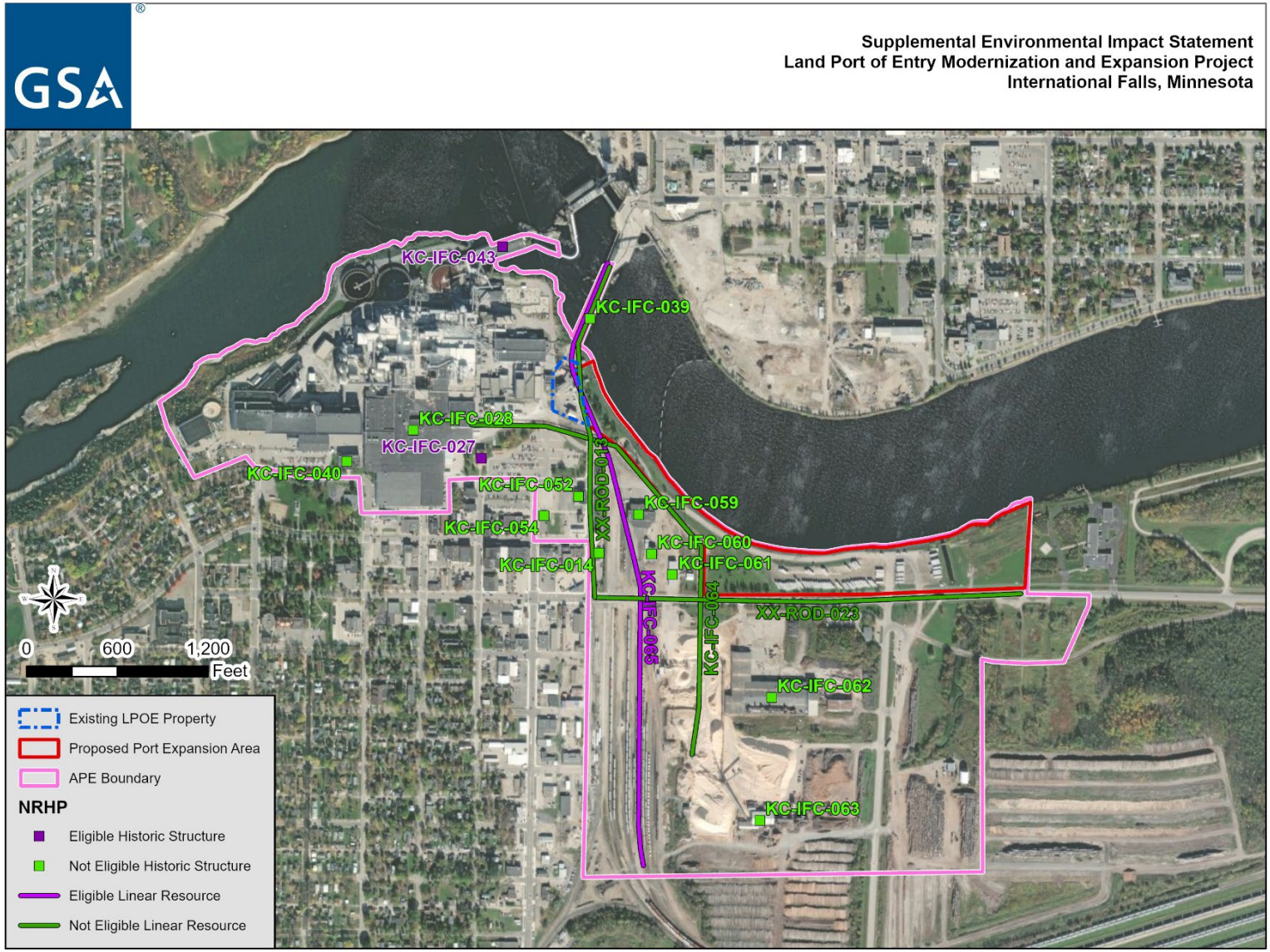
The MANDO Mill Complex is a large industrial plant located at 400 2nd Street, on the south bank of the Rainy River. Historic elements found on the property include railroad-related resources, an engine house, storage buildings, the International Bildrite plant, a timber processing center, and a chip line. Some of these areas occur outside the APE but were taken into consideration as part of the overall plant NRHP evaluation.

The historic architectural survey report noted that while the MANDO Mill Complex retains integrity of location, as it remains in the place where it was constructed, it lacks integrity in every other aspect. Integrity of materials, design, workmanship, setting, feeling, and association have been compromised by the numerous stages of additions, alterations, and removal of historic buildings at the mill. The original buildings of the mill have mostly been obscured by later additions and various buildings and structures built prior to 1945 have been removed. Due to the number and nature of alterations and additions to original buildings of the mill, the mill itself does not form a significant concentration of resources united historically or aesthetically by plan or physical development. Therefore, the historic architectural survey report recommended this resource as not eligible for NRHP inclusion.

Resources historically associated with the MANDO Mill Complex were evaluated individually and as a potential district. The historic architectural survey recommended that no potential historic district is present, due to the loss of integrity. The following sections briefly discuss individual evaluations.

MANDO Office (KC-IFC-027)

The MANDO Office is a ca. 1910 Italian Renaissance Revival one-story office associated with the MANDO Paper Company mill and is located at the southeast section of the paper plant. The resource was previously determined to be individually eligible for significance under Criterion C for Architecture as a fine example of Italian Renaissance Revival style. Despite minor alterations, the building appears to retain integrity of design, materials, and workmanship, as it clearly conveys the character-defining features of the style. The historic architectural survey report concurred with the previous determination and recommended the resource as eligible for NRHP inclusion.



Source: SEARCH 2023b

Figure 3.11-3. Surveyed Historic-Age Resources within the APE

Fort Frances-International Falls International Bridge (KC-IFC-039)

The Fort Frances-International Falls International Bridge consists of a ca. 1912 truss and half-through plate girder bridge and a ca. 1979 concrete girder bridge. The bridge was constructed by the MANDO Paper Company to connect its facilities in International Falls, Minnesota, and Fort Frances, Ontario, Canada. Over time, the bridge became a border crossing with non-plant related crossings, eventually carrying US 53/US 71 over the Rainy River and becoming the most utilized of the seven border crossings in Minnesota. The ca. 1912 bridge now only carries rail traffic while the ca. 1979 bridge carries two lanes of traffic, one north and one south bound. Aazhogan Limited Partnership, a partnership of the Rainy River First Nations and the BMI Group, purchased the U.S. portion of the structure in May 2021, later acquiring the Canadian side in May 2022. The acquisition of the bridge is regarded as a significant moment as it returns a border crossing back to the First Nations. The deal is the first indigenous-led acquisition of an international border crossing in North America.

As the original ca. 1912 truss and half-through plate girder bridge carried vehicular as well as railroad traffic, the NRHP MPDF *Iron and Steel Bridges in Minnesota* was used as a guide to evaluate KC-IFC-039. At present, the original ca. 1912 truss bridge, which is primarily situated in Canada is lacking original vehicular portion of the bridge. Additionally, the original bridge is visually overwhelmed by the addition of industrial piping attached to the exterior of the truss. Further, steel framing was added to the deck in order to carry the pipe the full length of the bridge, further visually distracting from the historic truss. The original sheet metal guard rails have since been replaced with modern chain link fencing and the erection of the ca. 1979 concrete bridge attached to the east obscures much of the lower portion of the superstructure and nearly all of sub structure.

The NRHP MPDF *Railroads in Minnesota, 1862-1956,* was also used as guidance for evaluating railroad bridges under the Railroad Grade Separation Structures property type. The MPDF states that steel truss bridges constructed during the 1890s were early examples of the use of the material and represent an important transitional type of design and construction; however, the bridge was constructed ca. 1912 and falls outside of that period. The bridge is associated with the MD&W Railway (KC-IFC-065), though the bridge lacks integrity and does not contribute to the district, and is therefore not significant under Criterion A. According to the MPDF, a railroad grade separation structure will not be significant under Criterion B, as they were built and operated by large corporations that represent the work of many people, rather than individuals. Additionally, the bridge does not meet any of the conditions listed in the MPDF for railroad grade separation structures under Criterion C and the historic architectural survey recommended this resource as not significant under this criterion. Finally, the survey found that the bridge is unlikely to yield further information of historical importance; as such, the resource is not significant under Criterion D. Therefore, the historic architectural survey report recommended the bridge as not eligible for NRHP inclusion.

Minnesota and Ontario Paper Co. Research Building (KC-IFC-040)

The MANDO Paper Company Research Building is a two-story office building with modest Art Deco elements and is associated with the MANDO Paper Company mill. It was originally constructed as a research building for the mill but was later turned into a training facility; a support function not related to the primary operation of the plant. The historic architectural survey report recommended the resource not significant under Criterion A because it is not indicative of a particular era and is not associated with any significant period, event, or theme. Background research did not identify association with any person(s) significant in history and it was constructed after Edward Backus, who was the president and founder of the Backus-Brooks Company, was no longer associated with the mill; therefore, the resource is not significant under Criterion B. Due to the building's lack of architectural distinction, it is not recommended significant under Criterion C. Finally, the resource is unlikely to yield further information of historical importance; as such, the resource is not significant under Criterion D. Therefore, the historic architectural

survey report recommended that the MANDO Paper Company Research Building as not eligible for NRHP inclusion.

Rainy Lake Dam (KC-IFC-043), Minnesota Dam No. 653

The Rainy Lake Dam is a stone masonry gravity dam with a fixed crest overflow section, located on the international boundary between the U.S. and Canada on the Rainy River. The hydroelectric dam was constructed 1905-1909 and consists of a PCA Pump House, Refuse Disposal Building, powerhouse (U.S. side), a stone masonry fixed crest overflow section, a stone masonry waste gate section, additional powerhouse (Canadian side), a stone masonry gravity canal wall, and head gate section. This resource was previously recommended significant at the local level under Criterion A, for its role in the development of International Falls and the Rainy Lake area; under Criterion B, for its association with Edward Backus (described above); and under Criterion C for Engineering. The dam was the necessary precursor to the construction of the paper mill and consequent extension of two railroad lines into the region. Prior to its construction, the region surrounding the dam was sparsely populated; however, the dam provided hydroelectric power and allowed for the establishment of the paper mill, which in turn helped stabilize the region's logging industry. Additionally, it expanded Rainy Lake and provided more opportunities for fishing and recreation, important economic drivers in the region. Finally, the dam is an impressive example of a mostly intact early twentieth century stone masonry gravity dam and has a unique fixed crest overflow section which arches upstream.

The resource retains all aspects of integrity, as it retains its original location, form, use, and general appearance, with only slight changes due to minimal repair work and alterations that do not detract greatly from its historic character. As a result, the historic architectural survey report concurred with the previous recommendation and recommended the resource as individually eligible for NRHP inclusion.

MD&W Railway Engine House (KC-IFC-059)

The MD&W Railway Engine House is a ca. 1950 single-story, Industrial Vernacular station set at grade on a concrete slab foundation. The NRHP MPDF *Railroads in Minnesota*, *1862-1956,* was used as a guide for evaluation of this resource. The resource was recommended not significant under Criterion A; while it is associated with Resource KC-IFC-065, it was constructed outside the period of significance of the railroad corridor. According to the MPDF, railroad depots will not be significant under Criterion B, as they were built and operated by large corporations that represent the work of many people, rather than individuals. The historic architectural survey report did not recommend the resource not significant under Criterion C, as it does not meet either requirement of the MPDF. The resource is unlikely to yield further information of historical importance; as such, the resource is not significant under Criterion D. Therefore, the historic architectural survey report recommended the resource as ineligible for NRHP inclusion.

PCA Storage Building (KC-IFC-060)

The PCA Storage Building is a ca. 1970 one-story, Industrial Vernacular pre-fabricated storage building associated with the PCA mill. The historic architectural survey report recommended the resource not significant under Criterion A because it is not indicative of a particular era and is not associated with any significant period, event, or theme. Background research did not identify association with any person(s) significant in history; therefore, the resource is not significant under Criterion B. KC-IFC-060 is a mass-produced, prefabricated steel-frame building that lacks any distinctive architectural or engineering details; therefore, the historic architectural survey report recommended the resource not significant under Criterion C. Finally, the resource is unlikely to yield further information of historical importance; as such, the resource is not significant under Criterion D. Therefore, the historic architectural survey report recommended the resource ineligible for NRHP inclusion.

PCA Cold Storage Building (KC-IFC-061)

The PCA Cold Storage Building is a ca. 1970 Industrial Vernacular pre-fabricated storage building associated with the PCA mill. The historic architectural survey recommended the resource not significant under Criterion A because it is not indicative of a particular era and is not associated with any significant period, event, or theme. Background research did not identify association with any person(s) significant in history; therefore, the resource is not significant under Criterion B. KC-IFC-061 is a mass-produced, prefabricated steel-frame building that lacks any distinctive architectural or engineering details; therefore, the historic architectural survey report recommended the resource not significant under Criterion C. Finally, the resource is unlikely to yield further information of historical importance and is not significant under Criterion D. Therefore, the historic architectural survey report recommended the resource ineligible for NRHP inclusion.

International Bildrite, Inc. (KC-IFC-062)

The International Bildrite building is a ca. 1966 fiberboard manufacturing plant. While the original use of the building is unknown, it is assumed to be associated with the operations of the MANDO paper mill (KF-IFC-028). Conversion of the building to serve as the International Bildrite facility began in 1986 and production began in 1987. The Industrial Vernacular complex has been subjected to multiple phases of additions which have resulted in an L-shaped plan. The historic architectural survey report recommended the resource not significant under Criterion A because it is not indicative of a particular era and is not associated with any significant period, event, or theme. Background research did not identify association with any person(s) significant in history; therefore, the resource is not significant under Criterion B. KC-IFC-062 is a common industrial steel-frame building with corrugated metal siding that lacks any distinctive architectural or engineering details. The building has been subjected to multiple phases of additions and alterations before reaching its current form in 1987. As such, the historic architectural survey recommended the resource not significant under Criterion C. Finally, the resource is unlikely to yield further information of historical importance; as such, the resource is not significant under Criterion D. Therefore, the historic architectural survey report recommended the resource ineligible for NRHP inclusion.

PCA Processing Center (KC-IFC-063)

The PCA Processing Center is an Industrial Vernacular steel-framed building located approximately 0.15 miles south of the International Bildrite building (KC-IFC-062). The building has an irregular plan and is surrounded by various non-historic equipment that supports the debarking and chipping operations of the processing center. Once logs are debarked and converted to wood chips, conveyors transport the chips to the nearby chip storage yard, where they are stored in piles to be aged. Once aged, the chips are transported through the chip line (KC-IFC-064) to the mill. The historic architectural survey report recommended the resource not significant under Criterion A because it is not indicative of a particular era and is not associated with any significant period, event, or theme. Background research did not identify association with any person(s) significant in history; therefore, the resource is not significant under Criterion B. The historic architectural survey report recommended the resource not significant under Criterion C due to its lack of architectural or engineering distinction. Finally, the resource is unlikely to yield further information of historical importance; as such, the resource is not significant under Criterion D. Therefore, the historic architectural survey report recommended the resource ineligible for NRHP inclusion.

PCA Chip Line (KC-IFC-064)

The PCA Chip Line is a ca. 1970 raised metal pneumatic conduit for the delivery of wood chips from the chip storage yard to the mill complex, a distance of approximately 0.6 miles. The historic architectural survey recommended the resource not significant under Criterion A because it is not indicative of a particular era and is not associated with any significant period, event, or theme. Background research did not identify association with any person(s) significant in history; therefore, the resource is not significant under Criterion B. KC-IFC-064 is a utilitarian structure that does not display any innovative engineering or

architectural distinction; therefore, the historic architectural survey recommended the resource not significant under Criterion C. Finally, the resource is unlikely to yield further information of historical importance; as such, the resource is not significant under Criterion D. Therefore, the historic architectural survey report recommended the resource ineligible for NRHP inclusion.

MD&W Railway (KC-ICF-065)

The MD&W Railway is a shortline railroad connecting International Falls to Ranier, Minnesota, as well as International Falls to Fort Frances, Ontario, Canada via the Fort Frances-International Falls International Bridge (KC-IFC-039). The MD&W Railway was one of several shortline railroad companies organized to serve northern Minnesota's logging industry during the early twentieth century. The MD&W Railway was organized in 1907 by Edward Backus for the purpose of extending a line of track from the terminus of the Minnesota & International (M&I) Railroad to the International Falls dam and paper mill. Formally incorporated in 1912 as a subsidiary of MANDO, the MD&W extended its reach via two additional lines of track in 1907 and 1910. The former line connected the site of the MANDO paper mill (KF-IFC-028) to nearby Falls Junction and the Duluth, Winnipeg & Pacific (DW&P) Railroad. The latter line of track, also known as the Loman Line, stretched 14-miles to the west of International Falls and linked up with the timber hoisting works on the Rainy River at Loman.

The historic architectural survey recommended the resource as significant under Criterion A, as it meets the second of the listed requirements for railroad corridor historic districts under the *Railroads in Minnesota* MPDF, by connecting a significant class of resource (pine forests) with an important logging center (International Falls). According to the MPDF, railroad corridors will not be significant under Criterion B or Criterion C, and are unlikely to be significant under Criterion D. Therefore, the historic architectural survey recommended the resource eligible for NRHP inclusion for significance at the state level under Criterion A in the area of Transportation. The period of significance for the resource is 1907, the year the railway was organized and began operations, to 1956, the end of the period of significance for the MPDF.

Resources Not Historically Associated with the MANDO Mill Complex

Northern Pacific Depot (KC-IFC-014)

The Northern Pacific Depot, now the International Falls Chamber of Commerce, is located at 301 2nd Avenue, on the east side of 2nd Avenue between 3rd and 4th Streets. A Northern Pacific Railway grade once passed by the east side of the building, though the rails were removed at an undetermined date, severing the physical association with a railroad corridor.

The NRHP MPDF *Railroads in Minnesota, 1862-1956,* was used as a guide for evaluation of this resource. As the Northern Pacific Depot does not meet the MPDF requirements for railroad depots because it is a combination depot, it is not considered significant under Criterion A. According to the MPDF, railroad depots will not be significant under Criterion B, as they were built and operated by large corporations that represent the work of many people, rather than individuals. The resource lacks the architectural distinction required for eligibility under Criterion C, and the resource is unlikely to yield further information of historical importance, making it ineligible under Criterion D. Therefore, the historic architectural survey report recommended the resource ineligible for NRHP inclusion.

Riverside Hotel (KC-IFC-052)

The ca. 1907 Riverside Hotel building, constructed during the early twentieth century paper mill boom and located at 200 2nd Avenue, is now known as Border Bob's, a souvenir and sports apparel store. The building is constructed in the Masonry Vernacular style and is the last remaining hotel constructed during the lumber and logging boom period of International Falls. However, it did not play a significant role in the development of International Falls, in the development of the local hotel industry, nor the growth and development of regional or international trade or tourism. The historic architectural survey report determined that the resource is not significant under Criterion A because it has been subjected to numerous

alterations and additions that prevent it from conveying any historic significance. Background research did not identify association with any person(s) significant in history; therefore, the resource is not significant under Criterion B. The historic architectural survey report recommended the resource not significant under Criterion C due to its lack of architectural distinction, as the building is of standard design and construction for commercial buildings of this period. Finally, the resource is unlikely to yield further information of historical importance; as such, the resource is not significant under Criterion D. Therefore, the historic architectural survey report concurred with the previous recommendation and recommended the resource ineligible for NRHP inclusion.

Bronko Nagurski's Servicenter (KC-IFC-054)

Bronko Nagurski's Servicenter, now known as Borderland Insurance Agents, Inc., was constructed in 1952 by Bronko Nagurski, a former wrestler who won the National Wrestling Association title twice, and a hall of fame football player regarded as one of the best players in the 1930s. The building is a Commercial-style auto service center turned office. KC-IFC-054 was previously recommended as ineligible for inclusion in the NRHP by Kellner (2011). The historic architectural survey report recommended the resource not significant under Criterion A because it is not indicative of a particular era and is not associated with any significant period, event, or theme. The building does not illustrate Nagurski's significant achievements, nor is it associated with the period when he achieved significance. As such, the building is recommended not significant under Criterion B. The historic architectural survey report recommended the resource not significant under Criterion C due to its lack of architectural distinction. The resource is unlikely to yield further information of historical importance; as such, the resource is not significant under Criterion D. Therefore, the historic architectural survey report concurred with the previous recommendation and recommended the resource ineligible for NRHP inclusion.

Trunk Highway 11 (XX-ROD-13)

Trunk Highway (TH) 11, also referred to as SR-11, is an east-west highway located in northwest Minnesota, traversing Kittson, Roseau, Lake of the Woods, and Koochiching Counties. At International Falls, TH 11 aligns briefly with US-71, then follows the Rainy River along the Minnesota/Ontario border. A 2017 Phase II evaluation by Mead and Hunt evaluated TH 11 as the entire road and as individual segments and the study recommended the current extent of TH 11 as not eligible and identified no significant segments within the APE as it did not meet any evaluation criteria. The historic architectural survey concurred with this recommendation of not eligible for that portion of the resource located within the APE.

Trunk Highway 53 (XX-ROD-23)

TH 53, also referred to as SR-53, is a north-south highway located in northeast Minnesota, traversing St. Louis and Koochiching Counties. A 2019 Phase II evaluation by Mead and Hunt evaluated TH 53 as the entire road and as individual segments and the study recommended the current extent of TH 53 as not eligible and identified no significant segments within the APE, as it did not meet any evaluation criteria. The historic architectural survey concurred with this recommendation of not eligible for that portion of the resource located within the APE.

3.11.2 Environmental Consequences

3.11.2.1 *Methodology*

Per NEPA, the significance of an environmental impact considers both context and intensity as described in Section 3.1. Context is the geographic, biophysical, and society within which project effects could occur. Intensity refers to the severity of the impact within that context. Impacts or effects can be direct or indirect and beneficial or adverse (40 CFR 1508.8).

Per NHPA and 36 CFR 800 of its implementing regulations, adverse effects to historic properties occur when an undertaking may alter any of the characteristics of a historic property that qualify the property for inclusion in the NRHP in a manner that would diminish the integrity of the property's location, design,

setting, materials, workmanship, feeling, or association. Consideration shall be given to all qualifying characteristics of a historic property, including those that may have been identified subsequent to the original evaluation of the property's eligibility for the NRHP.

Adverse effects on historic properties include, but are not limited to:

- Physical destruction of or damage to all or part of the property;
- Alteration of a property, including restoration, rehabilitation, repair, maintenance, stabilization, hazardous material remediation and provision of handicapped access, that is not consistent with the Secretary's *Standards for the Treatment of Historic Properties* (36 CFR 68) and applicable guidelines;
- Removal of the property from its historic location;
- Change of the character of the property's use or of physical features within the property's setting that contribute to its historic significance;
- Introduction of visual, atmospheric or audible elements that diminish the integrity of the property's significant historic features;
- Neglect of a property which causes its deterioration, except where such neglect and deterioration are recognized qualities of a property of religious and cultural significance to an Indian tribe or Native Hawaiian organization; and
- Transfer, lease, or sale of property out of federal ownership or control without adequate and legally enforceable restrictions or conditions to ensure long-term preservation of the property's historic significance.

3.11.2.2 *Alternative 1 – Full Build*

GSA is in the process of consultation with the MnHPO under Section 106 of the NHPA, as described in Chapter 6, with respect to the effect determinations described below. The results of this consultation process, as well as any applicable impact reduction measures, will be included in the Final SEIS.

Construction

Archaeological Resources

Construction under Alternative 1 would result in ground disturbance within the APE. The nearest known archaeological sites, described in Section 3.11.1.3, occur approximately 2 miles northeast of the project area, and would not be impacted by the proposed undertaking. However, the archaeological literature search also identified three archaeological sensitivity zones that overlap with two potential archaeological sites identified by Mulholland and Mulholland (2010). The archaeological literature search and corresponding report recommended a Phase I archaeological survey of these three areas, totaling approximately 4.8 acres, as well as a visual reconnaissance of the shoreline near the footprint for a potential geothermal system. The MnHPO concurred with these recommendations in their July 17, 2023 letter, and additionally recommended an archaeological survey of the shoreline and adjacent underwater area, should there be impacts to the shoreline under the Proposed Action or if the existing rip rap would be removed. GSA is moving forward with these recommendations and results of the surveys will be included in the Final SEIS. If archaeological resources are identified, GSA would develop measures in coordination with the MnHPO to avoid, minimize, or mitigate any potential adverse effects under NHPA, which would reduce impacts to less-than-significant under NEPA.

Aboveground Historic-age Resources

Construction under Alternative 1 would introduce a new visual element to the landscape, which would have varying levels of visibility throughout the APE, as well as result in demolitions and physical changes to the

built environment. The introduction of a modern visual element to the setting or surroundings of a historic property alone is not enough for a determination of Adverse Effect under Section 106 of the NHPA. Per the Criteria of Adverse Effect in 36 CFR 800.5, to be considered adverse, an effect must alter a characteristic of the property that qualifies the property for NRHP listing and the alteration must diminish the property's historic integrity, or those physical aspects that convey a property's significance. Therefore, each historic property's significance was considered along with the respective aspects of integrity that convey that significance.

Effects to resources recommended as NRHP-eligible in Section 3.11.1.3 are considered below.

Minnesota and Ontario Paper Co. Office (KC-IFC-027)

KC-IFC-027 is approximately 0.15 miles west of the proposed expansion area and approximately 0.50 miles west-northwest of the proposed location of the new LPOE facilities. The only portions of Alternative 1 that would be visible from KC-IFC-027 are road improvements and realignments in the portion of the project area north of 2nd Street. Standing commercial and industrial buildings provide a visual break between KC-IFC-027 and the proposed location of the new LPOE facilities. Alternative 1 would not impact the current setting of KC-IFC-027 as the viewshed would remain consistent with roadways and commercial and industrial architecture. Further, Alternative 1 would not diminish the integrity of KC-IFC-027, nor detract from its ability to display the characteristics that make it eligible for listing in the NRHP. Therefore, GSA has concluded that implementation of Alternative 1 would have no adverse effect to this historic property under the NHPA, and there would be no major effects under NEPA.

International Falls Power Company Dam (KC-IFC-043), Minnesota Dam No. 653

KC-IFC-043 is approximately 0.15 miles northwest of the proposed expansion area and approximately 0.50 miles northwest of the proposed location of the new LPOE facilities. The only portions of Alternative 1 that would be visible from KC-IFC-043 are road improvements and realignments. The Fort Frances-International Falls International Bridge (KC-IFC-039) provides a visual break between KC-IFC-043 and the proposed location of the new LPOE facilities. Alternative 1 would not impact the current setting of KC-IFC-043 as the viewshed would remain consistent with roadways and commercial and industrial architecture. Alternative 1 would not diminish the integrity of KC-IFC-043, nor detract from its ability to display the characteristics that make it eligible for listing in the NRHP. Therefore, GSA has concluded that implementation of Alternative 1 would have no adverse effect to this historic property under the NHPA, and there would be no major effects under NEPA.

MD&W Railway Company (KC-IFC-065)

The proposed expansion project would result in the reconfiguration of MD&W Railway rail lines on PCA lands to create a new paved area so PCA can accommodate the reduced amount of parking spaces that resulted from the expanded and modernized LPOE. Site work would occur primarily on PCA lands directly west of the proposed expansion area and east of 2nd Avenue. This relocation would include abandonment of existing tracks; construction of new storage tracks south of the existing MD&W Railway building; new gate arms on the roadways and pedestrian walkways crossing the rail line; new at-grade crossing panels with warning devices and control equipment; and a new turnout. In total, approximately 1,300 linear feet of new railroad tracks would be built. Construction would include the following site work:

- Site grading, including clearing, grading, and site drainage; erosion control during construction (silt fence); removal of pavement as needed; and preparation of railroad subgrade.
- Site work, including installation of a new turnout in existing track, construction of new turnouts in new track, construction of new tracks and turnouts, installation of new switch stands (with bow handles), and installation of bumping posts.
- Removal of tracks removed from service (after new storage tracks open to service); MD&W Railway storage tracks; and a main line turnout leading to MD&W Railway storage tracks. The

main line, grade crossing, roadway, and two turnouts on MD&W Railway storage tracks would be restored.

GSA has concluded that implementation of Alternative 1 would have no adverse effect to this historic property under the NHPA, and there would be no major effects under NEPA. Railroad corridors may include many contributing elements but must include a railroad roadway that retains historic integrity. The boundary of KC-IFC-065 within the APE is limited to the current right-of-way. The Fort Frances-International Falls International Bridge (KC-IFC-039) and the MD&W Railway Engine House (KC-IFC-059), which are historically associated with the railroad corridor, are not contributing to the district due to lack of integrity. According to the MPDF, at a minimum, a railroad corridor historic district must retain integrity of location, design, and materials.

Location is the place where the elements of a railroad corridor historic district were constructed and operated, and it is the most important aspect of integrity for a railroad corridor historic district. KC-IFC-065 conforms to the horizontal and vertical alignment present at the end of the period of significance, and Alternative 1 would not affect the location of the main line.

Design is the combination of planned, developed, and constructed elements within a railroad corridor historic district that created its form, plan, and structure. To retain integrity of design, a railroad corridor historic district must retain integrity of location, which KC-IFC-065 would within Alternative 1. The right-of-way of KC-IFC-065 retains sufficient visual presence to convey its historic function and therefore the resource retains integrity of design and the proposed changes would not affect the resource's integrity in this regard.

A railroad corridor historic district must retain some of the physical materials from its period of significance. KC-IFC-065 appears to retain historic materials; however, if ballast, ties, or rails have been replaced, the appearance of modern tracks is almost identical to their historic counterparts and the resource may still retain some integrity of materials.

To retain integrity of setting, the general land uses adjacent to a corridor must be similar to the historic land uses during the period of significance. A 1953 USGS aerial photograph of the project area depicts suburban development to the south and west of the APE with lumber storage and a railyard to the east, all of which are consistent with current land uses in the respective areas. The setting of KC-IFC-065 within the APE has not changed drastically from the end of the period of significance (1907 – 1956); therefore, Alternative 1 would not affect the setting of the historic property.

Feeling is conveyed by a railroad corridor historic district's ability to illustrate its historic function and feel from its period of significance. The extent to which a railroad corridor historic district retains its integrity of feeling is derived from the extent to which it retains its other aspects of integrity. Association is the direct link between a railroad corridor historic district and the significant transportation it provided. A railroad corridor historic district retains its integrity of association if it retains integrity of location, materials, and design. For many elements of a railroad corridor historic district, workmanship would not be a factor in evaluating integrity, due to the utilitarian nature of the resource and standardized design of its components.

Operation

Operation of the Proposed Action would not result in additional subsurface disturbance, other than for occasional repair and maintenance activities; therefore, there would be limited potential for the disturbance of archaeological resources. Impact reduction measures, including inadvertent discovery procedures, would be implemented as necessary during maintenance activities. No adverse effects under NHPA and less-than-significant impacts to archaeological resources under NEPA would be anticipated during operations. No additional effects under NHPA or impacts under NEPA would occur to aboveground historic-age resources beyond those described above under Construction.

3.11.2.3 *No Action Alternative*

Under the No Action Alternative, GSA would not expand or modernize the International Falls LPOE; current facilities and infrastructure at the existing LPOE would remain. No ground or subsurface disturbance from new facility or infrastructure construction would occur. No impacts to archaeological or aboveground historic-age resources would be anticipated.

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3.12 HUMAN HEALTH AND SAFETY

This section describes the baseline conditions for human health and safety resources in the project area and potential human health and safety impacts that could result from implementing the Proposed Action and No Action Alternative as discussed in Chapter 2. Human health and safety includes direct and indirect factors that have the potential to affect the human population or workers associated with the Proposed Action and No Action Alternative. Direct factors include exposure to chemicals, extreme temperatures, and weather, while indirect factors include physical safety and security of the surrounding environment. Factors in the project area that could affect human health and safety include automobile or pedestrian accidents, workplace accidents, criminal activities, extreme weather, and exposure to hazardous waste and chemicals.

This SEIS uses the following documents and data sources to characterize the affected environment and assess potential impacts regarding human health and safety resources.

- The 2011 Final EIS Section 3.11 provides a description of uncontrolled petroleum and hazardous substances within the project area. The 2011 Final EIS Section 4.11 presents the anticipated impacts resulting from construction and operations of the new LPOE facility, as considered in the 2011 Final EIS, for uncontrolled petroleum and hazardous substances.
- Primary data sources used to update and supplement the affected environment discussion regarding human health and safety: Two Phase I ESAs conducted in 2021 and 2022 for the existing LPOE site and proposed expansion area, respectively, were incorporated to update and verify existing conditions of potential hazards to human health and safety. The 2018 Feasibility Study was also used to update and verify the project plans for the Proposed Action and the anticipated conditions, needs, and impacts of human health and safety.

3.12.1 Affected Environment

3.12.1.1 *Region of Influence*

The ROI for human health and safety focuses on the project area, which includes the International Falls LPOE, the proposed expansion area, and areas for potential connected actions necessitated by the LPOE expansion (see Section 2.2.1.1). In addition, the ROI includes areas directly adjacent to the project area.

3.12.1.2 *Regulatory Setting*

Hazardous Waste and Materials. The purpose of the Comprehensive Environmental Response, Compensation, and Liability Act, often referred to as Superfund, is to clean up contaminated sites so that public health and welfare are not compromised. The Federal Resources Conservation and Recovery Act of 1976 (RCRA) provides for "cradle to grave" regulations of hazardous wastes. Other federal laws applicable to hazardous waste and materials include: Community Environmental Response Facilitation Act of 1992; CWA; CAA; SDWA; OSHA; Atomic Energy Act; Toxic Substances Control Act; and Federal Insecticide, Fungicide, and Rodenticide Act.

In addition to the acts and laws mentioned above, EO 12088, *Federal Compliance and Pollution Control*, mandates that necessary actions be taken to prevent and control environmental pollution when federal activities or federal facilities are involved.

Hazardous waste in Minnesota is regulated primarily under the authority of the RCRA and the Minnesota Hazardous Waste Rules. Other Minnesota laws regarding hazardous waste are specific to handling, storage, transportation, disposal, treatment, reduction, cleanup, and emergency planning. Worker health and safety and public safety are key issues when dealing with hazardous materials that may affect human health and the environment.

For this analysis, the terms hazardous waste, hazardous materials, and toxic substances include those substances defined as hazardous by Comprehensive Environmental Response, Compensation, and Liability

Act, RCRA, and the SPCC Rule. In general, they include substances that, because of their quantity; concentration; or physical, chemical, or toxic characteristics, may present moderate danger to public health or welfare or the environment when released into the environment.

Worker Safety. As a division of the Minnesota Department of Labor and Industry, the Minnesota Occupational Safety and Health operates under an approved plan with the U.S. Department of Labor to regulate occupational safety and health issues within Minnesota. The Minnesota Occupational Safety and Health plan adopts most of federal OSHA standards by reference; however, the Minnesota State Plan has also adopted unique standards, including, but not limited to: general industry, a Workplace Accident and Injury Reduction Program, personal protective equipment (PPE), employee right-to-know, lockout devices, permissible exposure limits, hazardous substances, and construction, among others (OSHA 2023 and Minnesota Department of Labor and Industry 2023). The State Plan governs both private-sector and public-sector workplaces, with the exception of federal government employers.

The occupational health and safety concerns of federal employers and employees are the responsibility of OSHA. OSHA regulations applicable to the Proposed Action include 29 CFR 1910 and 29 CFR 1926, which cover general industry and construction regulations, respectively. Hazards faced by personnel at construction sites or in commercial workplaces could include injuries sustained from collisions with moving vehicles, lifting and moving equipment, and contact with hazardous substances during inspections.

3.12.1.3 *Existing Conditions*

Existing conditions at the International Falls LPOE for human health and safety since publication of the 2011 Final EIS generally remain the same due to similar sources of potential contamination from nearby sites. However, further characterization of potential contamination and health and safety conditions have been conducted by Phase I ESAs completed for the existing LPOE and the proposed expansion area since the release of the 2011 Final EIS.

Existing LPOE

A Phase I ESA was completed in September 2021 to verify existing conditions within the International Falls LPOE footprint (GSA 2021b). This Phase I ESA was used to identify potential Recognized Environmental Conditions (RECs), as defined by the guidelines (E1527-13) of the American Society for Testing and Materials, associated with current and past uses of the property.

The International Falls LPOE has operated since at least 1950, when a building referred to as the U.S. Customs House was developed on the existing site (GSA 2021b). This facility was demolished and the current LPOE building was constructed in 1993 and has since had minor alterations. The site has been developed with roadways and railroad lines since 1930. Adjacent properties have historically included a hotel, warehouse, paper manufacturing facility, and vacant lots. The current LPOE is surrounded by the industrial buildings of the PCA paper mill (formerly Boise Inc.) to the west and south, the International Bridge and Rainy River to the north, and the Rainy River and MD&W Railway to the east. The MD&W Railway and utility easements cross the LPOE.

The 2021 Phase I ESA included an assessment of existing hazardous materials and wastes currently within the LPOE footprint. The LPOE is registered as a hazardous waste minimal quantity generator per MPCA and has minimal industrial or hazardous-material-generating uses. There are no aboveground storage tanks (ASTs), underground storage tanks (USTs), petroleum pipelines, or RCRA hazardous materials storage, other than materials typically used for office building maintenance, cleaning, and fuel at the LPOE. Two pad-mounted transformers exist on the site and are labeled as non-polychlorinated biphenyl (PCB)-containing (GSA 2021b).

The 2021 Phase I ESA identified two RECs within the existing LPOE:

1) potential soil and groundwater contamination as a result of pesticide and creosote treatments historically on the railroad tracks within the LPOE site; and

2) potential for migration of soil and groundwater contamination onto the LPOE site as a result of numerous spill incidents, USTs with unknown statuses, a nearby closed landfill, and long-term handling of paper processing chemicals in association with the west adjacent paper manufacturing facility.

Further information about the potential sources of contamination from the adjacent PCA facilities and closed landfill are discussed below under *Nearby Facilities of Concern.* The 2021 Phase I ESA recommended that a subsurface investigation be performed to further investigate the identified RECs on the existing LPOE site.

Proposed Expansion Area

A Phase I ESA was prepared in December 2022 to establish existing conditions within the proposed expansion area (GSA 2022a). The Phase I ESA was performed in accordance with current American Society for Testing and Materials guidelines (E1527-21) and USEPA's "Standards and Practices for All Appropriate Inquiries" (40 CFR 312). The findings of the 2022 Phase I ESA are summarized as follows:

- On October 10, 1995, a leaking UST was reported on the eastern-most parcel of the proposed expansion area. A Limited Site Investigation was submitted to the MPCA on June 28, 2006 concluding that only low concentrations of assumed petroleum contaminants were left present in the soil. The MPCA granted the parcel site closure on September 29, 2006. However, in the closure letter, MPCA stated the following: "*If future development of this property or the surrounding area is planned, it should be assumed that petroleum contamination may still be present*."
- A 2006 Phase I ESA, provided by RLD, of the eastern-most parcel of the proposed expansion area identified a number of potential soil contamination sources including: a 1,500-gallon, partially buried used oil tank; a 750-gallon diesel fuel AST; improper storage of numerous uncovered used batteries; several "liquid waste" barrels stored outdoors and in "precarious situations" with missing bungs; and scrap concrete and metal reportedly buried on-site. The 2006 Phase I ESA indicates these observations were addressed by the former tenant via excavation activities; however, no supporting data or reports have been identified, and there is no indication that consultation with MPCA ever occurred.
- A leachate line runs across the northern portion of the proposed expansion area, which transports liquid leachate from a nearby closed landfill to the PCA facilities for treatment. Due to the mostly buried nature of the line, unseen leaks and subsurface soil contamination are possible from the untreated leachate.
- Railroad tracks were historically located within the proposed expansion area from at least 1919 until the early 1980s. These tracks were formerly located running along the northern extent of the proposed expansion area, in the same location as the present-day access road. Historical use of pesticides and creosote to treat the tracks could have potentially contributed to soil and groundwater contamination.
- At least two former USTs were identified onsite, associated with a former concrete batch facility. A sawmill formerly operated on the west and central portions of the site until 1937. It is possible that this facility also utilized USTs.
- Cargo trucks are parked on, or travel across gravel and paved areas of the proposed expansion area. Minor leaks of automotive fluid from parked vehicles are common. Over time these small releases can impact shallow soil just below the parking surface.
- The number of nearby properties with known or suspected environmental contamination presents potential for contamination within the groundwater underlying the proposed expansion area. Even though GSA would not be liable for groundwater contamination that originates off-site from a third-

party, the potential exists for vapors from groundwater contamination to migrate into the occupied space of the current or future buildings, creating a health and safety concern.

Due to the potential for soil contamination identified in the proposed expansion area summarized above, soil sampling and laboratory testing will be conducted around areas identified with potential contamination concern to prevent exposure to workers or the release of hazardous waste and materials to the environment. Further, a subsurface geospatial survey utilizing ground-penetrating radar and electromagnetic technologies will be conducted to inspect for the presence or evidence of past or present USTs on-site associated with both the former sawmill and concrete batch facility on-site. Results of the soil sampling and ground-penetrating radar / electromagnetic survey will be included in the Final SEIS.

Connected Action Footprint

Connected actions described in Section 2.2.1.1 and shown in Figure 2-5 would occur on properties outside the boundaries of the LPOE and the proposed expansion area. Operation of facilities at these locations would ultimately be the responsibilities of PCA and other owners of the respective properties. Therefore, the locations were not included in the Phase I ESAs for LPOE or the proposed expansion area. However, because these facilities would be disturbed under Alternative 1, and because any potential on these properties would have the potential to impact the LPOE and proposed expansion area, the potential for contamination within these properties are considered in this SEIS.

The former BildRite property is located directly south of the proposed expansion area across SR-11 and is a potential relocation site for the PCA trailer parking area (Trailer Parking Location 1). This site is associated with 17 listings on federal databases including ASTs, spills, RCRA very small quantity generator, 2020 Corrective Action Program[3], and U.S. Aerometric Information Retrieval System (AIRS) Facility Subsystem[4]. Listing in these federal databases indicates the site is a source or generator of hazardous materials (ASTs and RCRA-very small quantity generator) and has been associated with a potential spill or release requiring some type of monitoring, corrective actions, or institutional controls. Information on the USEPA's Cleanups In My Community database indicates that as of October 29, 2001, human exposure is controlled, but groundwater mitigation is not controlled; however, the site received a "Ready for Anticipated Use" status as of June 29, 2022 (USEPA 2023a). Although the human exposure contamination has been controlled, and the site appears to be determined fit for development, there may still be a residual groundwater contamination concern and the site may have associated institutional controls in place that either limit the type of land use or prohibit certain types of land disturbance (e.g., no digging, no placement of wells, no use of groundwater, etc.). In addition to the land at this site being potentially contaminated, subsurface contamination has the potential to migrate via groundwater towards the proposed expansion area, as the BildRite property is potentially upgradient from the proposed expansion area. As such, potential groundwater contamination could result in vapors to migrate into the occupied space of current or future buildings, creating a health and safety concern (GSA 2022a).

The other proposed site for the PCA trailer parking relocation (Trailer Parking Location 2) is located southeast of the eastern boundary of the proposed expansion area, south of SR-11 and east of First Creek as shown in Figure 2-5. This site is currently undeveloped and covered in vegetation, although based on historical aerial photography the site was previously developed as of 1968 (NETR 2023). Database searches associated with the 2022 Phase I ESA did not identify any potential sources of contamination at this site.

[3] The 2020 Corrective Action Program List is an USEPA RCRA cleanup baseline database that includes facilities expected to need corrective action. Some properties are heavily contaminated while others were contaminated but have since been cleaned up, have not been fully investigated yet, or may require little to no remediation.

[4] U.S AIRS Facility Subsystem contains compliance data on air pollution point sources regulated by the USEPA and/or state and local air regulatory agencies.

Properties to the south of the LPOE and west of the proposed expansion area have long been used for and are currently the site of MD&W Railway tracks and facilities. These areas would be potential sites for relocated facilities under connected actions associated with the Proposed Action. Past use of pesticides and creosote to treat the tracks could have potentially contributed to soil and groundwater contamination as discussed for the proposed expansion area above.

Nearby Facilities of Concern

The PCA facility is a potential source for migration of soils and groundwater contamination onto the existing LPOE site and proposed expansion area because of numerous spill incidents, USTs with unknown statuses, and long-term handling of paper processing chemicals associated with the facility (GSA 2021b). The USEPA's Cleanups In My Community database listing for this facility indicates the RCRA Corrective Action Status as "Cleanup is Complete". As of August 16th, 2006, the status of human exposure and groundwater mitigation are indicated as controlled (USEPA 2023b).

The Moonlight Rock Landfill is located approximately 1.3 miles southeast of the proposed expansion area. This landfill is the origination point of the leachate line that crosses the proposed expansion area. The landfill is no longer active but was an industrial solid waste disposal facility operated by Boise Cascade Corporation (now OfficeMax Incorporated) for disposal of wastes from operation of the paper mill (now operated by PCA). The landfill was in operation for approximately 50 years and ceased operation in 1999. A Closure Order by Consent was signed by the MPCA and became effective on August 31, 2005. A Post-Closure Plan prepared in 2005 required OfficeMax to conduct an annual inspection of the landfill to ensure proper maintenance, water monitoring and reporting, and adhere to land-use controls. To date, OfficeMax has adhered to all post-closure care activities specified in the approved Post-Closure Plan during the post-closure period. Given the adherence to the Post-Closure Plan, and considering the distance from the landfill to the project area, this facility (excluding the existing leachate line) has not been identified as a potential source of contamination for the LPOE or proposed expansion area.

The 2022 Phase I ESA identified 25 additional locations within 0.125 mile of the proposed expansion area with state or federal database listings. These sites are primarily gas stations or automotive related service stations, as well as other industrial facilities associated with leaking USTs, USTs, ASTs, spills, and Site Remediation Services sites.

Lead-Based Paint and Asbestos-Containing Materials. The 2021 Phase I ESA identified the potential for ACM within the existing LPOE buildings; however, given the building's construction in 1993, it is unlikely to be present in large quantities as ACM was phased out in buildings constructed after 1980. Similarly, it is not likely that LBP is present in the buildings (GSA 2021b). The 2022 Phase I ESA indicated that since the proposed expansion area is largely undeveloped, the only concern for ACM includes the potential for small amounts within the duty-free pick-up building and air blower building depending on the age of the structures. A survey for LBP was not conducted as part of the investigation; however, LBP is typically present in buildings constructed prior to 1980 and is normally only a concern during demolition or renovation activities, or in child-occupied buildings (GSA 2022a).

Site Security. Results of the 2018 Feasibility Study confirmed the existing buildings, although well maintained, do not meet the GSA's minimum requirements for LPOEs. The existing LPOE suffers from a variety of basic deficiencies that inhibit the ability of the CBP and other agencies to provide safe and efficient processing of vehicle and pedestrian traffic. These issues consist of: poor site circulation and layout; inadequate space to process inbound vehicles especially secondary inspections of large commercial vehicles; insufficient space to process outbound vehicle and pedestrian traffic; lack of dedicated employee parking; deficient exterior lighting; and concerns related to security measures (equipment, fencing, building setbacks, etc.) (GSA 2019a).

Security and Law Enforcement. The International Falls Police Department is located approximately 0.7 mile southwest of the LPOE and is the primary provider of law enforcement and police protection services

in the area. In addition, the Kabetogama Police Department is located approximately 18 miles to the southeast of the LPOE in Ray, Minnesota.

Fire and Medical Emergency Services: The Rainy Lake Medical Center Emergency Department is located approximately 1.8 miles west-southwest of the existing LPOE. This facility is housed within the Rainy Lake Medical Center, which provides other services such as primary care, urgent care capabilities, coumadin clinic, laboratory, surgery clinic, and physical therapy.

Fire protection and emergency services are provided by the combined International Falls Fire, Rescue, and EMS Department located on 4th Street approximately 0.6 mile southeast of the LPOE.

3.12.2 Environmental Consequences

3.12.2.1 *Summary of Human Health and Safety Impacts from the 2011 Final EIS*

The 2011 Final EIS does not include a Human Health and Safety section; however, it does include a discussion of uncontrolled petroleum and hazardous substances. Impacts from uncontrolled petroleum and hazardous substances associated with the 2011 Preferred Alternative are discussed in Section 4.11 of the 2011 Final EIS and are summarized as follows:

- The 2011 Preferred Alternative would create a small increase in the amounts of hazardous substances currently generated or used in the study area during demolition, construction, and operation.
- The construction of a new GRIT facility or mobile unit has the potential to result in impacts from a slight increase in hazardous substances or materials.
- Based on the CBP's criterion of 2,000 hours per year as the time of exposure to the GRIT facility, neither CBP inspectors nor the general public would experience a dose greater than 0.05 millirem (50 microrem) per hour above natural and man-made background radiation, through the establishment of radiation safety exclusion zones.
- Operation and maintenance of non-intrusive inspection units has low potential for impact to health and safety.

3.12.2.2 *Methodology*

To evaluate impacts on human health and safety, GSA reviewed the project alternatives to determine whether any activities have the potential to cause the following within the ROI:

- Adverse impacts on public or occupational health and safety;
- New sources of construction materials and operational supplies to be developed;
- Create the need for a hazardous waste treatment, storage, or disposal permit for the project;
- Create reasonably foreseeable conditions that would increase the risk of a hazardous materials or hazardous waste release;
- Affect the capacity of waste collection services and treatment, storage, and disposal facilities; or
- Affect the capacity of fire protection or emergency medical services to respond to needs of the public.

A major adverse impact to human health and safety would occur if the project alternatives would result in:

- Conflict with and federal, state, or local laws, regulations, or ordinances relating to public health and safety, including occupational safety and health;
- An unacceptable increased risk of adverse impacts to human health;

- Violations of applicable federal, state, or local standards related to the management of hazardous materials or wastes;
- Increase in the use of hazardous materials or generation of hazardous wastes to such an extent that would lead to an elevated risk of human health or environmental effects; or
- Additional demand or hazards that would exceed the capacities of fire protection or emergency response services.

The potential impacts of the Proposed Action on occupational health and safety relate directly to the size of the workforce needed for construction, operation, and maintenance activities. Workers at any facility are subject to risks of injuries and fatalities from physical hazards. Such risks include exposure to extreme weather conditions, hazardous equipment, and large moving vehicles. This SEIS estimates the potential occupational safety and health impacts of construction of the Proposed Action using data collected by the Bureau of Labor Statistics based on the North American Industry Classification System (NAICS). NAICS Codes 2362 (construction of nonresidential buildings) and 2373 (highway, street, and bridge construction) were used to predict the probability of the workforce to experience recordable injuries, illnesses, lost workdays, or fatalities during the construction phase of the Proposed Action.

3.12.2.3 *Alternative 1 – Full Build*

Construction

Table 3.12-1 summarizes the Bureau of Labor Statistics data for occupational injuries and fatalities in the construction industry, specifically NAICS Codes 2362 (construction of nonresidential buildings) and 2373 (highway, street, and bridge construction). These data summarize the incidence rate for injury or illness cases per 100 worker-years (or 200,000 hours) for total recordable cases and cases involving lost workdays. The table also lists the total number of fatalities in each industry by year.

Table 3.12-1. Occupational Injuries and Fatalities for Relevant Construction Industries (2014 - 2020)

Year	Average Employment (thousands)		Total Recordable Injury or Illness Cases (rate per 100 workers)		Cases with Days Away from Work, Transfer, or Restriction (rate per 100 workers)		Total Fatal Injuries in Industry	
	2362[a]	2373[b]	2362[a]	2373[b]	2362[a]	2373[b]	2362[a]	2373[b]
2014	698.4	294.4	2.7	3.8	1.4	2.3	69	94
2015	730.3	309.7	2.4	3.6	1.3	2.2	62	108
2016	762.3	319.3	2.4	3.5	1.3	2.3	50	107
2017	792.5	327.7	2.7	3.2	1.4	1.9	56	104
2018	827.1	341.2	2.5	3.6	1.4	2.0	71	100
2019	840.9	348.6	1.9	3.4	1.1	2.0	69	104
2020	797.7	346.0	1.8	2.7	1.0	1.6	58	105
Average	**778.4**	**326.7**	**2.3**	**3.4**	**1.3**	**2.0**	**62.1**	**103.1**

Source: U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics 2022

a. NAICS Code 2362 is the industry code for construction of nonresidential buildings.

b. NAICS Code 2373 is the industry code for construction of highways, streets, and bridges.

The average annual number of fatal injuries for workers in the nonresidential building construction industry is approximately 62, based on the years from 2014 to 2020, for an average workforce of approximately 778,000 employees. The average probability of a fatal injury during the period was approximately 0.00008

per worker per year (less than 1 in 10,000). The average annual number of fatal injuries for workers in the highway, street, and bridge construction industry is approximately 103, based on the years from 2014 to 2020, for an average workforce of approximately 327,000 employees. The average probability of a fatal injury during the period was approximately 0.0003 per worker per year (less than 1 in 1,000). During peak construction activity under Alternative 1, it is assumed that up to 100 construction workers could be onsite simultaneously. A conservative estimate would still expect no fatalities to occur over the course of construction (projected maximum of 0.15 fatality to occur over the 5-year total construction period).

Under Alternative 1, risks to health and safety of personnel and patrons would increase slightly during the construction phase. Risks would be minimized by adhering to occupational safety and health regulations, the use of protective gear and equipment, and implementation of BMPs. Access to the construction site would be restricted to construction workers; however, parts of the LPOE would remain open and operational 24 hours per day, 7 days per week throughout construction. Risks to human health and safety during construction under Alternative 1 would therefore be direct, short-term, negligible to minor, and adverse locally.

Alternative 1 would result in direct and indirect, short-term, negligible to minor, adverse impacts locally and regionally from hazardous materials use and waste handling during construction of the proposed LPOE expansion. During demolition, there would be an increase of hazardous or otherwise regulated wastes such as fluorescent, halide, or sodium vapor lamps containing mercury; smoke detectors and emergency exit signs containing low-level radioactive sources; mercury switches; electronic ballasts containing PCBs and/or other fluids; and various equipment containing batteries. Hazardous materials associated with construction would be used in accordance with federal, state, and local regulations. All wastes including hazardous waste, construction and demolition debris, and other waste materials would be removed from all project areas and disposed of in accordance with applicable regulations. The increased amounts of hazardous materials such as diesel fuel, gasoline, paint, adhesives, and solvents used onsite during construction could increase the potential for spills. Any spills from construction activities would be immediately contained and disposed of properly in accordance with all applicable plans and regulations. In addition, any project-specific hazards affecting workers would be reduced based on strict adherence to OSHA standards and other relevant safety laws, rules, and regulations. Therefore, there would be a low likelihood of hazardous material spills or associated human health impacts from hazardous materials or waste handling during construction activities.

Potentially contaminated soil could be encountered during construction excavation activities as a result of current and historical land uses and associated spills that have occurred within the proposed expansion area and surrounding parcels. Soil sampling will be conducted prior to the Final SEIS to further identify the presence of hazardous materials, and results will be incorporated into the Final SEIS. GSA would cap and remove the leachate line (both active and inactive portions) prior to site redevelopment. The line would be inspected upon removal to identify any holes or cracks which may have resulted in leakage of wastewater to the subsurface. As necessary, soil and/or groundwater sampling would also be performed along and adjacent to the line (GSA 2022a). If contaminated soil is present, appropriate abatement, management, or disposal actions would be implemented in accordance with applicable regulatory requirements to prevent, minimize, and control hazardous materials, if necessary, during construction.

Construction of renewable energy technologies for the LPOE as described in Section 2.2.1.3 would be integrated with the general construction of facilities and infrastructure on the site and the proposed expansion area. Impacts to human health and safety as well as hazardous materials use and waste handling during construction would be mainly as described above for construction of the port facilities.

For connected actions, modifications or demolition and construction of facilities on properties not under the jurisdiction of GSA would be conducted by the responsible entities. This includes features and locations described in Section 2.2.1.1 and illustrated on Figure 2-5. Through the observance of construction methods

and procedures comparable to those described above, the construction for connected actions would have direct, short-term, negligible to minor, adverse impacts on health and safety locally.

Construction for Alternative 1 or connected actions would not cause demands or create hazardous conditions that would exceed the capacities of existing fire protection and emergency services to respond. Similarly, construction for Alternative 1 or connected actions are not expected to affect the capacities of these services to meet the demands of the community and region.

Operation

There would be direct, long-term, negligible to minor, adverse effects on human health and safety locally during operations of the proposed LPOE expansion. Operations would be conducted in accordance with applicable building and safety codes. Employees would adhere to fire and safety standards set forth in the National Fire Protection Association Standard 101, *Life Safety Code,* and the Minnesota State Fire Code. Redevelopment and expansion of the LPOE would improve the efficiency and safety of vehicle inspections. The relocations of tracks and the improvements in at-grade crossings would have direct and indirect, long-term, minor to moderate, beneficial impacts on public safety locally by improving traffic patterns and minimizing risks of vehicular and pedestrian accidents near the LPOE.

Impacts to human health from radiation emissions from inspection equipment, including use of GRIT facility, would be mainly as described in the 2011 Final EIS and would result in negligible to minor impacts on human health and safety and the surrounding environment. Overall operations of the expanded and modernized LPOE are not expected to increase demands on emergency services.

There would be direct and indirect, long-term, negligible to minor, adverse impacts related to hazardous materials and waste handling from operations of the proposed LPOE expansion locally and regionally. The new facility would not include any ACM or LBP that would result in occupant exposure, contain any PCB-containing electrical equipment, and prior site contamination would be remediated. There may be petroleum storage tanks associated with the new facility; these would be installed and operated in accordance with all applicable regulations and current industry standards including leak-detection systems and secondary containment. The addition of indoor firing range would result in a slight increase of handling hazardous materials and generation of minor amounts of potentially hazardous munitions waste. Hazardous materials such as paints and cleaners would be used in facility maintenance activities, but these would likely be used in small amounts. Small amounts of hazardous waste may also be generated periodically from facility maintenance activities. All hazardous materials and waste would be managed in accordance with applicable federal, state, and local regulations.

The operation of renewable energy technologies at the expanded and modernized LPOE as described in Section 2.2.1.3 would not substantially change conditions or introduce activities that would create additional hazards or increase demands on emergency services. Use of closed loop geothermal systems would employ use of antifreeze, propylene glycol, or ethanol solutions as a heat exchange fluid; however, regular maintenance of these systems would minimize any potential for leaks from these systems. Any adverse impacts would be long-term but negligible locally.

Operation and maintenance of facilities associated with connected actions identified in Section 2.2.1.1 would be performed by entities responsible for the facilities, including PCA and MD&W Railway. The operation and maintenance of these facilities would be comparable to the facilities replaced and would not cause any additional conditions that would adversely affect health and safety locally. Any adverse impacts would be long-term but negligible locally. Relocations of tracks, access road improvements, and upgraded rail crossing features would have a direct, long-term, minor to moderate, beneficial impact on local safety.

3.12.2.4 *No Action Alternative*

Under the No Action Alternative, GSA would not expand or modernize the International Falls LPOE; current facilities and infrastructure at the existing LPOE would remain essentially unchanged. Therefore,

negligible impacts would occur as there would be no change in risks to human safety, hazardous materials usage, or waste generation. Ongoing maintenance to the LPOE would continue, which would require negligible amounts of hazardous materials usage and generate negligible amounts of hazardous waste. Risks to health and safety associated with existing conditions and operations at the LPOE would remain unchanged from current conditions.

3.12.2.5 *Impacts Reduction Measures*

Measures that would limit impacts related to human health and safety during building construction and operations are discussed below:

- Prior to demolition, an inspection of the buildings to be demolished would be performed by a licensed asbestos inspector and a "Notification of Intent to Perform a Demolition" form would need to be completed and filed with the MPCA.
- GSA would require diversion of at least 50 percent of nonhazardous construction and demolition waste from the landfill per Section 207 of EO 14057, *Catalyzing Clean Energy Industries and Jobs Through Federal Sustainability*.
- All spills or releases of petroleum, oils, and lubricants; hazardous materials; pollutants; or contaminants would be handled in accordance with measures outlined in a Spill Prevention and Response Plan prepared for construction.
- GSA would develop a SPCC plan during final design for operations of the facility, assuming the facility meets the requirements to prepare a plan per 40 CFR 112.
- As a BMP, a Soil Management Plan may be prepared to address the potential for encountering areas of environmental concern (e.g., contaminated soil) during grading, excavation, or other subsurface disturbance. The Soil Management Plan would identify specific measures to address hazardous waste and materials cleanup efforts, including monitoring, handling, stockpiling, characterization, on-site reuse, export, and disposal protocols for excavated soil.
- All personnel would follow federal regulations and standard handling procedures as specified in product Safety Data Sheets for hazardous materials.
- All potentially hazardous wastes generated would be properly characterized, segregated, and managed onsite prior to offsite disposal.
- If PCB-containing materials are identified onsite, appropriate abatement actions for their disposal would be implemented in accordance with regulatory requirements, and soils beneath transformers would be evaluated for evidence of releases. If present in underlying soils, appropriate actions for removal and disposal would be implemented in accordance with applicable regulatory requirements.
- Any existing municipal (household) trash, construction debris, and other waste materials would be removed from all project areas and disposed of in accordance with applicable regulations.
- Potentially hazardous wastes generated during project-related construction activities would be disposed of or recycled at appropriate facilities in accordance with associated regulatory requirements.
- Construction workers would adhere to safety standards promulgated in 29 CFR 17 to protect against workplace hazards. To minimize potential exposure or safety concerns to workers, appropriate PPE would be worn.
- Signs, barriers, and traffic cones would be installed to direct vehicles and non-construction personnel away from the construction area.

3.13 ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE AND PROTECTION OF CHILDREN'S HEALTH AND SAFETY

This section describes the baseline conditions for race, income, and populations of children in the project area and potential disproportionate impacts that could result on minority and low-income populations, and on children's health and safety from implementing the Proposed Action and No Action Alternative as discussed in Chapter 2. In evaluating environmental justice under NEPA, agencies must recognize the interconnected cultural, social, occupational, historical, or economic factors that may amplify the natural and physical environmental effects of the proposed agency action (CEQ 1997).

This SEIS uses the following documents and data sources to characterize the affected environment and assess potential impacts regarding environmental justice and protection of children's health and safety:

- The 2011 Final EIS Section 3.12 provides a description of the minority and disadvantaged populations of the project area. The 2011 Final EIS Section 4.12 presents the anticipated impacts resulting from construction and operations of the new LPOE facility, as considered in the 2011 Final EIS, for minority and disadvantaged populations.
- Primary data sources were used to update and supplement the affected environment discussion regarding environmental justice and protection of children's safety. U.S. Census Bureau data was used to quantify minority and low-income populations in block groups surrounding the project area, and to determine the meaningfully greater criteria based on Koochiching County demographics.
- The analysis also considers information from the USEPA's EJSCREEN model. The EJSCREEN model serves as a screening-level tool to identify areas that may have a higher susceptibility to environmental justice impacts because of their demographic composition and existing exposure to contaminants or proximity to facilities. The model uses environmental indicators (as quantified in twelve pre-determined indexes) to quantify susceptibility to exposure to various environmental contaminants, including proximity to ozone and other air toxins, lead paint, USTs, hazardous waste sites, among others.

3.13.1 Affected Environment

3.13.1.1 *Region of Influence*

The ROI for environmental justice and children's health and safety focuses on the project area, including the existing International Falls LPOE, proposed expansion area, areas for potential connected actions necessitated by the LPOE expansion (see Section 2.2.1.1), and the immediate surrounding area. Potential impacts with the greatest intensity and longest duration (e.g., air quality, noise, transportation, changes in socioeconomic conditions) would occur near the project area. Therefore, environmental justice and children's health and safety considerations are analyzed within a respective 1-mile radius of the project area.

3.13.1.2 *Regulatory Setting*

EO 12898, *Federal Actions to Address Environmental Justice in Minority Populations and Low-Income Populations*, directs federal agencies to consider whether impacts on human health or the environment (including social and economic aspects) would be disproportionately high and adverse for minority and low-income populations, and would outweigh impacts on the general population or other comparison group.

EO 13990, *Protecting Public Health and the Environment and Restoring Science to Address the Climate Crisis* directs federal agencies to prioritize both environmental justice and employment. EO 13990 supports the national goal of improving public health and the environment by ensuring access to clean air and water, limiting exposure to dangerous chemicals and pesticides, and holding polluters accountable, including those who disproportionately harm people of color and low-income people.

EO 14030, *Climate-Related Financial Risk*, outlines the government approach to mitigating climate-related financial risks and ensuring financial security for workers, families, and businesses who may be disproportionately affected by climate change. The EO advises federal agencies to assess their government programs, assets, and liabilities, and to identify causes of and address disparate impacts on disadvantaged communities and communities of color.

EO 13045, *Protection of Children from Environmental Health Risks and Safety Risks*, places a high priority on the identification and assessment of environmental health and safety risks that may disproportionately affect children. The EO requires that each agency "shall ensure that its policies, programs, activities, and standards address disproportionate risks to children." It considers that physiological and social development of children makes them more sensitive than adults to adverse health and safety risks, and it recognizes that children in minority and low-income populations are more likely to be exposed to and have increased health and safety risks from environmental contamination than the general population.

The *Memorandum Addressing Children's Health through Reviews Conducted Pursuant to the National Environmental Policy Act and Section 309 of the Clean Air Act* recommends that an EIS "describe the relevant demographics of affected neighborhoods, populations, and/or communities and focus exposure assessments on children who are likely to be present at schools, recreation areas, childcare centers, parks, and residential areas in close proximity to the project area, and other areas of apparent frequent and/or prolonged exposure" (USEPA 2012).

3.13.1.3 *Existing Conditions*

Existing conditions for environmental justice populations since publication of the 2011 Final EIS generally remain the same as current conditions. The 2011 Final EIS did not specifically address children's health and safety risks.

Environmental Justice

The definitions of minority, low-income, and minority or low-income populations are presented below.

- **Minority –** Individual(s) who are members of the following population groups as designated in the U.S. Census: Black or African American, American Indian and Alaska Native, Asian, Native Hawaiian and Other Pacific Islander, as well as Hispanic or Latino of any race.
- **Low-income –** The U.S. Census Bureau uses a set of income thresholds that vary by family size and composition to determine who is in poverty (i.e., classified as 'low-income'). If a family's total income is less than the family's threshold, then that family and every individual in it is considered in poverty. The official poverty thresholds do not vary geographically but are updated for inflation using the Consumer Price Index. The official poverty definition uses income before taxes and does not include capital gains or noncash benefits (such as public housing, Medicaid, and food stamps) (USCB 2021a).
- **Minority or low-income population –** Populations where either: (a) the total number of minority or low-income individuals of the affected area exceeds 50 percent of the overall population in the same area, or (b) the total number of minority or low-income individuals within the affected area is meaningfully greater (e.g., 120 percent greater) than the minority or low-income population percentage in an appropriate comparison unit of geographic analysis (CEQ 1998). A minority population also exists if there is more than one minority group present and the minority percentage, as calculated by aggregating all minority persons, meets one of the above-stated thresholds. In identifying minority or low-income populations, agencies may consider as a community either a group of individuals living in geographic proximity to one another, or a geographically dispersed/transient set of individuals (such as migrant workers or Indigenous people), where either type of group experiences common conditions of environmental exposure or effect. The selection of the appropriate unit of geographic analysis may be a governing body's jurisdiction, a

neighborhood, census tract, or other similar unit that is to be chosen so as not to artificially dilute or inflate the affected minority population.

- **Meaningfully Greater –** A meaningfully greater minority or low-income population within a geographic unit affected by a federal action is determined by comparing the minority or low-income composition of the geographic unit to the minority or low-income composition of the general population. As with selecting the appropriate unit of geographic analysis, a comparison population should be selected so as not to artificially dilute or inflate the affected minority populations. For this analysis, the comparison population is the total population of Koochiching County.

The analysis of minority and low-income populations focuses on U.S. Census Bureau data for geographic units (i.e., census tracts and block groups) that represent, as closely as possible, the potentially affected areas. A census tract is a geographic area for which the U.S. Census Bureau provides consistent sample data and is comprised of smaller census block groups. Census tracts generally contain a population between 1,200 and 8,000 people. A census block group is the smallest geographic area for which the U.S. Census Bureau provides consistent sample data, and generally contains a population between 600 and 3,000 individuals (USCB 2022).

USEPA typically considers a project to be in an area of potential environmental justice concern when an EJSCREEN analysis for the impacted area shows 1 or more of the 12 indices at or above the 80th percentile in the nation and/or state. Per scoping comments received from USEPA dated January 13, 2023, this analysis considers EJSCREEN information for the block groups that meet or exceed the 80th percentile in the nation and/or state.

Table 3.13-1 summarizes the percentage of minority and low-income populations within 1 mile of the project area, Koochiching County, and Minnesota for comparison purposes.

Table 3.13-1. Minority and Low-Income Population within the Region of Influence

Population Group	1-Mile ROI		Koochiching County		Minnesota	
	Pop.	Total (%)	Pop.	Total (%)	Pop.	Total (%)
Nonminority	5,795	91.1	11,135	91.2	4,441,935	78.3
Black or African American	46	0.7	71	0.6	371,249	6.5
Total Hispanic or Latino	135	2.1	169	1.4	319,828	5.6
American Indian or Alaska Native	11	1.7	263	2.2	46,371	0.8
Asian	7	0.1	23	0.2	281,572	5.0
Other Minority[a]	268	4.2	542	4.4	209,517	3.6
Total Minority	**567**	**8.9**	**1,068**	**8.8**	**1,228,537**	**21.7**
Total Population	**6,362**	**100**	**12,203**	**100**	**5,670,472**	**100**
Low Income	**1,319**	**20.7**	**1,356**	**11.1**	**519,731**	**9.2**

USCB 2021c and 2021d

[a] Other Minority = Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander; Some other race; or Two or more races.

The average minority population percentage of Koochiching County is approximately 9 percent. If a block group's percentage of minority individuals meets the 50 percent criterion or exceeds 120 percent of the total minority population within Koochiching County (i.e., 10.5 percent), the area is considered to have a minority population of environmental justice concern as defined above. Because the minority population percentage relative to the general population of Koochiching County would not exceed the 50 percent threshold defined by CEQ, the secondary threshold of 10.5 percent is used to identify areas with meaningfully greater minority populations within 1 mile of the project area. There are eight block groups

within the ROI, and four of those block group contain individual racial group minority populations or aggregate minority populations that meet the environmental justice criteria. The total minority population residing within 1 mile of the project area is approximately 567, or 8.9 percent of the entire population. Therefore, the overall composition of the ROI is predominantly nonminority. Minority populations in the ROI are predominantly Other Minority, which includes Native Hawaiian or other Pacific Islander; Some other race; or Two or more races, followed by Hispanic or Latino. Figure 3.13-1 displays the block groups identified as meeting the criteria for environmental justice minority populations surrounding the project area, as well as the population density of minority populations within each block group.

Low-income populations were evaluated using the absolute 50 percent and the relative 120 percent or greater criteria for potentially affected block group within the ROI. If a block group's percentage of low-income individuals meets the 50 percent criterion or is more than 120 percent of the total low-income population within Koochiching County (i.e., 13.3 percent), then the area is considered to have a low-income population of environmental justice concern as defined above. Figure 3.13-2 displays the block groups identified as meeting the criteria for environmental justice low-income populations surrounding the project area, as well as the population density of low-income individuals within each block group. Out of the eight block groups within a 1-mile radius of the project area, six block groups have a low-income population that exceeds the meaningfully greater criteria.

The total low-income population residing within 1 mile of the project area is approximately 1,319, or 20.7 percent of the entire population. The low-income population is substantially higher in the block groups surrounding the project area and International Falls as a whole, compared to 11.1 percent in Koochiching County and 9.2 percent in Minnesota. Poverty in the entire city of International Falls is higher than the county and the state, and 37 percent of families with children living in the city experience poverty. Children living in International Falls are the group most vulnerable to poverty, experiencing poverty about 1.5 times more than the rate in the county and more than two times the rate in the state overall (City of International Falls 2020).

Based on a review of the USEPA's EJSCREEN model, no block groups within a 1-mile radius of the project area were identified as meeting or exceeding the 80th national percentile threshold for any environmental justice indicators.

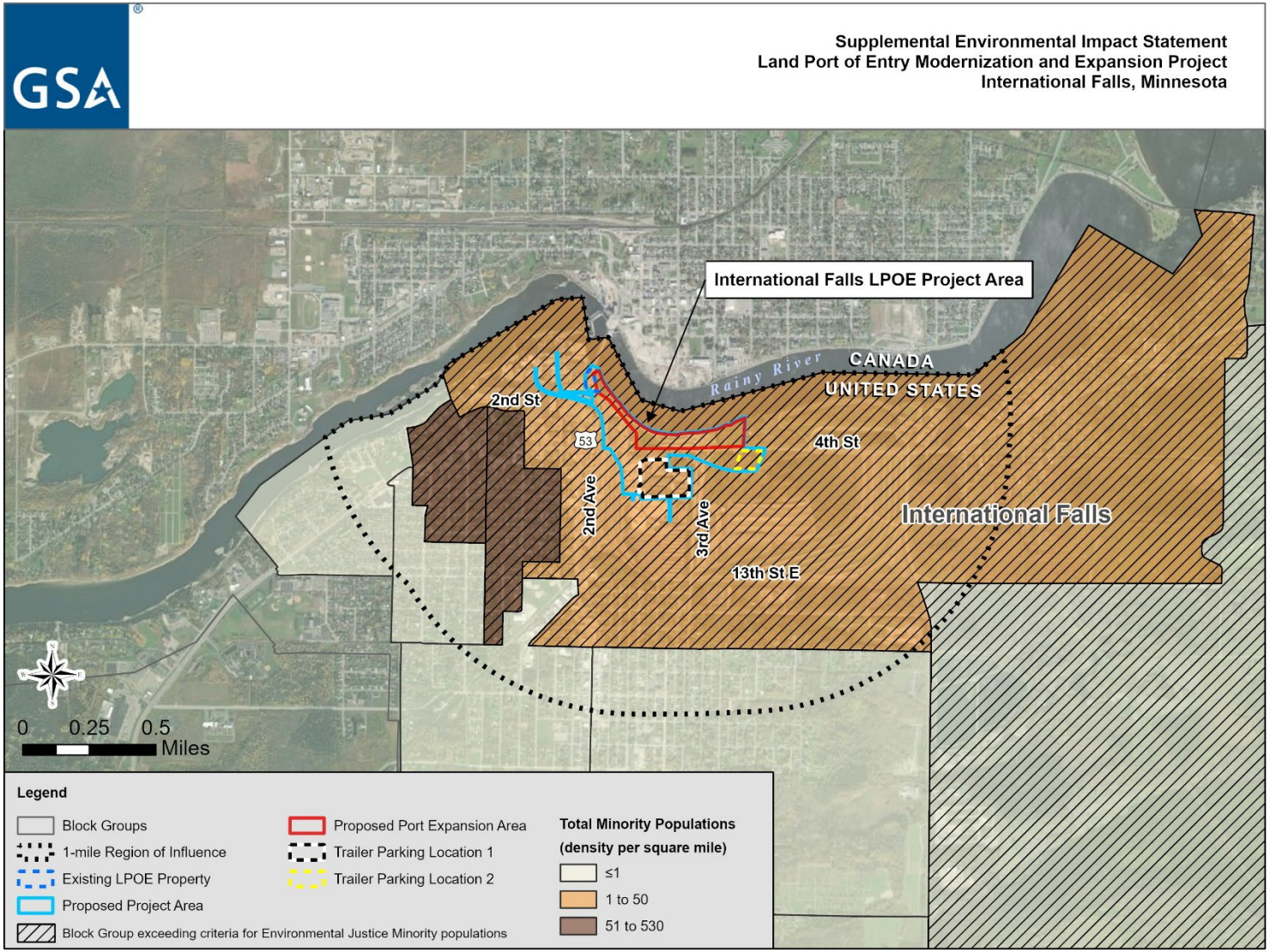
Protection of Children's Health and Safety

Table 3.13-2 shows the population of children under age 5 and ages 5 to 19 within 1 mile of the project area, in Koochiching County, and in Minnesota. Section 3.5, Air Quality and Climate Change and Section 3.6, Noise, also discuss locations of air pollutant- and noise-sensitive receptors, to include locations children may be present within 0.5 mile of the project area. Children under age 5 make up about 4 percent of the total population surrounding the project area, and children aged 5 to 19 make up about 19 percent of the total population. Figure 3.13-3 shows densities of youth populations in International Falls.

Table 3.13-2. Youth Populations in the Region of Influence

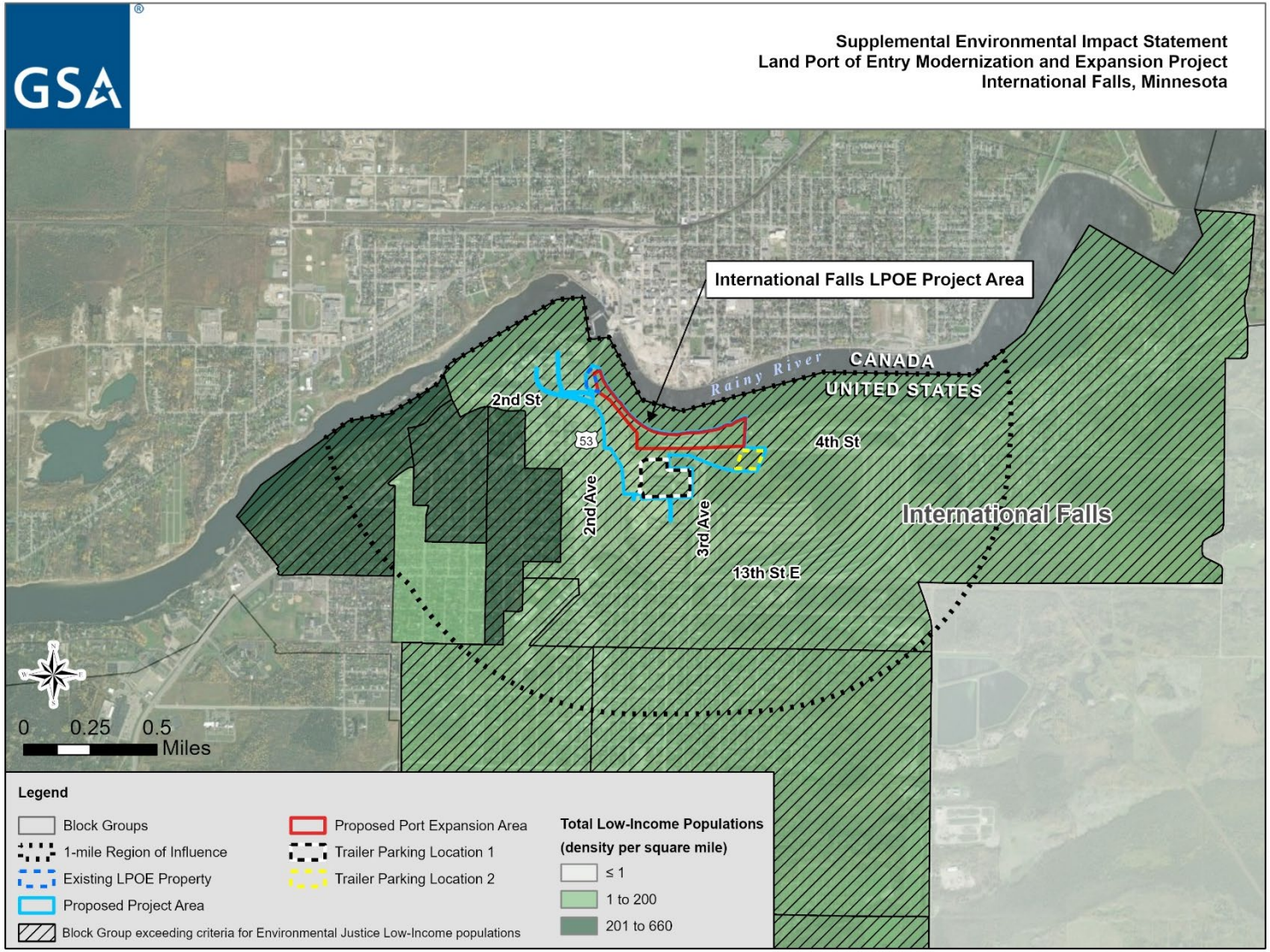
Location	Children under Age 5 (%)	Children 5 to 19 Years (%)
1-Mile ROI	3.8	18.7
Koochiching County	3.9	16.7
Minnesota	6.4	19.6

Source: USCB 2021e



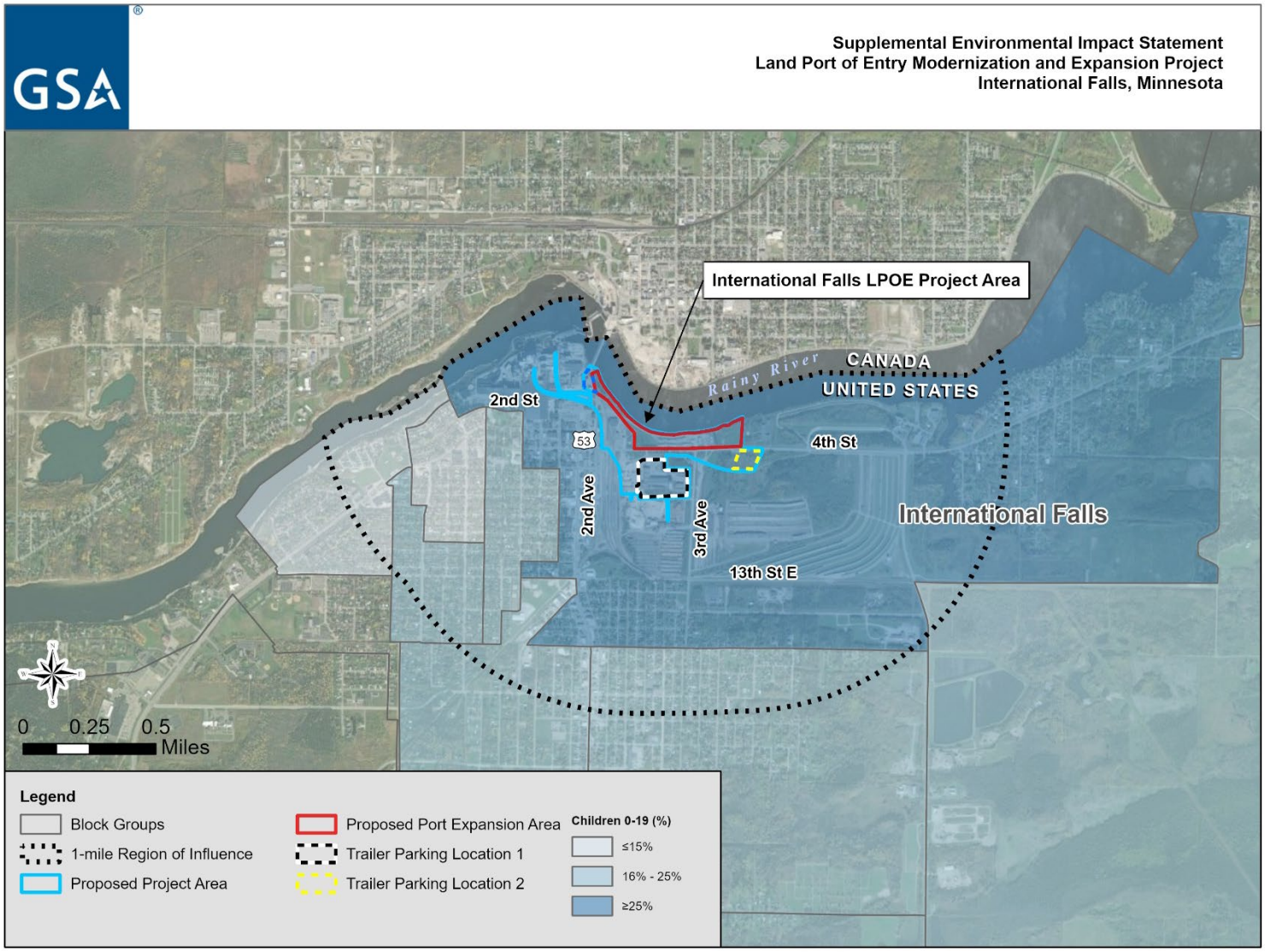
Source: USCB 2021c

Figure 3.13-1. Minority Populations near the International Falls LPOE Project Area



Source: USCB 2021d

Figure 3.13-2. Low-Income Populations near the International Falls LPOE Project Area



Source: USCB 2021e

Figure 3.13-3. Youth Populations near the International Falls LPOE Project Area

3.13.2 Environmental Consequences

3.13.2.1 *Summary of Environmental Justice and Children's Safety Impacts from the 2011 Final EIS*

GSA determined that the 2011 Preferred Alternative would have no effects on environmental justice. Impacts to minority and disadvantaged populations from the 2011 Preferred Alternative are discussed in Section 4.12 of the 2011 Final EIS. Impacts to children's health and safety risks were not discussed in the 2011 Final EIS.

3.13.2.2 *Methodology*

Consideration of the potential consequences for environmental justice requires three main components:

1) A demographic assessment of the affected community to identify the presence of minority or low-income and youth populations that may be potentially affected.
2) An assessment of all potential impacts identified to determine if any result in major adverse impacts to the affected environment.
3) An integrated assessment to determine whether any disproportionately high and adverse impacts exist for minority or low-income groups and youth populations present in or near the existing International Falls LPOE and proposed expansion area.

To evaluate the impacts on environmental justice resources, project alternatives were reviewed for their potential to result in the following:

- A disproportionately high and adverse effect on a low-income or minority population; or
- A disproportionately high and adverse environmental health and safety risks to children.

Generally, the presence of disproportionately high and adverse effects on low-income or minority population, or to the environmental health and safety risks to children, equates to a major impact under NEPA. Determination of major impacts for environmental justice is informed by the USEPA's *Promising Practices for EJ Methodologies in NEPA Reviews* (USEPA 2016b). Context and intensity of impacts on the impacted communities is considered when determining whether impacts from the Proposed Action would be considered major under NEPA. Factors considered when determining significance of impacts to environmental justice populations include:

- Whether the action results in environmental, economic, or health impacts due to special vulnerabilities, unique routes of exposure, or cultural practices;
- The degree to which the action may establish a precedent for future actions with major effects;
- Whether the action results in loss of significant cultural or historical resources; or
- Whether the action results in impacts with specific concern to low-income or minority populations that are highly controversial.

Determination of major impacts on children's health and safety is informed by USEPA's *Memorandum Addressing Children's Health through Reviews Conducted Pursuant to the National Environmental Policy Act and Section 309 of the Clean Air Act.* Factors considered when determining significance of impacts to children's health and safety relate to whether "children are likely to be present at schools, recreation areas, childcare centers, parks, and residential areas in close proximity to the project area and other areas of apparent frequent and/or prolonged exposure" (USEPA 2012).

3.13.2.3 *Alternative 1 – Full Build*

Construction

The project area is located within Census Tract 7902.02, Block Group 2 and within 1 mile of multiple environmental justice block groups as shown on Figures 3.13-1 and 3.13-2. This SEIS identified the following impacts that could occur during construction and that may disproportionately affect minority and low-income populations and children's health and safety surrounding the project area.

- **Air Quality Impacts –** During construction, short-term, minor, adverse, direct and indirect air quality impacts would be expected locally as described in Section 3.5, Air Quality and Climate Change. These would include increased air emissions from on-road and non-road construction vehicles, as well as airborne dust from soil surface disturbance during construction activities. Because these emissions would occur at ground level, they would likely cause short-term increases in air pollutant emissions in the immediate vicinity of the project area, but would not likely be transported more than 1 mile except on windy days. Emissions would be reduced through the use of BMPs such as watering of soils.
- **Noise Disturbance –** During construction, short-term, minor to moderate adverse impacts from noise would be expected during construction locally as described in Section 3.6, Noise. Indoor noise levels from the combined construction equipment at the closest residential properties could be reduced to approximately 54.9 dBA (at 500 feet) and 50.2 dBA (at 860 feet), which is considered tolerable and below the NAC-1 daytime thresholds and below or near nighttime thresholds for residential areas. If nighttime construction would be required, GSA would coordinate with the City of International Falls to ensure that such activity would be approved by the city to reduce adverse noise impacts to the closest residential areas. The construction noises emanating from the project area would result in short-term minor local noise impacts on the closest sensitive noise receptors.
- **Traffic Congestion –** Short-term, minor, adverse transportation and traffic impacts would be expected during construction locally from increased congestion as described in Section 3.7, Traffic and Transportation. These impacts would occur primarily on roads primarily serving the LPOE and proposed expansion area, including SR-11, US-53, US-71, CR-332, and CR-155, which mainly pass through commercial areas locally.
- **Job Opportunities –** Short-term, minor to moderate, beneficial impacts on employment locally would result from the creation of direct, indirect, and induced jobs during construction as described in Section 3.10, Socioeconomics.

Environmental Justice

Alternative 1 would not have a disproportionately high and adverse impact on environmental justice during construction. Although minority and low-income populations living and working within 1 mile of the project area may be disproportionately affected by activities during construction for Alternative 1, none of the impacts described above and elsewhere in this chapter are expected to be high or adverse. Adverse impacts would generally be minor to moderate as described above, because the most-affected populations are at such distance and are physically separated from the proposed construction areas by commercial and industrial properties east of US-53 and north of 11th Street, such that the extent of any adverse impacts during construction described above would be diminished. Beneficial impacts may have a disproportionately favorable effect for minority and low-income populations locally.

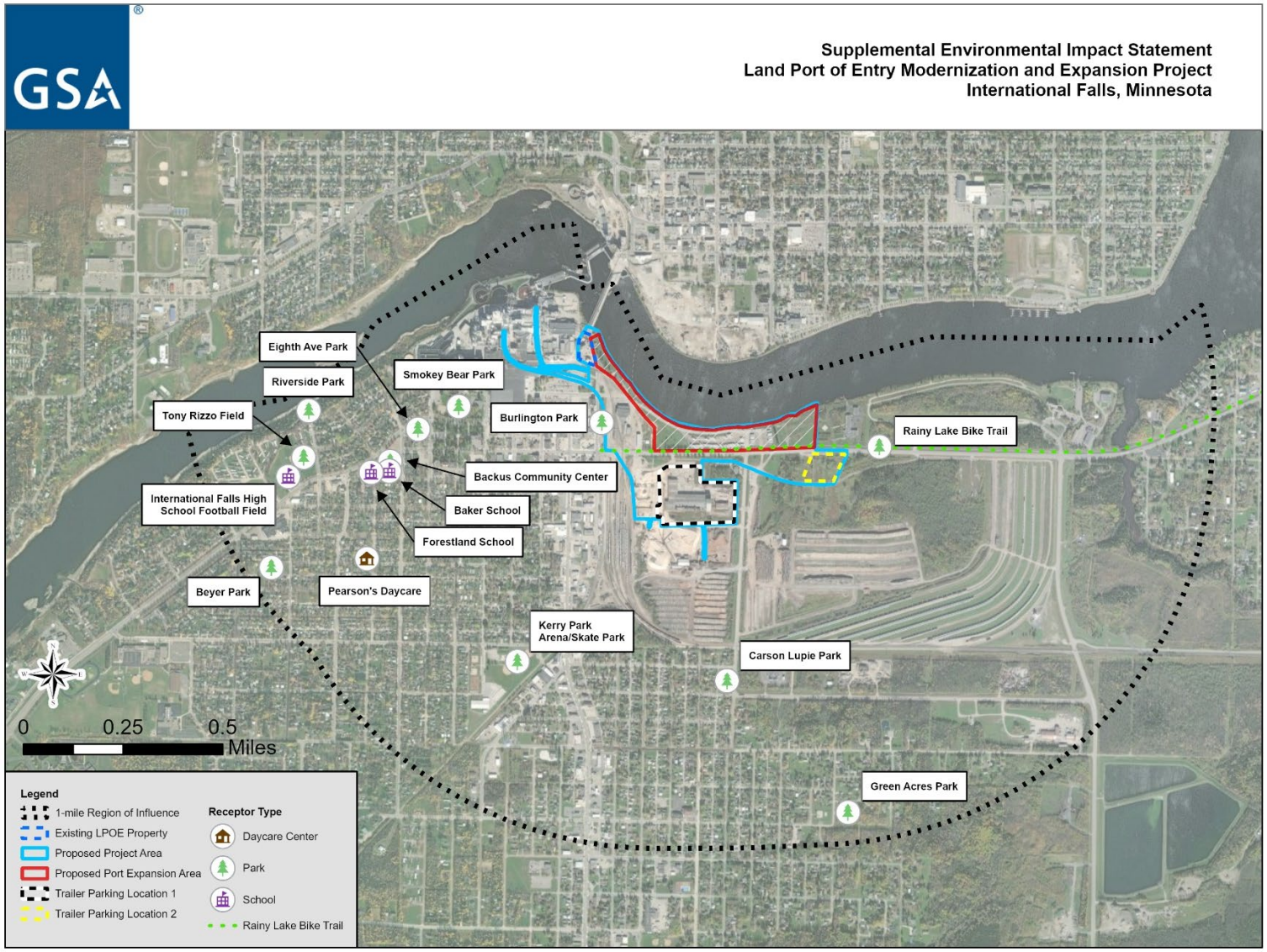
Protection of Children's Health and Safety

There could be minor to moderate adverse impacts to children's health and safety during construction. Increased noise levels have the potential to affect children's learning. Children are especially vulnerable due to higher relative doses of air pollution, smaller diameter airways, more active time spent outdoors and closer to ground-level sources of vehicle exhaust. Within 1 mile of the project area, there are 16 sites identified that children may regularly attend (e.g., childcare centers or schools, community centers, or recreational facilities) as shown in Figure 3.13-4. These include Rainy Lake Bike Trail (0 feet), Burlington Park (0 feet), Centennial Park (900 feet), Smokey Bear Park (1,500 feet), Eighth Avenue Park (2,200 feet), Carson Lupie Park (2,400 feet), Backus Community Center (2,600 feet), Kerry Park Arena (2,700 feet), Baker School (2,800 feet), Forestland School (3,000 feet), Riverside Park (3,100 feet), Pearson's Daycare (3,400 feet), Tony Rizzo Field (3,800 feet), International Falls High School Football Field (3,800 feet), Green Acres Park (4,000 feet), Beyer Park (5,000 feet). Falls Elementary is located outside a 1-mile radius of the project area. The impacts described above and elsewhere in this chapter are not expected to be high and adverse for children's health and safety, because the most-affected populations and facilities used regularly by children are at such distance and are physically separated from the proposed construction areas by commercial and industrial properties east of US-53 and north of 11th Street, such that the extent of any adverse impacts during construction described above would be diminished.

Operation

The SEIS identified the following impacts that could occur during operations and that may affect minority and low-income populations and children's health and safety surrounding the project area.

- **Air Quality Impacts –** During operations, long-term, negligible, adverse, direct and indirect air quality impacts would be expected locally as described in Section 3.5, Air Quality and Climate Change. The operations of the LPOE for Alternative 1 would not change substantially from current conditions, but improvements in traffic patterns and wait times would reduce emissions from vehicles while idling.
- **Noise Disturbance –** During operation, long-term, negligible to minor adverse impacts from noise would be expected locally as described in Section 3.6, Noise. The operations of the LPOE for Alternative 1 would not change substantially from current conditions, but improvements in traffic patterns and wait times would reduce traffic noise during operations.
- **Traffic Congestion –** The improvements in traffic patterns, wait times, and general public safety at the LPOE as described in Section 3.7, Traffic and Transportation, are expected to have long-term, minor beneficial impacts on traffic and transportation locally during operations. These impacts would occur primarily on roads adjacent to the LPOE and proposed expansion area, including SR-11, US-53, US-71, CR-332, and CR-155, which mainly pass through commercial areas locally.
- **Job Opportunities –** Long-term, minor, beneficial impacts on employment locally would result from the creation of direct, indirect, and induced jobs during operations as described in Section 3.10, Socioeconomics.



Source: City of International Falls 2020; Google Earth 2022; Google Maps 2023b

Figure 3.13-4. Locations near International Falls LPOE Project Area Children May Be Present

Environmental Justice

Alternative 1 would not have a disproportionately high and adverse impact on environmental justice during operations. Although minority and low-income populations living and working within 1 mile of the project area may be disproportionately affected by activities during operations for Alternative 1, none of the impacts described above and elsewhere in this chapter are expected to be high or adverse. The impacts would generally be negligible to minor adverse or beneficial, and the most-affected populations are at such distance and are physically separated from expanded and modernized LPOE by commercial and industrial properties east of US-53 and north of 11th Street, such that the extent of any adverse impacts during construction described above would be diminished.

Protection of Children's Health and Safety

The impacts described above and elsewhere in this chapter are not expected to be high and adverse for children's health and safety, because operations for Alternative 1 would generally remain comparable to current operations of the LPOE. Improvements in traffic patterns and rail crossings would also reduce safety hazards near the LPOE. The most-affected child populations and facilities used regularly by children are at such distance and are physically separated from the expanded and modernized LPOE by commercial and industrial properties east of US-53 and north of 11th Street, such that the extent of any adverse impacts during operations described above would be diminished.

Climate Risk

Long-term impacts related to climate change in the Midwest are discussed in Section 3.5.1.3. Generally, these impacts include long-term increases in temperatures, increases in extreme weather events, impacts on food production, and health impacts associated with these conditions. Decreased food availability could also further increase costs associated with accessing these resources, which could disproportionately affect low-income populations. Over time, minority and low-income populations and children near the project area would likely become more susceptible to these impacts. Alternative 1 would result in only negligible incremental contributions to global GHG emissions and climate change.

3.13.2.4 *No Action Alternative*

Under the No Action Alternative, GSA would not expand or modernize the International Falls LPOE; current facilities and infrastructure at the existing LPOE would remain. No creation of direct or indirect jobs would occur; therefore, there would be no potential beneficial impacts for existing environmental justice communities. Otherwise, there would be no change in conditions relating to minority and low-income populations or children's health and safety.

3.13.2.5 *Impacts Reduction Measures*

Impact reduction measures for resources specific to environmental justice are discussed in the respective sections (i.e., Sections 3.5, Air Quality and Climate Change; Section 3.6, Noise; Section 3.7, Traffic and Transportation; Section 3.10, Socioeconomics; and Section 3.12, Human Health and Safety. Construction contractors would be required to submit work plans which detail impact reduction measures to be followed during construction. GSA would distribute this information to the local community as appropriate.

CHAPTER 4 CUMULATIVE IMPACTS

4.1 INTRODUCTION

Cumulative impacts are defined by the CEQ regulations in 40 CFR 1508.1(g)(3) as "effects on the environment that result from the incremental effects of the action when added to the effects of other past, present, and reasonably foreseeable actions regardless of what agency (Federal or non-Federal) or person undertakes such other actions. Cumulative effects can result from individually minor but collectively significant actions taking place over a period of time." Taken together, these land use activities may result in cumulative effects on a variety of natural resources, such as vegetation, species and their habitats, water resources, and air quality. The construction and operations for these actions also can contribute to cumulative impacts on the urban environment, such as changes in community character, traffic patterns, noise, housing availability, and employment. According to CEQ's cumulative impacts guidance, the cumulative impact analysis should be narrowed to focus on important issues at a national, regional, or local level.

4.2 PAST, PRESENT, AND REASONABLY FORESEEABLE FUTURE ACTIONS

The cumulative effects analysis presented in this SEIS is based on the potential effects (direct and indirect) resulting from the demolition, expansion, construction, and operation of facilities for the LPOE (as described in Chapters 1 through 3), combined with other past, present, and reasonably foreseeable future actions that could have effects in the project area. Figure 4-1 shows the locations of ongoing and potential future actions in the International Falls area.

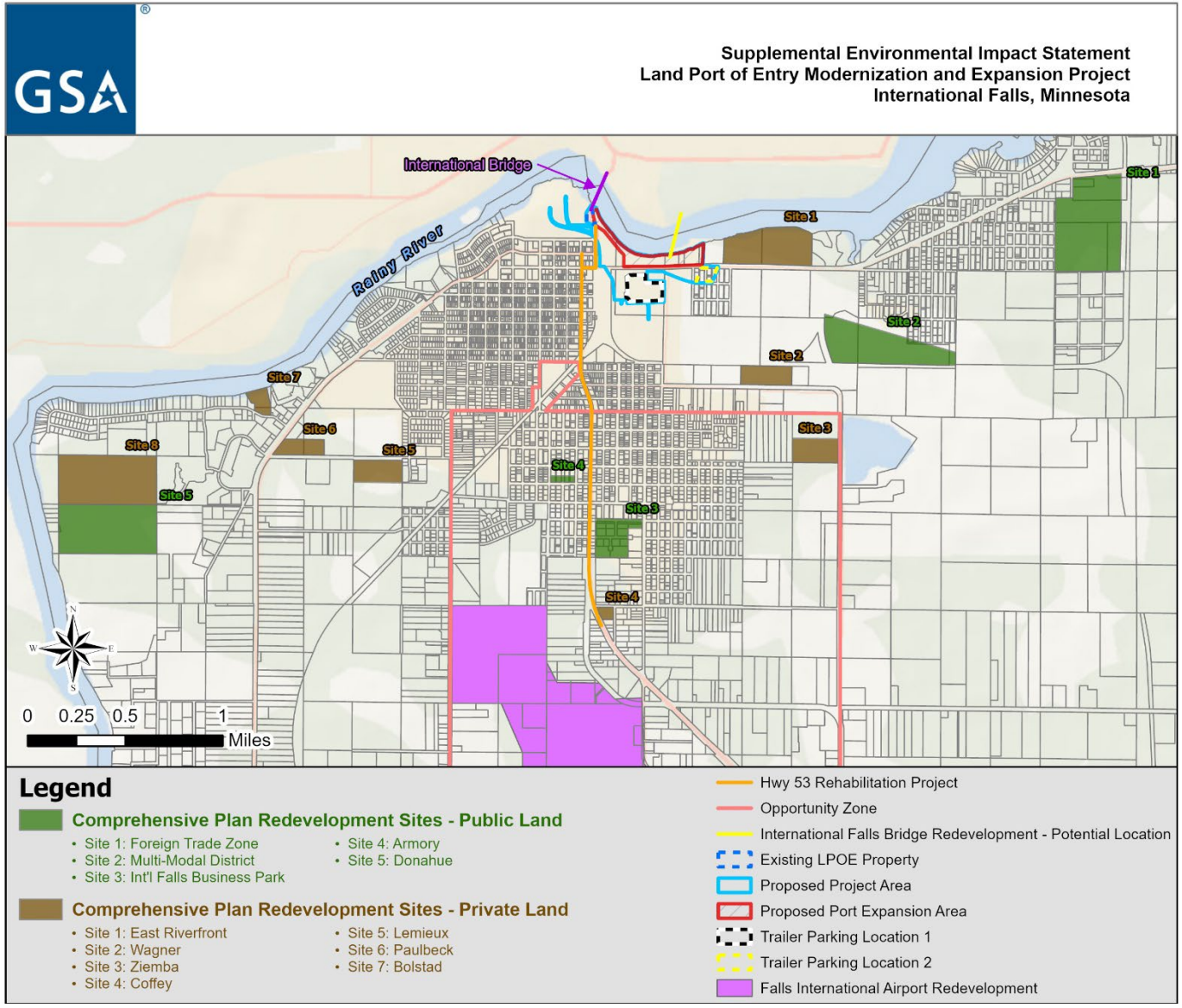
4.2.1 Past Actions

Sections 3.8, Land Use, and 3.10, Socioeconomics, describe existing conditions for International Falls and the surrounding region, including changes in population, housing, land use, and commercial and manufacturing activities. Because the populations of the city and county have been declining steadily since their height in the 1960s, much of the infrastructure and many buildings were already in place before the end of the last century. New housing construction has also been slow, and the total number of housing units has declined since the 1960s. Housing construction has been associated more commonly with renovations, modifications, and rebuilds locally (City of International Falls 2020).

Significant large manufacturing, commercial, and public facilities that have been in existence longer than 10 years include the PCA plant, Falls International Airport, Rainy Lake Medical Center, Menards Home Improvement Store, Falls High School, Falls Elementary School, Minnesota North College - Rainy River, Backus Community Center, MD&W Railway, and Kerry Park Arena. The U.S. Border Patrol Station completed in 2010, adjoining the proposed expansion area to the east between SR-11 and Rainy River, is the largest new facility nearest to the LPOE project area. Construction of that facility affected much of the same terrain, vegetation, and wildlife habitat as found in the proposed expansion area for LPOE.

4.2.2 Ongoing Actions

U.S. Highway 53 Rehabilitation and Streetscape. MnDOT is in the final stages of a major pavement rehabilitation and streetscape enhancement project in International Falls. The project was initiated to address the aging US-53 infrastructure in International Falls along a 2.5-mile highway segment between Falls International Airport and the International Bridge. The project began in 2020 and is expected to complete in mid-2023. When finished, the project will result in a smoother pavement surface, an improved drainage/storm sewer system, improved American Disabilities Act compliant pedestrian accessibility, a multi-use trail, new state-of-the-art signal systems, an LED lighting system, and other streetscape features. Construction was primarily confined to the existing ROW for US-53 (MnDOT 2023c).



Source: MnDOT 2023c; City of International Falls 2020; Koochiching County 2023

Figure 4-1. Ongoing and Potential Future Actions in International Falls

Capital Improvement Plan Projects at Falls International Airport. In July 2022, the Falls International Airport (INL) Commission issued a request for Statements of Qualifications for professional engineering and architectural services for projects expected to be completed over a 5-year period. The projects are anticipated to involve a wide array of services, ranging from administrative improvements to renovations and new construction. Examples include purchases of maintenance vehicles and equipment; reconstruction of the southern 900 feet of Runway 13-31 and the blast pad; removal, relocation, and construction a fuel pad and tanks; rehabilitation and/or reconstruction of Runway 4-22 and associated taxiway connectors; rehabilitation and/or reconstruction of taxi lanes; installation of new Transportation Security Administration equipment improvements in the terminal; rehabilitation and modifications to the terminal and jet bridge; construction of a new multi-plane aircraft hangar; construction of new Airport Rescue and Fire Fighting/Snow Removal Equipment Buildings; construction of new taxi lane, parking, and access road developments for future private hangar expansion; installation of miscellaneous airfield and auto parking lighting; replacement of the airfield beacon; rehabilitation and/or reconstruction of the pavement on the commercial service and general aviation apron; updates to the Wildlife Hazard Assessment; wildlife fence improvements; routine pavement rehabilitation, crack repair, and sealing of airfield and other pavements; updates as needed of the Airport Master Plan, Airport Layout Plan, and/or the Airport Zoning Ordinance; planning, engineering, and supervising obstruction removal activities for runways, approaches, protected surfaces, and weather reporting stations; preparation of a new Passenger Facility Charge Application and/or amending existing applications; preparation of Disadvantaged Business Enterprise Program 3-year plans, project goals, and reports; and coordination related to Reimbursable Agreements and Flight Checks (International Falls Airport Commission 2022). The airport is located approximately 3 miles south of the LPOE.

Water Level Regulation in the International Rainy-Lake of the Woods Watershed. The IJC issued a Temporary Supplemental Order on March 3, 2023 for emergency regulation of the level of Rainy Lake and of other Boundary Waters in the Rainy Lake watershed. Accordingly, on March 10, 2023 the International Rainy-Lake of the Woods Watershed Board Water Levels Committee established an initial spring regulation plan for Rainy and Namakan Lakes that targets water levels for both lakes. The plan is intended to provide flexibility to direct dam operations on Rainy River. The targets were established based on above-normal snow water equivalent in the headwaters; groundwater supplies in the normal/slightly above normal range for the tributaries upstream of Namakan and Rainy Lakes; the potential for above-normal spring flows for the U.S. tributaries in the Rainy River; and warmer than normal winter temperatures with lower frost depth below the ground surface (IRLWWB 2023). Changes in the targeted water levels are intended in part to help avoid conditions that contributed to the historic flooding along portions of Rainy Lake in 2022 (MPR 2022).

4.2.3 Potential Future Actions

Targeted Development Locations in Comprehensive Plan. The International Falls Planning Commission completed a Comprehensive Plan in 2020 that recognized the challenges of static socioeconomic conditions in the city and region. The plan reviewed demographic and economic conditions and assessed strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats to development. The plan outlined opportunities for the region, including a focus on attracting desirable industries for economic growth, leveraging International Falls' designation as a Federal Opportunity Zone to attract investment, and targeting five publicly owned and eight privately owned sites for future redevelopment. Among the targeted sites, three are nearest the LPOE and proposed expansion area. The closest is the East Riverfront site, a 48-acre private site bordering Rainy River and SR-11 between the U.S. Border Patrol Station and Voyageurs National Park Headquarters, approximately 1,000 feet from the LPOE proposed expansion area. The property is an undeveloped greenfield site zoned C-2 commercial, which the commission considers ideal for residential, restaurant, entertainment, or hotel development based on proximity to the river. The next closest, the Wagner Site, encompasses 30 acres between 13th and 15th Streets approximately 4,000 feet southeast of the LPOE and proposed expansion area, which is an undeveloped greenfield site zoned M2-A manufacturing. The third

closest is the publicly owned 64-acre Multimodal Transportation Distribution Center site located east of CR-155/CR-332 and south of Hwy 121, approximately 4,500 feet southeast of the proposed expansion area. It is an undeveloped greenfield site zoned M2-A with a rail spur into the property. Additionally, 15th Street south of the LPOE is the northern boundary of the Federal Opportunity Zone, which includes two public and two private sites. The zone is approximately 4,000 feet south of the LPOE and the closest sites are approximately 1 mile from the LPOE and proposed expansion area. Any large new development projects are most likely to occur in these areas during future years (City of International Falls 2020).

Multimodal Transportation Distribution Center. State funding was announced in December 2022 for a project at the Multimodal Transportation Distribution Center site. The project is intended to improve multimodal transportation and other infrastructure on the property including rail spurs, sewer, water, and other utilities to support the development of a multimodal transportation hub. International Falls is partnering with Nexus Distribution to provide integrated warehousing and transportation solutions that will promote regional economic development (MnDOT 2023d).

Potential Future Bridge Replacement. The Comprehensive Plan also addressed the potential for future construction of a new bridge to replace the International Bridge as an opportunity to maintain existing traffic patterns that are important for local businesses while providing a safer, more attractive, and toll-free International Boundary crossing. Given the proposed expansion of the LPOE in the 2011 Final EIS, the Comprehensive Plan suggested that a location directly across from the former Resolute paper mill in Fort Frances may offer substantial benefits to both the International Falls and the Fort Frances communities. The plan acknowledged that coordination between federal, state, provincial, and local governments would be needed to acquire the land and funding to build the bridge (City of International Falls 2020). Therefore, from the perspective of this SEIS, the action is considered a long-range prospect that would be the subject of substantial future environmental analysis.

US-53 Roundabout Study. An Intersection Control Evaluation was conducted at the intersection of US-53 and CR-332 for Koochiching County due to traffic safety concerns with the mix of trucks, local commuters, and recreational traffic passing through this area (KLJ Engineering 2021). To address these concerns, a preliminary analysis was conducted to identify potential intersection management options, including a new roundabout (KLJ Engineering 2021). The analysis recommended the installation of a single-lane roundabout that would be designed "to handle oversize and overweight loads, including the long logging trucks that frequent the intersection." COVs currently use this intersection to access CR-332.

4.3 GEOLOGY AND SOILS

Under the Proposed Action, there would be direct, long-term, minor to moderate, adverse impacts to geology and soils during construction in the LPOE, proposed expansion area, and properties affected by connected actions as described in Section 3.2. During operations, there would be direct, long-term, minor, adverse local impacts to soils from increased impervious surfaces at the expanded LPOE and connected actions.

Cumulatively, the Proposed Action, in combination with potential future development projects at sites discussed in Section 4.2, could result in some additional level of local geology and soil disturbance from construction activities and development. Future construction for potential development in sites described in Section 4.2 would have similar impacts to geology and soil resources as potential impacts under the Proposed Action. These would include excavation activities with disturbance or modification to surficial geology, soil erosion from use of heavy equipment, and reduced soil productivity as surface soils and vegetation would be replaced with mostly paved and impervious surfaces. As with the Proposed Action, any future development would be subject to the same MPCA Minnesota CSGP requirements, which would limit soil loss on site and reduce potential for cumulative adverse impacts once construction is completed. Negligible adverse impacts would be anticipated to topography as new construction under the Proposed Action and potential future development projects would generally retain existing land contours in the areas affected.

Under the No Action Alternative, future activities would remain substantially unchanged at the LPOE including ongoing maintenance and modifications, which would result in negligible amounts of land disturbance. This would result in minor to moderate cumulative effects when considered with other potential development projects in the area, as other projects would still contribute to soil surface loss to paved and impervious surfaces, and surficial geology and soil disturbance depending on the extent of development.

4.4 WATER RESOURCES

The Proposed Action would have the potential to cause short-term, minor to moderate, adverse impacts to water resources locally and regionally, and direct long-term, minor, adverse impacts on wetlands and floodplains locally during construction. Construction may cause adverse impacts to water quality from soil erosion or contaminated runoff; however, adherence to NPDES permit requirements, including the development of a SWPPP, would minimize these impacts. During operations the Proposed Action would have direct, long-term, negligible to minor adverse impacts on stormwater runoff and potential beneficial impacts locally and regionally during operations as described in Section 3.3.

Cumulatively, the Proposed Action, in combination with potential future development projects at sites discussed in Section 4.2, could result in minor to moderate impacts to water resources. Potential development projects would result in similar adverse impacts as the Proposed Action. During construction of these projects, there would be short-term, minor impacts from the potential for sedimentation and spills; potential impacts to water quality during construction would be mitigated through NPDES permit requirements.

Under the No Action Alternative, future activities would remain substantially unchanged at the LPOE including ongoing maintenance and modifications, which would result in negligible adverse effects on water resources. This would result in minor to moderate adverse cumulative effects when considered with other potential development projects in the area, as other projects would still cause short-term construction impacts on stormwater runoff and long-term impacts by increased runoff from impervious surfaces.

4.5 BIOLOGICAL RESOURCES

The Proposed Action would cause direct, short- and long-term, minor adverse impacts on vegetation; direct, short-term, minor adverse impacts on local wildlife; and no adverse impacts on listed species during construction as described in Section 3.4. This includes direct impacts from vegetation loss, habitat disturbance, and potential mortality from vehicle encounters, as well as indirect impacts from noise and increased human activity resulting in wildlife avoidance. For the Proposed Action, these impacts would be greatest in the proposed expansion area and at the alternative PCA site for relocation of trailer parking east of First Creek (Trailer Parking Location 2) under a connected action. The Proposed Action and connected actions are not expected to affect high-quality native vegetation, critical habitat, or protected species. No additional impacts to vegetation or terrestrial wildlife would be expected during operations, although there could be minor impacts to aquatic habitat from runoff due to impervious surface increases and use of RWC technology.

Cumulatively, the potential future development areas identified in Section 4.2, combined with the Proposed Action, could result in permanent, minor to moderate adverse impacts on biological resources locally and regionally. The potential development sites and revitalization plans for the city could collectively result in additional impacts on vegetation and wildlife habitat. Sites outlined in the Comprehensive Plan nearest the LPOE are mainly greenfield sites, meaning that they have not been developed previously and currently support native vegetation and wildlife. Projects proposed in these locations would generally result in greater amounts of vegetation loss or habitat disturbance than proposed projects located within highly developed areas; however, sites in developed areas are very limited in International Falls.

Overall impacts from potential future development projects would result in minor to moderate adverse impacts through implementation of applicable permit requirements and BMPs (e.g., minimizing area of disturbance, revegetation with native plants, timing construction activities to avoid sensitive breeding or migration periods, etc.) and adherence to relevant federal and state regulations. Additionally, because the greenfield sites identified in the Comprehensive Plan for potential future development projects already represent fragmented "islands" of vegetation and habitat, they are not anticipated to support high-quality native vegetation, critical terrestrial or aquatic wildlife habitat, or protected species.

Under the No Action Alternative, future activities would remain substantially unchanged at the LPOE including ongoing maintenance and modifications, which would result in negligible adverse effects on biological resources. This would result in negligible to moderate adverse cumulative effects when considered with other potential development projects in the area, as other projects would still cause permanent losses of vegetation or wildlife habitat.

4.6 AIR QUALITY AND CLIMATE CHANGE

For the Proposed Action, there would be emissions of criteria pollutants, GHGs, and fugitive dust during the construction phase as described in Section 3.5. Predicted annual construction emissions would be less than federal *de minimis* thresholds for criteria pollutants and represent a negligible amount of Minnesota's annual GHG emissions. As stated in Section 3.5.1, the region is an attainment area for all criteria pollutants. The Proposed Action would contribute negligible incremental amounts of GHGs and would have negligible adverse impacts during construction or operations. The Proposed Action may have long-term, beneficial impacts on air quality through the implementation of renewable energy features and reduced idling times for vehicles.

Construction-related air emissions from future development projects within and in the vicinity of International Falls are expected to be minor and primarily end following construction. In the uncertain event that construction of potential future projects may occur during the same time frame as the Proposed Action, the combined emissions are not expected to exceed the levels of impacts anticipated for those projects. Construction of potential projects in areas identified in the Comprehensive Plan would be subject to impact reduction measures comparable to those described for the Proposed Action in Section 3.5 and would also include the control of fugitive dust per state regulations.

Potential future projects located at sites targeted by the Comprehensive Plan, as described in Section 4.2, that would involve the development of new facilities along with Proposed Action could also generate operational emissions. However, the area is in attainment for criteria pollutants, and future projects would be subject to review and permitting approval to ensure construction and operational air emissions remain within applicable limits and do not violate any local or regional air quality plans. Therefore, cumulative impacts for the Proposed Action in combination with other potential future development projects would be negligible.

Under the No Action Alternative, there would be negligible emissions from ongoing maintenance, generator usage, and vehicle trips. The existing LPOE would cause a negligible contribution to cumulative impacts in combination with past, present, and future projects.

4.7 NOISE

Construction projects involve activities that increase noise levels and can adversely affect sensitive receptors. The main sources of noise would be onsite construction activities and trucks transporting materials and equipment. The Proposed Action would cause direct, short-term, minor, adverse local noise impacts from construction activity on the closest sensitive noise receptors as described in Section 3.6. Construction would also cause direct and indirect, short-term, minor adverse, local and regional impacts on sensitive noise receptors along major roadway corridors. Operations for the Proposed Action would have direct, long-term, minor, local, adverse noise impacts from expanded operations and traffic.

Cumulatively, construction activities for the development projects listed in Section 4.2, along with the Proposed Action, would increase noise levels locally and could occur in the vicinity of sensitive receptors located near the project sites and along travel routes for construction-related traffic resulting in short-term, minor to moderate adverse impacts. The extent of noise impacts would depend on the construction schedule for each of the projects; further increases in noise levels could be detected by sensitive receptors if construction of projects overlaps. Permanent, moderate adverse noise impacts to sensitive receptors could occur along US-53 and other roads from vehicular traffic if the region attracts industrial and commercial businesses to relocate in potential development areas described in Section 4.2.

Under the No Action Alternative, future activities would remain substantially unchanged at the LPOE, which would not contribute to a change in cumulative noise impacts from other potential actions.

4.8 TRAFFIC AND TRANSPORTATION

Under the Proposed Action there would be direct and indirect, short-term, minor, local impacts to roadway traffic, and direct, short-term, minor, adverse local impacts on pedestrians and the Rainy Lake Bike Trail during construction. Operations for the Proposed Action would have direct and indirect, long-term, negligible, impacts on traffic locally from a small increase in workers, and indirect, long-term, minor, local impacts to traffic flows on SR-11 from COV traffic. The Proposed Action would also cause indirect, long-term, beneficial impact to portions of the city's downtown by relocating the COV access point to SR-11, as well as indirect, long-term, negligible to minor, beneficial impacts locally by increasing queuing space and removing vehicles from city streets. Traffic analyses indicate that affected roadways would have more than adequate capacity to handle additional traffic from the Proposed Action during construction and operations as discussed in Section 3.7.

Cumulatively, the recent and planned improvements to US-53, as described in Section 4.2, could reduce adverse impacts of the Proposed Action on traffic locally during construction and operation. Other potential development projects at locations discussed in Section 4.2, if constructed in the same time frame as the Proposed Action, could result in additional adverse, short-term, minor to moderate impacts on traffic locally. The operation of other potential projects at locations near the LPOE could contribute to additional long-term, adverse, moderate impacts on traffic locally in combination with the Proposed Action. Furthermore, cumulative long-term, adverse, minor to moderate impacts on traffic locally may result from economic development and associated traffic induced by successful new enterprises.

The cumulative impacts of the Proposed Action in combination with a potential future replacement of the International Bridge would depend on too many variables to be predicted with any degree of certainty. However, if a location for the bridge is selected after careful planning and evaluation of traffic and environmental impacts, a new bridge integrated with the expanded and modernized LPOE could have moderate to major, long-term, beneficial impacts on traffic locally and regionally.

Under the No Action Alternative, future activities would remain substantially unchanged at the LPOE. The periodic congestion on local roadways caused by inadequate queuing space at the existing LPOE would cause minor to major cumulative traffic impacts in combination with the operation of additional development projects in the future.

4.9 LAND USE AND VISUAL RESOURCES

The expansion of the LPOE under the Proposed Action would not conflict with local zoning and land use in International Falls as discussed in Section 3.8. Construction for the Proposed Action would have direct, short-term, minor, adverse impacts on PCA operations, adjacent land uses, recreational uses, surrounding businesses and residential areas from fugitive dust, increased traffic volumes, noise generated by construction activities, or reduced accessibility to a property as described for other resources in Chapter 3. During operation, the Proposed Action would have direct, long-term, minor, adverse, local impacts to users of the Rainy Lake Bike Trail and SR-11 at the new COV access point. It would also have permanent,

beneficial impacts on land use by improving the layout and accessibility of LPOE facilities. Permanent, beneficial visual impacts are expected from the modernization of the LPOE as buildings and structures would be upgraded and the layout would be more efficient and better organized.

Potential projects described in Section 4.2 are generally consistent with the Comprehensive Plan and would not conflict with local zoning and land use. Cumulatively, potential development projects identified in Section 4.2, along with the Proposed Action, could result in short-term, minor to moderate adverse impacts on surrounding land uses during construction, depending on the timing of these projects. The construction at the LPOE for the Proposed Action is not expected to overlap substantially with construction of potential projects nearby to cause adverse cumulative impacts greater than minor to moderate.

Under the No Action Alternative, future activities would remain substantially unchanged at the LPOE, which would not contribute to a change in cumulative land use or visual resources impacts.

4.10 UTILITIES AND INFRASTRUCTURE

Under the Proposed Action there would be the potential for short-term, minor to moderate, adverse impacts locally on infrastructure and utilities during construction as described in Section 3.9. The intermittent disruptions during relocation of utility components in the project area would have the greatest short-term, adverse impact during construction. Demands on water and wastewater systems during construction would be within available capacities. Upon completion, the Proposed Action would have direct, long-term, major, beneficial, site-specific impact on facilities and infrastructure for the CBP. This would be attributable to the new utilities and infrastructure built and maintained to GSA standards that would support CBP's updated operational needs. New buildings would be designed to comply with current building codes and P100 Standards and would have LEED Gold certification at a minimum. GSA is also considering options for renewable energy technology. Operations at the expanded and modernized LPOE would have long-term, negligible to minor adverse impacts to water, wastewater, electricity, natural gas, and telecommunication services resulting from the increase in square footage of the buildings and small potential increase in personnel. All utilities have adequate capacities to support expanded and modernized LPOE operations.

Cumulatively, potential development projects at locations discussed in Section 4.2, combined with the Proposed Action, could result in long-term, adverse minor impacts to local infrastructure and utilities. New projects would connect to local and regional systems and may cause temporary disruptions in service as the new utility lines are connected. Increased demand on utilities would result from new facilities, new workers, and population growth induced by the revitalization efforts of the city. Existing facilities have adequate capacities to support anticipated growth mainly because local and regional demographic and economic conditions have already declined from previous higher levels.

Under the No Action Alternative, future activities would remain substantially unchanged at the LPOE, which would not contribute to a change in cumulative impacts on utilities and infrastructure.

4.11 SOCIOECONOMICS

The Proposed Action would have direct, short-term, adverse, negligible to minor impacts on local and regional population, housing, schools, emergency services, and health services during construction as discussed in Section 3.10. Construction for the Proposed Action also would have direct, short-term, minor, beneficial impacts on unemployment and income locally in International Falls from increasing jobs, local spending in the community, and associated tax revenue during the construction phase. Operation of the new LPOE would have direct, long-term, negligible to minor, adverse impacts to population, housing, schools, emergency services, and health services locally. Any in-migration of workers would have long-term, beneficial, indirect impacts on the aging labor force of International Falls and Koochiching County if incoming workers have family members of working age. Operations would also have long-term, minor to moderate, beneficial, direct and indirect impacts on unemployment. The improvements for the Proposed

Action would have long-term, minor to moderate beneficial impacts to quality of life locally, including reduced congestion and safer roads for residents and tourists, and indirectly improve access to the Rainy River and Rainy Lake by expanding more opportunity for pedestrian and bike infrastructure.

Cumulatively, new projects at locations discussed in Section 4.2, when combined with the Proposed Action, would have the potential to support future development and permanent job creation, which would result in long-term, beneficial cumulative impacts. An influx of population induced by economic development efforts of the city administrators to implement the Comprehensive Plan would increase demand on housing, schools, and public services. However, the revenues generated by new industries would improve local economic conditions in the region and support any necessary expansions. Also, because the city and county have experienced declining population, commerce, and industry for more than 40 years, many of the institutions, infrastructure, utilities, and public service facilities have available capacity to support reasonable socioeconomic growth. Therefore, long-term, adverse cumulative impacts on socioeconomic conditions in the city and region are expected to be negligible to minor.

Under the No Action Alternative, future activities would remain substantially unchanged at the LPOE, which would not contribute to a change in cumulative impacts on socioeconomic conditions.

4.12 CULTURAL RESOURCES

Under the Proposed Action, adverse effects to archaeological resources could occur as a result of ground disturbance within the APE, if such resources are present. GSA is moving forward with archaeological surveys of archaeological sensitivity zones within the project area as well as the shoreline. If archaeological resources are identified, GSA would develop measures in coordination with the MnHPO to avoid, minimize, or mitigate any potential adverse effects under NHPA, which would reduce impacts to less-than-significant under NEPA. No adverse effects to aboveground historic-age resources are expected from the Proposed Action. GSA is continuing consultation under Section 106 with regards to the proposed effect determinations and the results of this consultation process, as well as any applicable impact reduction measures, will be included in the Final SEIS.

Cumulatively, the development projects identified in Section 4.2, along with the Proposed Action, could result in some level of adverse impacts to cultural resources. Additional ground disturbance could occur within the APE under certain projects identified in the APE, including the U.S. Highway 53 Rehabilitation and Streetscape and the International Falls Bridge Replacement project. Archaeological resources could also be present on undisturbed sites where construction is proposed for other projects discussed in Section 4.2, outside of the APE. When considered on a regional scale, there could be cumulatively major impact to archaeological resources when combined with the Proposed Action, particularly if the resources were impacted in the process of conducting site work. Proposed projects subject to compliance with Minnesota environmental review or historic preservation regulations would be evaluated as applicable, including conducting required consultations with regulatory agencies and stakeholders, such as MnHPO and tribal governments. Potentially adverse effects would be mitigated, through avoidance when possible.

Regarding aboveground historic-age resources, as there would be no adverse effects to aboveground historic-age resources from the Proposed Action, no cumulative impacts are expected.

Under the No Action Alternative, future activities would remain substantially unchanged at the LPOE, which would not contribute to a change in cumulative impacts on cultural resources.

4.13 HUMAN HEALTH AND SAFETY

Under the Proposed Action, risks to health and safety of personnel and patrons would increase slightly during the construction phase. As discussed in Section 3.12, these would be direct, short-term, negligible to minor, and adverse. The Proposed Action would also have direct and indirect, short-term, negligible to minor, adverse impacts from hazardous materials use and waste handling during construction. The Proposed Action would not cause demands or create hazardous conditions during construction that would exceed the

capacities of existing fire protection and emergency services to respond and is not expected to affect the capacities of these services to meet the demands of the community and region.

Operations for the Proposed Action would be conducted in accordance with applicable building and safety codes, which would result in direct, long-term, negligible to minor, adverse effects on human health and safety. The relocations of tracks and the improvements in at-grade crossings for connected actions would have direct and indirect, long-term, minor to moderate, beneficial impacts on public safety locally by improving traffic patterns and minimizing risks of vehicular and pedestrian accidents near the LPOE. There would be direct and indirect, long-term, negligible to minor, adverse impacts related to hazardous materials and waste handling from operations of the LPOE.

In combination with the Proposed Action, potential development projects at locations described in Section 4.2 could result in short-term, minor, adverse, cumulative impacts to human health and safety during construction and long-term, negligible to minor, adverse, cumulative impacts during operation. The development projects would have similar impacts for construction and operation as those described for the Proposed Action. Risks to health and safety of personnel and patrons would increase slightly during the construction phases of the projects; however, these risks would be minimized by adhering to OSHA regulations and the implementation of BMPs. Project-specific impacts from hazardous waste and materials would be reduced through conformance with applicable regulatory requirements and implementation of appropriate avoidance, management, and mitigation measures as required by OSHA and RCRA.

The potential presence and exposure to soil contamination in future project areas would require evaluation on a case-by-case basis. If contaminated soils are present and encountered during construction activities, appropriate sampling, abatement, management, or disposal actions would be implemented in accordance with applicable regulatory requirements to prevent, minimize, and control hazardous materials, if necessary.

Under the No Action Alternative, future activities would remain substantially unchanged at the LPOE, which would not contribute to a change in cumulative impacts on health and safety.

4.14 ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE AND PROTECTION OF CHILDREN'S HEALTH AND SAFETY

During construction, the Proposed Action would have short-term, negligible to moderate adverse impacts on resources within the ROI for environmental justice and children's health and safety as described for the resources in Chapter 3. These impacts would not be disproportionately high and adverse for minority and low-income populations or children's health and safety, because the most-affected populations are at such distance and are physically separated from the proposed construction areas by commercial and industrial properties east of US-53 and north of 11th Street, such that the extent of any adverse impacts during construction would be diminished as discussed in Section 3.13.

Operations for the Proposed Action would have long-term, negligible to minor, adverse impacts on resources within the ROI for environmental justice and children's health and safety as described for the resources in Chapter 3. These impacts would not be disproportionately high and adverse for minority and low-income populations or children's health and safety, because the most-affected populations are at such distance and are physically separated from the LPOE and proposed expansion area by commercial and industrial properties east of US-53 and north of 11th Street, such that the extent of any adverse impacts during operations would be diminished. The Proposed Action would also improve traffic conditions and public safety near the LPOE and proposed expansion area, which would cause direct and indirect, long-term, minor to moderate beneficials impacts, which would benefit the minority and low-income populations and children's populations nearby disproportionately.

The Proposed Action would not contribute to cumulative disproportionate impacts on minority populations, low-income populations, or children's health and safety in combination with future projects at potential locations described in Section 4.2. Potential locations for future projects identified in the Comprehensive

Plan are generally within the same ROI for environmental justice and children's health and safety as the Proposed Action. Any attempt to site potential projects in alternative locations to avoid affecting minority, low-income, or children's populations would generally preclude consideration of any actions in International Falls. Therefore, it would be necessary for city administrators and planning authorities to review potential projects for compatibility with, and appropriate consideration of potential impacts on, environmental justice populations and children's health and safety.

Under the No Action Alternative, future activities would remain substantially unchanged at the LPOE, which would not contribute to a change in cumulative impacts on minority populations, low-income populations, or children's health and safety.

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CHAPTER 5 ENVIRONMENTAL TRADE-OFFS AND COMMITMENTS OF RESOURCES

5.1 RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN LOCAL SHORT-TERM USES OF MAN'S ENVIRONMENT AND THE MAINTENANCE AND ENHANCEMENT OF LONG-TERM PRODUCTIVITY

Section 102(C)(iv) of NEPA [42 U.S.C. § 4332] and 40 CFR 1502.16 require an EIS to address "*the relationship between local short-term uses of man's environment and the maintenance and enhancement of long-term productivity*." This involves environmental tradeoffs and the consideration of whether a Proposed Action is sacrificing a resource value that might benefit the environment in the long-term, for some short-term value to the project proponent (GSA) or the public.

The purpose of the Proposed Action is to support the mission of CBP and other tenant agencies by bringing the International Falls LPOE facilities and operations in line with current land port design standards and operational requirements while addressing existing deficiencies identified with the ongoing port operations. As described in Section 1.2, these deficiencies relate to the inadequate capacity of existing facilities to meet increasing demand and spatial constraints that cause traffic congestion and safety issues for employees and users of the LPOE.

Since the publication of the 2011 Final EIS and 2012 ROD, the space and facility requirements for CBP have changed, resulting in a need to revise the 2011 Feasibility Study and to reflect the GSA's current needs at the LPOE. Additionally, project updates have occurred that were documented in the 2018 Feasibility Study or have otherwise been identified by GSA since the completion of the 2012 ROD as described in Section 1.1.2.

Project areas impacted under the Proposed Action include the existing 1.6-acre LPOE site, the 20.5-acre proposed expansion area, and up to 30-acre connected action footprint. The existing LPOE has been fully developed with facilities and paved surfaces supporting the CBP and other tenants. The proposed expansion area is a mostly vacant property owned by PCA and currently used by PCA as a parking area for commercial trailers. Both properties have been disturbed by prior commercial activities and do not provide high-quality native habitat for local species as discussed in Section 3.4. Both properties are bounded to the north by the Rainy River, the bank of which has been stabilized with the placement of riprap along the entire length of the project area as discussed in Section 3.3. A segment of First Creek crosses the eastern part of the proposed expansion area from SR-11 to the Rainy River in a north-south direction. This segment of the creek was enclosed in a culvert at publication of the 2011 Final EIS, but it has since been uncovered for most of its length. The banks of First Creek in this segment have been stabilized with riprap on both sides. As described in Sections 3.3 and 3.4, the creek segment does not provide a high-quality water resource or critical habitat for aquatic species.

The acquisition of the proposed expansion area for the Proposed Action would necessitate the demolition, removal, and relocation of some existing utilities and PCA infrastructure located on the property as described in Section 2.2.1.1. These are analyzed in this SEIS as connected actions in accordance with 40 CFR 1501.9(e)(1). As shown previously in Figure 2-5, these connected actions would occur mainly in three potential areas. One would be the area bounded by the existing LPOE site and proposed expansion area, 2nd Avenue, and SR-11. The area is currently developed by facilities of MD&W Railway and other entities. The other two areas are owned by PCA south of SR-11, and PCA would select one of these for the relocation of the trailer parking area. One area is the former site of a BildRite manufacturing plant west of 3rd Avenue, which is mainly cleared and developed with structures and pavement. The other is located east of First Creek and currently supports vegetation, including native grasses, shrubs, and groves of trees; but the area is crossed by three unpaved lanes and has been disturbed by other uses in the past. None of the areas for connected actions provide high-quality native vegetation or critical habitat for native or protected species.

The current conditions of the LPOE and proposed expansion area do not possess existing and enduring resource or environmental values whose long-term potential benefits would be sacrificed to provide for short-term value to the project proponent (GSA). The Proposed Action, if implemented, would last for many decades. The short-term impacts on the environment would be offset by the benefits that the Proposed Action would generate in the long term. The Proposed Action would fulfill capacity needs and provide mitigation for current adverse traffic conditions. If the LPOE would not be expanded at the current location, the need for adequate CBP facilities could require consideration of an entirely new location for a LPOE that would involve potentially far greater environmental tradeoffs.

5.2 IRREVERSIBLE AND IRRETRIEVABLE COMMITMENTS OF RESOURCES

Section 102(C)(v) of NEPA [42 U.S.C. § 4332] requires an EIS to address "any irreversible and irretrievable commitments of resources which would be involved in the proposed action should it be implemented." Irreversible and irretrievable commitments of resources mean losses to or impacts on natural resources that cannot be recovered or reversed.

More specifically, "irreversible" implies the loss of future options. Irreversible commitments of resources are those that cannot be regained, such as permanent conversion of wetlands and loss of cultural resources, soils, wildlife, agricultural and socioeconomic conditions. The losses are permanent and incapable of being reversed. "Irreversible" applies mainly to the effects from use or depletion of nonrenewable resources, such as fossil fuels or cultural resources, or to those factors, such as soil productivity, that are renewable only over long periods of time.

"Irretrievable" commitments are those that are lost for a period of time, such as the temporary loss of timber productivity in forested areas that are kept clear for use as a ROW, road, or winter sports site. The lost forest production is irretrievable, but the action is not irreversible. If the use changes back again, it is possible to resume timber production.

5.2.1 Irreversible Commitments of Resources

Under the Proposed Action, the following irreversible commitments of resources would occur:

- Consumption of fossil fuels (primarily diesel) and lubricants by heavy construction equipment (e.g., bulldozers, graders, scrapers, excavators, loaders, trucks) used to demolish structures, excavate land, and develop structures for the upgraded LPOE, associated facilities, and connected actions;
- Materials used to construct the new facilities, including cement/concrete, soil cement, steel, iron and other metallic alloys, copper wiring, PVC pipe, plastic, etc.;
- Energy, supplied by fossil fuels or some other source of electricity, used over the operational life and maintenance of the upgraded LPOE, associated facilities, and connected actions;
- Land required for development at the proposed expansion area; and
- Water used for construction purposes.

5.2.2 Irretrievable Commitments of Resources

As noted above, "irretrievable" commitments of resources are those that are lost for a period of time but not permanently. The Proposed Action would entail the long-term loss of vegetation and habitat at the proposed expansion area for Alternative 1 and the locations of connected actions. Most of this vegetation and habitat was disturbed during previous activities, has since re-established, and is not characterized as high-quality native vegetation or critical habitat for native or protected species.

CHAPTER 6 CONSULTATION AND COORDINATION

6.1 SCOPING AND PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT

The NEPA process provides several opportunities for public involvement to include public scoping and a public comment period following publication of the Draft SEIS. During each opportunity for public involvement, interested and affected parties (i.e., stakeholders) may express their concerns and provide their views about:

- The project and its possible impacts on the natural and human environment;
- What should be addressed in the analysis and evaluation of the Proposed Action; and
- The adequacy of the NEPA analysis and documentation of potential impacts in the SEIS.

Public participation with respect to decision-making on the Proposed Action is guided by GSA's implementing procedures for compliance with NEPA (GSA Order ADM 1095.1F, *Environmental Considerations in Decision Making*). GSA considered comments from interested and affected parties in the preparation of the Draft SEIS.

6.1.1 Summary of Past EIS Public Involvement Activities

As part of the NEPA process, GSA conducted public involvement activities including public scoping and opportunities for commenting on the Draft and Final EISs for the *International Falls Land Port of Entry Improvements Study*. Table 6-1 highlights public involvement activities conducted during the EIS process.

Table 6-1. Public Involvement for the International Falls LPOE Improvements Study EIS

Date	Action
August 27, 2009	GSA published its Notice of Intent (NOI) to prepare an EIS for the *International Falls Land Port of Entry Improvements Study* in the *Federal Register*, which initiates the public scoping period. The NOI invited individuals, organizations, and agencies to submit comments concerning the scope of the EIS. In September of 2009, scoping and early coordination letters were mailed to 47 federal, state, and local agencies and special interest groups (see Section 5.1 of the 2011 Final EIS for a summary of scoping letters and responses received). The comment period officially ended on October 11, 2009 and the GSA considered the comments received in defining the scope of the analysis performed and documented in the EIS.
September 15, 2009	A public scoping meeting was held in International Falls, MN. The meeting consisted of an open house and plans display, presentation, and time for public comments and questions to be considered in the planning of the proposed action and preparation of the EIS. Approximately 15 people attended the open house in the afternoon and 25 people attended the presentation and comment session in the evening (see Exhibit 1.10 of the 2011 Final EIS for issues identified during the scoping period).
January 14, 2010	GSA published a Notice of Availability (NOA) in the *Federal Register* announcing the availability of the Draft EIS for the *International Falls LPOE Improvements Study*. A 45-day comment period immediately followed, during which the GSA invited federal, state and local agencies, organizations and individuals to submit comments on the Draft EIS.
January 27, 2010	A public hearing was held at the Minnesota North College - Rainy River and a transcript of the hearing was prepared. Two attendees offered substantive comments during the public hearing. The public hearing was preceded by an open house to allow attendees to view plans of the build alternatives in detail, review the Draft EIS and discuss its content with GSA representatives, and ask questions. GSA received eight comment letters and one comment email (see Section 5.3 and Appendix A of the 2011 Final EIS).
October 7, 2011	GSA published an NOA in the *Federal Register* announcing the availability of the Final EIS. A 30-day wait period was conducted. No major substantive comments were received.
January 18, 2012	GSA published an NOA in the *Federal Register* for the ROD, which selected GSA's Preferred Alternative.

6.1.2 Scoping Phase for the Draft SEIS

Scoping is an early and open process for determining the scope of issues to be addressed and for identifying potential major issues related to a proposed action. Internal scoping began with GSA and CBP staff identifying the purpose and need for the project, defining the proposed action, determining the environmental issues potentially required for detailed analysis, eliminating issues that are out of scope of the project, listing data needs, identifying cumulative actions, and confirming the appropriate NEPA path. External scoping began when the public and all interested stakeholders were notified about the proposed action and comments on the project and potential environmental issues were solicited.

To formally initiate the NEPA process for this Draft SEIS, GSA published a Notice of Intent (NOI) to prepare a Draft SEIS in the *Federal Register* on December 9, 2022. After issuing the NOI, GSA conducted a scoping process that included hosting a hybrid virtual and in-person public scoping meeting and consultation with various interested governmental agencies and stakeholders. GSA also published advertisements in the International Falls, MN local newspaper and on social media in the days preceding the public scoping meeting. An advertisement was published in the *Rainy Lake Gazette* on December 9, 2022. Announcements were posted on GSA's social media accounts on December 9 and 12, 2022. The advertisement and announcements indicated GSA's intent to prepare a Draft SEIS and conduct a public scoping meeting; provided a brief description of the project; identified the public scoping meeting location and time; and included instructions on how to access the meeting and submit a comment.

A virtual public scoping meeting was held on December 13, 2022, from 4:00 p.m. to 6:00 p.m. Central Standard Time (CST) via Zoom. The public also had the opportunity to attend the meeting in-person at the Koochiching County Court Administration building at 715 4th Street, 3rd floor, International Falls, MN 56649. Approximately 17 and 7 people attended the meeting, virtually and in-person, respectively. The meeting began with a presentation and then was followed by a public comment session where members of the public had an opportunity to provide feedback or questions on the project.

After the scoping meeting, GSA published an advertisement in the *Rainy Lake Gazette* and posted announcements on their social media accounts on December 16, 2022, to provide a link to GSA's project website which included the scoping meeting presentation, recording, and handout. GSA accepted public scoping comments through January 13, 2023.

Outside of the public scoping meeting, GSA invited written comments to be submitted via mail or email throughout the scoping period. More specifically, GSA invited comments on the key topics that should be covered in the Draft SEIS; examples of potential adverse and beneficial impacts from the Proposed Action; and any other relevant information. Comments were submitted using comment forms and emails. A total of 16 unique commenters provided input during the scoping period. GSA used the results of the scoping efforts to further define the scope and areas of emphasis (or focus) of this SEIS. A Public Comments Summary Report was prepared for this SEIS and includes a detailed description of comments received, location addressed in this SEIS, as well as details on the Public Scoping Meeting (see Appendix A).

6.2 DRAFT SEIS PHASE

6.2.1 Notification of a Draft SEIS Public Hearing

GSA is soliciting comments from interested persons and stakeholders on the Draft SEIS during a 45-day comment period that began on October 27, 2023. The public was notified of the Draft SEIS public hearing through publication of a Notice of Availability as a display advertisement in the *Rainy Lake Gazette,* as well as letters mailed to interested parties. Comments received during the 45-day comment period will be considered in preparation of the Final SEIS and will be made part of the Administrative Record.

6.2.2 Draft SEIS Public Hearing

GSA invites public comment on the Draft SEIS during a hybrid virtual and in-person public hearing to be held during the Draft SEIS public comment period on November 8, 2023, similar to the public scoping meeting held for the project. The public will have an opportunity to interface with GSA representatives as well as have the opportunity to provide comments on the DEIS. Information on attending the public hearing can be found at the following website:

https://www.gsa.gov/about-us/regions/welcome-to-the-great-lakes-region-5/buildings-and-facilities/minnesota/international-falls-land-port-of-entry.

6.3 FEDERAL AGENCIES

GSA completed the Minnesota-Wisconsin Federal Endangered Species Determination Key on May 19, 2023, documenting its determination of effects to federally protected species as per Section 7 of the Endangered Species Act. GSA has concluded the Proposed Action would either have no effect or is not likely to adversely affect federally protected species. Consistency letters documenting this submittal can be found in Appendix B.

6.4 STATE AGENCIES

GSA is in the process of conducting formal consultation with the MnHPO and consulting parties under Section 106 of the NHPA. GSA re-initiated consultation with the MnHPO on January 5, 2023, continuing consultation originally initiated as part of the 2011 Final EIS. MnHPO provided comments in a letter dated February 27, 2023, stating that while they concur that the APE, as defined in GSA's January 5, 2023 correspondence, is generally appropriate to take into account potential direct effects of the undertaking, it is necessary to define and provide a single, comprehensive APE encompassing all potential direct, indirect, and cumulative effects of the Proposed Action. MnHPO further stated that the APE should include any areas, whether through current or historic ownership or function, related to parcels associated with PCA/Boise Cascade/Minnesota & Ontario Paper Company, including material storage areas and transportation facilities (rail spurs and railyards) associated with the forestry products manufacturing industry.

GSA provided the archaeological literature search and a revised APE (as defined in Section 3.11.1.1) to the MnHPO via email on May 23, 2023. MnHPO concurred with the revised APE in a letter dated July 17, 2023, and additionally commented that GSA should document the potential impact that increased traffic and changing traffic patterns may have on the surrounding area and consider how the ongoing design of above-ground facilities may contribute to visual effects. MnHPO concurred with the recommendations presented in the archaeological literature search, which are discussed in more detail in Section 3.11.2.2. GSA submitted a historic architectural survey report documenting the findings described in this SEIS to the MnHPO via email on October 3, 2023.

GSA will continue consultation under Section 106. The results of this consultation process, as well as any applicable impact reduction measures, will be included in the Final SEIS.

6.5 TRIBAL CONSULTATION

GSA initiated Section 106 consultation with relevant tribal governments through their THPO to help inform the analysis of the project. Affiliated tribes were sent letters on January 10, 2023, to inform them of the scoping period for the project and upcoming preparation of the Draft SEIS and seeking their input on the APE for archaeological studies. The following tribes were contacted:

- Leech Lake Band of Ojibwe
- Red Lake Nation

- Grand Portage Band of Ojibwe
- Mille Lacs Band of Chippewa Indians
- Upper Sioux Community
- Fond du Lac Band of Lake Superior Chippewa
- Shakopee Mdewakanton Sioux Community
- Prairie Island Indian Community
- White Earth Nation
- Bois Forte Band of Chippewa
- Lower Sioux Indian Community

The Fond du Lac Band of Lake Superior Chippewa THPO responded on January 23, 2023, deferring to the Bois Forte Band of Chippewa and requesting project updates and notification of any unanticipated discoveries that may occur during construction activities. The Shakopee Mdewakanton Sioux Community THPO responded on January 10, 2023, deferring to Federally Recognized Tribes and Tribal Nations with historical ties to the area and requesting project updates.

Additional correspondence was provided on May 19, 2023 regarding project updates and transmitting the findings of an archaeological literature search prepared for the project. The Shakopee Mdewakanton Sioux Community THPO responded on May 19, 2023, requesting GSA conduct shovel testing at intervals of 7 to 10 meters apart. Letters and responses are included in Appendix B.

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CHAPTER 9 LIST OF AGENCIES, ORGANIZATIONS, AND PERSONS CONTACTED

U.S. Federal Agencies

Customs and Border Protection

Federal Emergency Management Agency, Region 5

Federal Highway Administration, Minnesota Division

Federal Transit Administration, Region 5

International Joint Commission, Great Lakes Regional Office

National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, Greater Atlantic Regional Fisheries Office

National Park Service, Region 3

National Park Service, Voyageurs National Park

National Resources Conservation Service, Duluth MLRA Soil Survey Office

NOAA Fisheries

U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, St. Paul District

U.S. Department of Homeland Security, Customs and Border Protection

U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, Region 5

U.S. Department of Interior, Office of Environmental Policy & Compliance

U.S. Department of Interior

U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, NEPA Compliance Division

U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, Region 5

U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Minnesota-Wisconsin Ecological Services Field Office

U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service

U.S. Geological Survey

U.S. Geological Survey, Upper Midwest Water Science Center

Canadian Government/Agencies

Canada Border Services Agency, Fort Frances Bridge

Canadian Parliament

Ontario Provincial Parliament

Town of Fort Frances, Operations and Facilities

Town of Fort Frances, Planning Department

Tribal Nations and Organizations

Boise Forte Band of Chippewa

Fond du Lac Band of Lake Superior Chippewa

Grand Portage Band of Ojibwe

Leech Lake Band of Ojibwe

Lower Sioux Indian Community

Mille Lacs Band of Chippewa Indians

Minnesota Chippewa Tribal Executive Committee

Prairie Island Indian Community

Red Lake Band of Chippewa Indians of Minnesota

Red Lake Nation

Shakopee Mdewakanton Sioux Community

Upper Sioux Community

White Earth Reservation Tribal Council

White Earth Nation

State Agencies

Minnesota Board of Water and Soil Resources

Minnesota Department of Commerce

Minnesota Department of Employment & Economic Development

Minnesota Department of Natural Resources

Minnesota Department of Transportation

Minnesota Environmental Quality Board

Minnesota Geological Survey

Minnesota Indian Affairs Council

Minnesota Office of the State Archaeologist

Minnesota Pollution Control Agency

Minnesota Public Utilities Commission

Minnesota State Historic Preservation Office

Local Government Agencies

City of International Falls, City Council

City of International Falls, Department of Public Works

City of International Falls, Fire Department

Duluth-Superior Metropolitan Interstate Council, Transportation Advisory Committee

Koochiching County, Environmental Services Department

Koochiching County, Highway Department

Koochiching County, Historical Society

Koochiching County, Soil and Water Conservation District

Koochiching County Commission, Districts 1-5

Miscellaneous Organizations

Aazhogan – The BMI Group

Arrowhead Regional Development Commission

Duty Free Americas

Fort Frances Chamber of Commerce

International Falls Chamber of Commerce

International Falls Public Library

International Falls, Rainer, and Rainy Lake Convention and Visitors Bureau

Minnesota Center for Environmental Advocacy

Minnesota Conservation Federation

Minesota, Dakota, and Western Railway

Packaging Corporation of America

Rainy Lake Gazette

Elected Officials

Thomas Bakk, State Senator

Rob Ecklund, State Representative

Amy Klobuchar, Senator

Tina Smith, U.S. Senator

Pete Stauber, U.S. Representative

Tim Walz, Governor of Minnesota

Other Interested Parties

Merv Ahrens

Border Bob's

Richard D. Koeneman

Lindberg Enterprises of Rainy Lake, LLC

Allan Meadows

Myrna Meadows

Terry Randolph

Eric Rude

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APPENDIX A. PUBLIC COMMENTS SUMMARY REPORT

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ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

CBP	Customs and Border Protection
CEQ	Council on Environmental Quality
CFR	*Code of Federal Regulations*
FR	*Federal Register*
GSA	General Services Administration
LPOE	Land Port of Entry
NEPA	National Environmental Policy Act
NHPA	National Historic Preservation Act
NOI	Notice of Intent
SEIS	Supplemental Environmental Impact Statement
USC	United States Code

A.1 INTRODUCTION

This Public Comment Summary Report summarizes the General Services Administration's (GSA) public involvement activities and public comments on the Supplemental Environmental Impact Statement (SEIS) for the Modernization and Expansion of the International Falls Land Port of Entry (LPOE) in International Falls, Koochiching County, Minnesota. GSA has prepared the SEIS for the purpose of analyzing the potential environmental impacts resulting from the project, in accordance with the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) of 1969 (42 United States Code [USC] 4321 *et seq.*), the Council on Environmental Quality (CEQ) regulations implementing National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) (40 *Code of Federal Regulations* [CFR] 1500-1508), GSA Order ADM 1095.1F (*Environmental Consideration in Decision Making*), the GSA Public Building Service's *NEPA Desk Guide*, and other relevant federal and state laws and regulations. This SEIS supplements the 2011 Final Environmental Impact Statement for the project, which also included similar public involvement activities.

The potential issues identified from the comments received during the public scoping period are summarized in Chapter 2 of this report. GSA took these issues into consideration when defining the scope and areas of focus in the SEIS. This report will be updated following publication of the Draft SEIS to include public involvement activities and comments received during the Draft SEIS public involvement period.

This document also includes the following attachments:

- Attachment A: *Federal Register* Notice
- Attachment B: Newspaper Affidavits
- Attachment C: Letter to Interested Parties
- Attachment D: Advertising on Social Media
- Attachment E: Index of Comments by Source and Date

A.2 PROJECT SCOPING

Scoping is an early and open process for determining the scope of issues to be addressed and for identifying potential significant issues related to a proposed action. Internal scoping began with GSA and CBP staff identifying the purpose and need for the project, defining the proposed action, determining the environmental issues potentially required for detailed analysis, eliminating issues that are out of scope of the project, listing data needs, identifying cumulative actions, and confirming the appropriate NEPA path. External scoping began when the public and all interested stakeholders were notified about the proposed action and comments on the project and potential environmental issues were solicited.

A.2.1. Notification of External Project Scoping

Notification of external project scoping for the Modernization and Expansion of the International Falls LPOE Draft SEIS was accomplished using multiple channels of communication, including a Notice of Intent (NOI) in the *Federal Register*, newspaper ads, letters to interested parties/stakeholders, and social media posts:

- **Notice of Intent.** An NOI for the Draft SEIS was published in the *Federal Register* on December 9, 2022. The NOI announced the date, time, and location of a hybrid virtual public scoping meeting and announced that public comments were requested to be received within 35 days, no later than January 13, 2023. The NOI also indicated GSA's intent to prepare a Draft SEIS and conduct a scoping meeting; provided a brief description of the project; and included instructions on how to submit a comment. The *Federal Register* notice is included in Attachment A.

- **Newspapers Advertisements.** GSA published an advertisement in the *Rainy Lake Gazette* on December 9, 2022 to announce GSA's intent to prepare a Draft SEIS for the project and to conduct a hybrid virtual public scoping meeting on December 13, 2022. The advertisement also provided a brief description of the project; identified the public scoping meeting time, location, and instructions on how to attend in-person and virtually; and included instructions on how to submit a comment. After the scoping meeting, GSA published another advertisement in the *Rainy Lake Gazette* on December 16, 2022 to provide a link to GSA's project website, where the scoping meeting presentation, recording, and handout were provided. Both advertisements requested that public comments be received before the closing of the scoping period, no later than January 13, 2023. Affidavits of the legal notices are included in Attachment B.

- **Interested Parties Letter.** A letter dated December 9, 2022 was mailed to federal, state, and local agencies; elected officials; and other interested parties. The letter provided background on the project, a description of the alternatives, scoping meeting details, and instructions on how to submit comments. A copy of the letter sent to interested parties is included in Attachment C.

- **Social Media.** GSA posted announcements of the meeting on their social media accounts on December 9 and 12, 2022 and on the GSA project website: https://www.gsa.gov/real-estate/gsa-properties/land-ports-of-entry-and-the-bil/bipartisan-infrastructure-law-construction-project/minnesota#international-falls.

  The social media posts briefly summarized GSA's intent to prepare a Draft SEIS and conduct a scoping meeting; provided a brief description of the project; identified the public scoping meeting location and time; and included instructions on how to access the meeting and submit a comment. Screenshots of the social media postings can be found in Attachment D.

- **Media Notification.** Notification of the public scoping meeting was provided to the following media outlets: KCCTV (TV channel), KDSM Radio, and CFOB News in Fort Frances, Ontario.

A.2.2 Public Scoping Meeting

A hybrid virtual public meeting was held on Tuesday, December 13, 2022 from 4:00 p.m. to 6:00 p.m. Central Time via the Zoom platform. The public also had the opportunity to attend the meeting in-person by viewing the presentation at the Koochiching County Court Administration building at 715 4th Street, 3rd floor, International Falls, MN 56649. Seven (7) people attended the meeting in-person and 13 people attended the meeting via Zoom. The purpose of the public scoping meeting was to provide the public with information regarding the proposed project, answer questions, identify concerns regarding the potential environmental impacts that may result from implementation of the proposed project, and gather information to determine the scope of issues to be addressed in the SEIS.

The meeting began with a brief explanation of the meeting format and ground rules, followed by introductions and the presentation. Four GSA representatives spoke during the presentation. The presentation included discussions on: the purpose of the meeting; a brief discussion about the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) and National Historic Preservation Act (NHPA); past NEPA activities; the purpose and need for the project; project background and description of the alternatives; and how to provide scoping comments. Following the presentation, GSA conducted a public comment session where members of the public had an opportunity to provide comments or questions on the project. Two attendees provided written comments/questions via Zoom and two attendees provided verbal comments/questions from the in-person meeting location.

Additional meeting materials available at the in-person location included:

- Sign-in sheets;
- Comment forms; and
- A meeting handout (information on the project and NEPA process)

A.2.3 Public Scoping Comments

GSA invited comments for scoping of this SEIS during the scoping period (December 13, 2022 – January 13, 2023), including on the key topics that should be covered in the SEIS; examples of potential adverse impacts from the proposed project; and any other additional, relevant information available. Comments were submitted to GSA during the scoping meeting (via Zoom or verbally at the in-person meeting location) and using comment forms, letters, and emails after the scoping meeting.

Comments were indexed based on the source or commenter. Commenters included federal, state, or local agencies (A) and members of the public (P). Each comment was cataloged with a code based on the source of the comment and the order in which it was received (e.g., P3 was the third comment received by a member of the public). A total of 16 unique commenters provided input during the scoping period. Attachment E includes an index of commenters by type (i.e., agency, public) and dates comments were received. Each concern or question associated with a commenter was categorized by comment category or resource area. Table A-1 provides a summary of the comments, GSA's response, and location in the SEIS, if addressed.

In addition to the comments capture in Table A-1, one commenter representing the Shakopee Mdewakanton Sioux Community stated that the Tribe chooses to leave direct consultation to the local Federally Recognized Tribal Nations of the area and any other Tribal Nation with historical ties to the area.

Table A-1. Public Comments and GSA Responses by Category or Resource Area

Comment Category or Resource Area	Comment Issue or Concern	Location Addressed in the SEIS or Response
Consultation	GSA should consult with other appropriate agencies, including consideration of Minnesota Environmental Review Rules.	Refer to Appendix B of the Draft SEIS for consultation conducted to date with SHPO and USFWS. Consultation with USACE would be conducted later in the design stage prior to construction. GSA reviewed the Minnesota Environmental Review Rules and concluded the Proposed Action does not trigger the preparation of any additional state-level documentation under the Rules. There has been no need for federal highway approvals/funds for the project identified at this time. If any are identified in the future, GSA would contact FHWA.
Winter Maintenance	Concerns about responsibility of maintaining roadways and parking, specifically regarding winter maintenance.	GSA is early in the design process and the new LPOE design presented in the SEIS is conceptual in nature. Final design would consider management and storage needs for snow accumulation. GSA intends to coordinate with the bridge owner, city, county, and MnDOT throughout the project planning and design process, including with respect to winter maintenance.
Winter Maintenance	Project should consider an area between the new LPOE entrance road and the Recreational Bike Trail should be provided for snow storage.	GSA would consider this during project design. Please note, GSA intends to coordinate with the bridge owner, city, county, and MnDOT during the design process.
Potential for New Bridge	SEIS should consider the potential for a new bridge to be constructed to replace the existing International Bridge.	The port design is currently conceptual in nature and presented in the SEIS for purposes of conducting an environmental analysis. Project design would continue throughout the larger planning process. This may include contingencies for consideration of revised layout within the current proposed expansion area that could accommodate a new location for the International Bridge. GSA intends to coordinate with the bridge owner, city, county, and MnDOT during this process, including regarding any potential relocation or work required for the International Bridge.
Miscellaneous Suggestions to Proposed Action	Project should consider looking at other nearby areas to expand LPOE.	Refer to Section 2.1 of the SEIS for a discussion of the Alternatives development process.
Miscellaneous Suggestions to Proposed Action	Project should consider providing water access to LPOE, considering proximity to Fort Frances marina.	Water access is not contemplated as part of the Proposed Action due to potential security concerns that such access would present.

Comment Category or Resource Area	Comment Issue or Concern	Location Addressed in the SEIS or Response
Sustainability	Recommendation to use of energy-efficient and/or sustainable building materials and installation of renewable energy sources.	Refer to Section 2.2.1 of the SEIS regarding incorporation of sustainable measures into Alternative 1.
Transportation Resources – 2011 Final EIS Comments	Address transportation related comments in 2011 Final EIS.	Comment responses as made in the 2011 Final EIS still stand. GSA would coordinate with MnDOT, the city, and county regarding placement of final signals and road maintenance responsibilities. Potential impacts to the Rainy Lake Bike Trail are discussed throughout the SEIS.
Transportation Resources – Traffic Congestion	Concern with traffic volumes and resulting impacts on circulation and safety, including accessibility for emergency vehicles when there is traffic congestion at the bridge.	Section 1.2 of the SEIS discusses how the intent of the Proposed Action is to 1) improve the capacity and functionality of the International Falls LPOE to meet future demand, while maintaining the capability to meet border security initiatives; and 2) address spatial and layout constraints that lead to traffic congestion and safety issues for the employees and users of the LPOE. GSA is early in the design process, and the proposed traffic patterns and larger port design are conceptual in nature and are presented in the SEIS for purposes of conducting environmental analysis. Project design would continue throughout the larger planning process, including the consideration of accessibility for emergency vehicles and analyzing impacts from traffic demand. GSA intends to coordinate with the bridge owner, city, county, and MnDOT during this process, including regarding traffic issues. Potential impacts to transportation resources are discussed in Section 3.7 of the SEIS.
Transportation Resources – Oversized Vehicles	Concern with how LPOE would manage oversized truck loads and large RVs, campers, buses, etc.	Consideration of oversized vehicles and loads would be factored into the final design of the LPOE. During construction, the current plan is for the existing port to remain operational in its current configuration, and then switch over to the new port once it is constructed. The new port would be designed to more efficiently handle oversized vehicles and their associated loads and turning radius. GSA intends to coordinate with the bridge owner, city, county, and MnDOT during the design process.
Transportation Resources – Roadway Design & Planning	Consideration of MnDOT input, including for providing MnDOT a right of way through the LPOE and review of design specifics.	GSA intends to coordinate with MnDOT throughout the project design process, which would include review of design plans.
Transportation Resources – Traffic Circulation & Access Points	Questions and comments regarding the circulation of vehicles and the exit and entrance points at the new LPOE.	The port design is conceptual in nature and presented for purposes of conducting environmental analysis. Current plans include non-commercial entry and exit on 2nd Avenue, and commercial entry and exit onto SR-11, as shown in Chapter 2 of the SEIS. Project design would continue throughout the larger planning process. GSA intends to coordinate with the bridge owner, city,

Comment Category or Resource Area	Comment Issue or Concern	Location Addressed in the SEIS or Response
		county, and MnDOT during this process, including the most efficient and preferred circulation pattern.
Pedestrian / Bike Safety	Consider pedestrian/bike safety and providing an entrance from adjacent bike path walking trail.	As discussed in Chapter 2 of the SEIS, pedestrians would be processed in a satellite building, a short walk from the bridge, exiting directly into International Falls without crossing any of the vehicular lanes in the LPOE. The separate pedestrian processing facility and entrance would not require looping around the vehicle lanes. Bicyclists would be able to utilize the pedestrian processing center.
Stormwater management	Interested in reviewing impacts to floodplains.	Consideration of impacts to floodplains are discussed in Section 3.3 of the SEIS. FEMA will be included on the distribution list for the SEIS.
Stormwater management	Concerns with flooding and design of a new culvert on First Creek.	Sizing of any new culverts would be conducted during the project design stage. GSA would be responsible for maintaining any culverts installed. Any easements would be obtained later in the project planning process closer to construction. GSA intends to coordinate with the city and county during the design process. Refer to Section 2.2.1 of the SEIS which discusses stormwater management.
Stormwater management; Climate Resilience	SEIS should describe changing climate conditions and assess how such changes could impact the proposed project and the environmental impacts of the proposed project and alternatives. Recommend committing to on-site green stormwater management via use of bioswales, permeable pavement, rain gardens, retention ponds, and/or over-sized culverts or bridges, as applicable, in the SEIS and future ROD.	Section 3.5 of the SEIS includes discussion of potential impacts from climate change. Section 3.3 of the SEIS discusses stormwater management in regards to the Proposed Action, including standards and guidance GSA would abide by for selection of stormwater management measures. Selection of final stormwater management features is subject to final project design.
Stormwater management; Climate Resilience	SEIS should describe climate resilience and adaptation considerations for (1) construction plans; (2) stormwater management; and (3) maintenance and monitoring of the site post demolition.	Section 3.5 of the SEIS includes a discussion of climate resilience and adaptation considerations.
Water Quality	SEIS should identify wetlands and streams and potential impacts. Recommend discussing CWA Section 404(b)(1) Guidelines. If applicable, the SEIS should include a discussion on proposed mitigation	Refer to Section 3.3 of the SEIS for a discussion on water resources, including impacts on wetlands, streams, and other waters of the United States.

Comment Category or Resource Area	Comment Issue or Concern	Location Addressed in the SEIS or Response
	for unavoidable, minimized stream or aquatic impacts.	
Water Quality	SEIS should describe potential impacts to CWA Section 303(d)-listed water bodies and their impaired status. Recommendation to discuss current impairments, and how the Proposed Action may affect, either positively or detrimentally, the impairment.	Refer to Section 3.3 of the SEIS for a discussion on water resources, including 303(d)-listed water bodies.
Biological Resources	Discuss opportunities to provide or enhance pollinator habitat within the proposed project's footprint. See the MNDNR's webpage for best practices.	Refer to Section 3.4 of the SEIS for a discussion of biological resources, including measures to enhance pollinator habitat.
Biological Resources	Regarding invasive species, SEIS should: describe how the project would meet the requirements of EO 13112 on invasive species and discuss standard BMPs that will be used to eliminate the spread of non-native invasive species into, as well as out of, the project area.	Refer to Section 3.4 of the SEIS for a discussion of biological resources, including measures related to controlling invasive species.
Air Quality & GHG Emissions	SEIS should use CEQ's NEPA Guidance on Consideration of Greenhouse Gas Emissions and Climate Change, to disclose and consider climate impacts, including impacts from GHG emissions.	Refer to 3.5 of the SEIS for a discussion on air quality. GSA has reviewed and incorporated this guidance as necessary into the SEIS, to include an assessment of the social cost of carbon.
Air Quality & GHG Emissions	SEIS should evaluate social costs of GHG emissions.	Section 3.5 of the SEIS includes a quantification of GHG emissions, calculation of social cost of carbon, comparison of alternative impacts, and recommended impact reduction measures.
Air Quality & GHG Emissions	SEIS should identify practices GSA could take to reduce and mitigate GHG emissions. SEIS should consider practices in the enclosed Construction Emission Control Checklist.	GSA has reviewed the Construction Emissions Control Checklist and adopted applicable measures to reduce construction emissions. Please refer to Section 3.5 of the SEIS.
Hazardous Materials	SEIS should discuss the proper disposal hazardous materials, in accordance with federal and state regulations.	Refer to Section 3.12 of the SEIS for discussion of management of potential lead paint, asbestos, PCB, petroleum compounds, and other hazardous wastes.

Comment Category or Resource Area	Comment Issue or Concern	Location Addressed in the SEIS or Response
Hazardous Materials	GSA should test for contaminated soils and remediate or dispose of in accordance with federal and state regulations.	Refer to Section 3.12 for discussion of potentially contaminated soils. GSA is in the process of performing a Phase II Environmental Site Assessment to further investigate soil contamination. Results will be incorporated into the Final SEIS.
Waste & Materials	SEIS should discuss potential for reuse and/or recycling of construction and demolition material to greatest extent feasible. Include applicable practices from EPA's Sustainable Management of Construction and Demolition Materials webpage.	As stated in Chapter 2 of the EIS, GSA would require diversion of at least 50 percent of nonhazardous construction and demolition waste from the landfill per EO 14057 (Section. 207 of EO 14057). This language would be incorporated into contract language for the selected A/E firm.
Waste & Materials	SEIS should discuss potential for use of recycled materials in pavement applications and to replace carbon-intensive Portland Cement in concrete.	Section 3.5 of the SEIS includes a discussion of these considerations.
Environmental Justice	Recommendations provided on how to conduct the impacts analysis for environmental justice impacts.	See Section 3.13 of the SEIS for consideration of impacts to EJ populations and other sensitive receptors. Refer to Section 1.4 of the Draft SEIS regarding public outreach.
Cultural Resources	GSA needs to engage and consult with Tribes currently residing in the project area and Tribes with historic ties to area. Recommendations on what to include in SEIS for historic preservation and tribal resources.	Refer to Section 3.11 of the SEIS for a discussion of cultural resources, including GSA's compliance with Section 106 of the NHPA and tribal outreach efforts.
Utilities	Concern with existing oversized water line at the LPOE and question regarding water requirements.	Section 3.9 of the SEIS discusses impacts to utilities from the Proposed Action. The sizing of the water line would be addressed during project design. GSA would coordinate with the city and appropriate utilities during the design stage, including regarding water pipe sizing.
Utilities	Concern with existing natural gas pipeline.	GSA would coordinate with all utility providers, including EFG Centra Pipelines, during the final design process.
Impacts to PCA Operations	Concern with potential impacts to PCA property vacation timing and the coordination of LPOE construction with mill operations.	GSA intends to coordinate closely with PCA during the redevelopment process to minimize disruption to PCA activities. This includes coordinating activities that may be more disruptive such as utility switch overs to occur during PCA vacation periods, to the extent practicable.
Impacts to PCA Operations	Concern with potential impacts to truck / trailer parking.	GSA intends to coordinate closely with PCA during the redevelopment process. This includes identifying a suitable relocation site for the truck / trailer parking that would be displaced as part of the Proposed Action. Accommodations for a new truck / trailer parking site would be dictated by the terms of any potential site acquisition negotiations with PCA. Refer to Section 2.2.1.1 of the SEIS for a

Comment Category or Resource Area	Comment Issue or Concern	Location Addressed in the SEIS or Response
		discussion of the current understanding of the proposed truck / trailer parking relocation.
Impacts to PCA Operations	Concern with potential impacts chip and bark delivery systems.	See response above regarding truck / trailer parking. This same response applies to the chip and bark delivery systems currently within the project area.
Impacts to PCA Operations	Concern with potential impacts with utilities, network, and communication systems relocation.	The same response for truck / trailer parking applies to the utilities within the project area. In addition, GSA intends to coordinate closely with all applicable utility providers affected, including CentraGas, during the project design phase, to minimize disruptions to utilities.
Impacts to PCA Operations	Concern with potential impacts to MD&W rail infrastructure.	The same response for truck / trailer parking applies to the MD&W rail infrastructure currently within the project area. In addition, GSA intends to coordinate with MD&W during the project design phase to minimize disruption to the rail lines.

BMP- best management practices; CEQ – Council on Environmental Quality; CWA – Clean Water Act; EFG – Energy Fundamentals Group; EIS – Environmental Impact Statement; EJ – environmental justice; EO – Executive Order; EPA – Environmental Protection Agency; FEMA – Federal Emergency Management Agency; FHWA – Federal Highway Administration; GHG – greenhouse gas; GSA – General Services Administration; LPOE – land port of entry; MD&W – Minnesota, Dakota, & Western; MNDNR – Minnesota Department of Natural Resources; MnDOT – Minnesota Department of Transportation; NHPA – National Historic Preservation Act; PCA – Packaging Corporation of America; PCB – non-polychlorinated biphenyl; ROD – Record of Decision; SEIS – Supplemental Environmental Impact Statement; SHPO – State Historic Preservation Officer; SR-11 – State Route 11; USACE – U.S. Army Corps of Engineers; USFWS – U.S. Fish and Wildlife

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ATTACHMENT A: *FEDERAL REGISTER* NOTICE

75630 **Federal Register** / Vol. 87, No. 236 / Friday, December 9, 2022 / Notices

154 currently registered vessel-operating common carriers transport 1,500 or more 20-foot equivalent units per month, totaling over 99 percent of imported and exported containerized cargo.

Current Actions: This information being submitted contains a new data collection.

Type of Review: New data collection.

Needs and Uses: The Commission will use collected data to publish a quarterly report as directed by OSRA 2022.

Frequency: This information will be collected monthly.

Type of Respondents: The universe will be carriers who transport 1,500 20-foot equivalent units or more per month (total across imports and exports, regardless of whether they are laden) in or out of the U.S., in the U.S. oceanborne foreign commerce.

Number of Annual Respondents: The Commission estimates an annual respondent universe of 70. The Commission expects the estimated number of annual respondents to remain at 70 in the future.

Estimated Time per Response: The time per response is estimated at 80 person-hours for reporting.

Total Annual Burden: For the 70 annual respondents, the burden is calculated as 70 × 80 hours = 5,600 hours.

William Cody,

Secretary.

[FR Doc. 2022–26804 Filed 12–8–22; 8:45 am]

BILLING CODE 6730–02–P

FEDERAL MINE SAFETY AND HEALTH REVIEW COMMISSION

Senior Executive Service; Performance Review Board

AGENCY: Federal Mine Safety and Health Review Commission.

ACTION: Notice.

SUMMARY: This notice announces the appointment of the members of the Performance Review Board (PRB) for the Federal Mine Safety and Health Review Commission. The PRB reviews the performance appraisals of career and non-career senior executives. The PRB makes recommendations regarding proposed performance appraisals, ratings, bonuses, pay adjustments, and other appropriate personnel actions.

DATES: Applicable on December 9, 2022.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Tammy Russell, Acting Executive Director, Federal Mine Safety and Health Review Commission, (202) 434–9977.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION: This Notice announces the appointment of the following primary and alternate members to the Federal Mine Safety and Health Review Commission PRB:

Primary Members

Arturo Cardenas, Director of Programs, Railroad Retirement Board
James Biggins, General Manager, Defense Nuclear Facilities Safety Board
Christopher Roscetti, Technical Director, Defense Nuclear Facilities Safety Board.

Alternate Members

None.

Authority: 5 U.S.C. 4313(c)(4).

Tammy Russell,

Acting Executive Director, Federal Mine Safety and Health Review Commission.

[FR Doc. 2022–26792 Filed 12–8–22; 8:45 am]

BILLING CODE 6735–01–P

GENERAL SERVICES ADMINISTRATION

[Notice–PBS–2022–07; Docket No. 2022–0002; Sequence No. 28]

Notice of Intent To Prepare a Supplemental Environmental Impact Statement (SEIS) for the International Falls Land Port of Entry Modernization and Expansion Project in International Falls, Minnesota

AGENCY: Public Buildings Service (PBS), General Services Administration (GSA).

ACTION: Notice of Intent (NOI); Announcement of meeting.

SUMMARY: The GSA intends to prepare a Supplemental Environmental Impact Statement (SEIS) and conduct the Section 106 Process of the National Historic Preservation Act (NHPA) to address proposed improvements at the International Falls Land Port of Entry (LPOE), including site expansion (up to 20.5 acres), demolition, and new construction. This NOI also announces the public scoping process for the SEIS.

DATES: *Public Scoping Period*—Interested parties are invited to provide comments regarding the scope of the SEIS. The public scoping period begins with the publication of this NOI in the **Federal Register** and continues until Friday, January 13, 2023. Written comments must be received by the last day of the scoping period (see **ADDRESSES** section of this NOI on how to submit comments).

Meeting Date—GSA will host a hybrid virtual and in-person public and stakeholder meeting on Tuesday, December 13, 2022, from 6 p.m. to 8 p.m., Central Standard Time (CST). The purpose of the meeting is to provide information on the project and to encourage public feedback on the scope of the SEIS. The meeting will be primarily virtual in nature, although members of the public may attend at the Koochiching County Court Administration Building to view an online broadcast of the meeting in person (see **ADDRESSES** section for location address). Refer to the VIRTUAL PUBLIC MEETING INFORMATION section of this NOI on how to access the online public meeting.

ADDRESSES: *Meeting Location*—The public may attend the virtual meeting at the Koochiching County Court Administration building at 715 4th Street, 3rd floor, International Falls, MN, 56649, to view the online presentation in-person. A GSA staff member will be available (in-person and virtually) to assist the public in providing public comments via the virtual platform.

Public Scoping Comments

In addition to oral comments and written comments provided at the public meeting, members of the public may also submit comments by one of the following methods. All oral and written comments will be considered equally and will be part of the public record.

- *Email: michael.gonczar@gsa.gov.* Please include '*International Falls LPOE SEIS*' in the subject line of the message.
- *Mail: ATTN: Michael Gonczar, International Falls LPOE SEIS;* U.S. General Services Administration, Region 5; 230 S. Dearborn Street, Suite 3600, Chicago, IL 60604.

Virtual Public Meeting Information

The hybrid virtual public meeting will begin with presentations on the NEPA and NHPA processes and the proposed project. A copy of the presentation slideshow will be made available prior to the meeting at: *https://www.gsa.gov/real-estate/gsa-properties/land-ports-of-entry-and-the-bil/bipartisan-infrastructure-law-construction-project/minnesota.* Following the presentation, there will be a moderated session during which members of the public can provide oral comments on the SEIS. Members participating virtually or attending in-person will be able to comment. Commenters will be allowed 3 minutes to provide comments. Comments will be recorded. Attendees can also provide written comments at the public meeting should they not wish to speak.

Members of the public may join the SEIS virtual public meeting by entering

the Meeting ID: 817 8441 8631, using any of the below methods, or by using the following link *https://us06web.zoom.us/j/81784418631*. Note that the meeting is best viewed through the Zoom app. Attendees are encouraged to download the Zoom app at the Zoom website (*https://zoom.us*) on their personal computer or on their mobile device and test their connection prior to the meeting to ensure best results.

- By personal computer (via the Zoom app)—Install the Zoom app at the Zoom website (*https://zoom.us*) and launch the Zoom app. Click '*Join a Meeting*' and enter the above Meeting ID. Follow the prompts to enter your name and email address to access the meeting; or
- By personal computer (via the Zoom website)—Using your computer's browser, go to the Zoom website at *http://zoom.us/join* and enter the above Meeting ID. Click '*Join from your browser*' and follow the prompts to enter your name; or
- By mobile device (via the Zoom mobile app)—Install and launch the Zoom app. Enter the above Meeting ID.

Whether joining through the Zoom app or web browser, attendees should follow the prompts to connect their computer audio. Attendees are encouraged to connect through the '*Computer Audio*' tab and click '*Join Audio by Computer*' under the '*Join Audio*' button on the bottom of their screen. Users who do not have a computer microphone and wish to provide a comment during the meeting may connect by following the prompts under the '*Phone Call*' tab under the '*Join Audio*' button.

For members of the public who do not have access to a personal computer, they may join the meeting audio by dialing the following number: 646 931 3860. When prompted, enter the following information: Meeting ID–817 8441 8631, followed by the pound (#) key; then press pound (#) again when prompted for a participant ID. Note, dialing in to the meeting is only necessary if you are not accessing the meeting through a personal computer or mobile app, or if you would like to provide oral comments during the meeting but do not have a computer microphone.

The public meeting will be recorded, and all comments provided will become part of the formal record.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Michael Gonczar, NEPA Program Manager, GSA, 312–810–2326, *michael.gonczar@gsa.gov*.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION:

Scoping Process

The purpose of the public scoping process is to identify relevant issues that will influence the scope of analysis of the human and natural environment including cultural resources. The scoping process will be accomplished through a hybrid virtual and in-person public scoping meeting, direct mail correspondence to appropriate federal, state, and local agencies, and to private organizations and citizens who have previously expressed, or are known to have, an interest in the project. The SEIS will include public input on alternatives and impacts.

The public scoping meeting will also initiate GSA's public consultation required by NHPA. GSA seeks input at this meeting that will assist the agency in planning for the Section 106 consultation process. This includes identifying consulting parties, determining the area of the undertaking's potential effects on cultural resources (Area of Potential Effects), and seeking agreement regarding ways to avoid, minimize, or mitigate adverse effects. Federal, state, and local agencies, along with members of the public, are invited to participate in the NEPA scoping and Section 106 consultation process.

The NHPA and NEPA are two separate laws which require federal agencies to consider the impacts to historic properties and the human environment before making decisions. NHPA and NEPA are independent statutes, yet may be executed concurrently to optimize efficiencies, transparency, and accountability to better understand the effects to the human, natural, and cultural environment. The SEIS will be prepared pursuant to the requirements of the NEPA of 1969, the Council on Environmental Quality NEPA regulations, and the GSA Public Buildings Service *NEPA Desk Guide*. GSA will also consult with appropriate parties in accordance with Section 106 of the NHPA of 1966.

Opportunities for members of the public to become a consulting party during the NHPA Section 106 process will be presented during the public scoping meeting. You may submit a comment to express your interest in being a consulting party if you cannot attend the meeting.

Background

The existing 1.6-acre LPOE is located on the south bank of the Rainy River and serves as the port of entry to people and vehicles crossing the International Bridge that connects International Falls, Minnesota to the town of Fort Frances, Ontario, Canada. The International Falls Land Port of Entry Improvements Study Final EIS, released in 2011, assessed the potential environmental impacts associated with the proposed action of replacing the undersized International Falls LPOE with a new LPOE facility "to improve safety, security, and functionality." A total of ten build alternatives were considered, and a preferred action alternative was identified. This alternative would consist of demolishing the existing building, constructing new facilities at the existing LPOE, and expanding the LPOE to meet the required space standards and increased security requirements of the Federal Inspection Services. This alternative would move the majority of the LPOE improvements and operations to an approximately 20-acre site southeast of the existing site between 4th Street and Rainy River. GSA signed and released a Record of Decision in January 2012 that identified a preferred alternative as it best satisfied the purpose and needs of the project with the least overall adverse impacts to the environment. The ROD stated that the preferred alternative would have less-than-significant impacts on the natural and social environment of the study area and International Falls, including minor changes or impacts to surface water, surface water runoff, traffic, increased lighting, and hazardous substances.

Since 2011, GSA has identified the following changes to the project, which differ from the preferred alternative described in the 2011 EIS:

- There have been proposed changes in tenants and use of the space. U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) no longer requires space at the LPOE; however, the U.S. Department of Agriculture/Animal Plant Health Inspection Services/-Plant Protection and Quarantine (USDA/APHIS–PPQ), and U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) will need space and facilities at the LPOE.
- The Packaging Corporation of America (PCA) has acquired Boise, Inc. and has a different timber unloading operation occurring adjacent to the proposed acquisition parcel, which will require modifications to the original site plan.
- PCA's proposed trailer parking lot was shifted further east (beyond First Creek) and includes a paved 90-trailer parking lot for PCA, which will modify traffic patterns for the LPOE.
- A section of First Creek between Route 11 and the Rainy River that was previously contained in a culvert was identified following the 2011 EIS. The

culvert has been removed and is now daylighted, requiring impacts analysis.

- There has been an increase in the proposed usable square feet (USF) for overall building space needed from 42,282 to 80,611, based on the addition of a maintenance building and expansion in the sizes of all other buildings per updated agency requirements.
- Stormwater management would be redesigned in the 300-foot section of First Creek due to two new areas of pavement crossing the creek.
- The Resolute Paper Mill in Fort Frances, Ontario has since closed and has decreased rail traffic.

GSA is preparing an SEIS to assess the potential impacts of these updates, which were not assessed in the 2011 EIS.

Alternatives Under Consideration

GSA has preliminarily identified one action alternative that may be assessed in the SEIS:

- Alternative 1: Full Build—Construct the facilities as described in the Preferred Action Alternative assessed in the 2011 EIS and modified by the 2018 project updates.

The No Action Alternative will also be considered to satisfy federal requirements for analyzing "no action" under NEPA. Analysis of this alternative will provide a baseline for comparison with impacts from Alternative 1.

The SEIS will address the potential environmental impacts of the proposed alternatives on environmental resources including geology and soils, water resources, biological resources, air quality and climate change, noise, traffic and transportation, land use and visual resources, cultural resources, utilities, and human health and safety. The EIS will also address the socioeconomic effects of the project, as well as impacts on environmental justice populations. Impacts may occur from air emissions, noise, and traffic delays associated with construction; as well as soil disturbance from earth moving activities and resultant sedimentation of nearby waterways. Long term benefits to traffic and transportation, air quality, and the local economy are expected from operations of the expanded and modernized LPOE and associated improved traffic flows.

William Renner,

Director, Facilities Management and Services Programs Division, Great Lakes Region 5, U.S. General Services Administration.

[FR Doc. 2022–26834 Filed 12–8–22; 8:45 am]

BILLING CODE 6820–CF–P

DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention

Notice of Closed Meeting

Pursuant to section 10(d) of the Federal Advisory Committee Act, as amended, notice is hereby given of the following meeting.

The meeting will be closed to the public in accordance with the provisions set forth in sections 552b(c)(4) and 552b(c)(6), Title 5 U.S.C., as amended, and the Determination of the Director, Strategic Business Initiatives Unit, Office of the Chief Operating Officer, CDC, pursuant to Public Law 92–463. The grant applications and the discussions could disclose confidential trade secrets or commercial property such as patentable material, and personal information concerning individuals associated with the grant applications, the disclosure of which would constitute a clearly unwarranted invasion of personal privacy.

Name of Committee: Disease, Disability, and Injury Prevention and Control Special Emphasis Panel (SEP)—RFA–OH–22–001, Panel B, Occupational Safety and Health Education and Research Centers (ERC).

Dates: February 23–24, 2023.

Times: 12:00 p.m.–5:00 p.m. EST.

Place: Video-Assisted Meeting.

Agenda: To review and evaluate grant applications.

For Further Information Contact: Dan Hartley, Ed.D., Scientific Review Officer, Office of Extramural Programs, National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health, CDC, 1095 Willowdale Road, Morgantown, West Virginia 26505; Telephone: (304) 285–5812; Email: *DHartley@cdc.gov.*

The Director, Strategic Business Initiatives Unit, Office of the Chief Operating Officer, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, has been delegated the authority to sign **Federal Register** notices pertaining to announcements of meetings and other committee management activities, for both the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and the Agency for Toxic Substances and Disease Registry.

Kalwant Smagh,

Director, Strategic Business Initiatives Unit, Office of the Chief Operating Officer, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

[FR Doc. 2022–26749 Filed 12–8–22; 8:45 am]

BILLING CODE 4163–18–P

DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention

Notice of Closed Meeting

Pursuant to section 10(d) of the Federal Advisory Committee Act, as amended, notice is hereby given of the following meeting.

The meeting will be closed to the public in accordance with the provisions set forth in sections 552b(c)(4) and 552b(c)(6), Title 5 U.S.C., as amended, and the Determination of the Director, Strategic Business Initiatives Unit, Office of the Chief Operating Officer, CDC, pursuant to Public Law 92–463. The grant applications and the discussions could disclose confidential trade secrets or commercial property such as patentable material, and personal information concerning individuals associated with the grant applications, the disclosure of which would constitute a clearly unwarranted invasion of personal privacy.

Name of Committee: Disease, Disability, and Injury Prevention and Control Special Emphasis Panel (SEP)—DP23–002, Improving Health Outcomes for Patients with Inflammatory Bowel Disease.

Date: March 8, 2023.

Time: 11:00 a.m.–3:00 p.m., EST.

Place: Teleconference.

Agenda: To review and evaluate grant applications.

For Further Information Contact: Catherine Barrett, Ph.D., Scientific Review Officer, National Center for Chronic Disease Prevention and Health Promotion, CDC, 4770 Buford Highway, Mailstop S107–3, Atlanta, Georgia 30341–3717; Telephone: (404) 718–7664; Email: *CBarrett@cdc.gov.*

The Director, Strategic Business Initiatives Unit, Office of the Chief Operating Officer, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, has been delegated the authority to sign **Federal Register** notices pertaining to announcements of meetings and other committee management activities, for both the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and the Agency for Toxic Substances and Disease Registry.

Kalwant Smagh,

Director, Strategic Business Initiatives Unit, Office of the Chief Operating Officer, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

[FR Doc. 2022–26747 Filed 12–8–22; 8:45 am]

BILLING CODE 4163–18–P

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ATTACHMENT B: NEWSPAPER AFFIDAVITS

Rainy Lake Gazette newspaper advertisement – December 9, 2022

DECEMBER 9, 2022 | A4
RAINY LAKE GAZETTE

LOCAL NEWS

Yount to perform

STAFF REPORT

Student Gavin Yount from International Falls has been selected to participate in The-atre Gallery: "Fuzzy Gray Lines."

The performance is scheduled for Dec. 9-11 at Gustavus Adolphus College, St. Peter, Minn.

Fuzzy Gray Lines is a collection of short plays that grapple with mental health, said a news release.

The catch? They're comedies. Reflecting a diverse range of stories and experiences, Fuzzy Gray Lines tackles our generation's struggles with mental wellbeing through a lighthearted lens.

"The experience is sometimes inspiring, sometimes absurd, and always entertaining," promises the news release. "And please, feel free to laugh."

GAVIA YOUNT

NIKKI ROLANDO PHOTOS

Holiday songs

Holiday concerts are underway, with area youth performing for family and friends. Above, Falls Elementary School second graders sing and move to Christmas tunes last week. Below, Littlefork-Big Falls second graders were all dressed up for their evening performance Monday night.

CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

Notice of Intent to Prepare a Supplemental Environmental Impact Statement (SEIS) for the International Falls Land Port of Entry Modernization and Expansion Project in International Falls, Minnesota

Pursuant to the requirements of the National Environmental Policy Act of 1969 (NEPA), the Council on Environmental Quality (CEQ) Regulations, and the General Services Administration (GSA) Public Buildings Service NEPA Desk Guide, and to conduct the Section 106 Process of the National Historic Preservation Act (NHPA), GSA is issuing this notice to advise the public that a Supplemental Environmental Impact Statement (SEIS) will be prepared to analyze the potential impacts resulting from the expansion and modernization of the International Falls Land Port of Entry (LPOE) in International Falls, Minnesota. The NHPA and NEPA are two separate laws which require federal agencies to consider the impacts to historic properties and the human environment before making decisions. NHPA and NEPA are independent statutes which may be executed concurrently to optimize efficiencies, transparency, and accountability to better understand the effects to the human, natural, and cultural environment.

The International Falls LPOE is owned and managed by GSA and operated by the U.S. Department of Homeland Security's Customs and Border Protection (CBP). This facility serves as the port of entry to travelers crossing the International Bridge that connects to the town of Fort Frances, Ontario, Canada. CBP currently inspects private vehicular, pedestrian, and commercial truck traffic at the LPOE on the U.S.-Canada Border. This SEIS will serve as an update to the International Falls LPOE Improvements Study Final Environmental Impact Statement (EIS), released in 2011. Since 2011, GSA has identified changes to the project, which differ from the preferred alternative described in the 2011 EIS. The SEIS will examine the impacts on human, natural, and cultural environments from potential improvements at the LPOE, including site expansion (up to approximately 20 acres), demolition, and new construction.

The purpose of the Proposed Action is for GSA to support CBP's mission by bringing the International Falls LPOE operations in line with current land port design standards and operational requirements of CBP while addressing existing deficiencies identified with the ongoing port operations. Generally, the deficiencies described in the 2011 EIS remain at the LPOE. The deficiencies fall into two broad categories: deficiencies in the overall site layout and substandard building conditions. Therefore, in order to bring the International Falls LPOE operations in line with CBP's design standards and operational requirements, the Proposed Action is needed to 1) improve the capacity and functionality of the International Falls LPOE to meet future demand, while maintaining the capability to meet border security initiatives; 2) address spatial and layout constraints that lead to traffic congestion and safety issues for the employees and users of the LPOE; and 3) provide adequate space and facilities for the federal agencies to accomplish their missions.

The public is encouraged to attend and participate in a hybrid in-person and virtual scoping meeting to be held for the project. The purpose of this meeting is to provide project information and to solicit public input on what resources and issues are important, which will help determine the scope and content of the SEIS.

The meeting will be held on December 13, 2022, from 6 p.m. to 8 p.m. CST. Please follow this hyperlink to access the virtual meeting: https://gsaweb.zoom.us/j/91764458041. The public may also attend the virtual meeting at the Koochiching County Court Administration building at 715 4th Street, 3rd floor, International Falls, Minnesota, 56649 to view the online presentation in-person. A GSA staff member will be available (in-person and virtually) to assist the public in providing public comments via the virtual platform.

The meeting will begin with a presentation and will be followed by a public comment session, in which both in-person and virtual attendees may participate. Those not able to attend in person or virtually may submit comments via mail or e-mail, as instructed below. All written or verbal comments will be treated with equal importance. The meeting will be recorded and available for viewing on the GSA website in the days following the meeting at https://www.gsa.gov/real-estate/gsa-properties/land-ports-of-entry-and-the-bli/bluethan-infrastructure-law-construction-project/minnesota#internationalfalls.

In order to be considered during the preparation of the Draft SEIS, comments must be received by January 13, 2023, and may be submitted at the scoping meeting, by email to **michael.gonczar@gsa.gov** (include "International Falls SEIS Scoping Comment" in subject line), or mailed to:

ATTN: Michael Gonczar, International Falls LPOE SEIS
U.S. General Services Administration, Region 5
230 S. Dearborn St. Suite 3600
Chicago, IL 60604

For more information or if special assistance is needed to attend and participate in the public scoping meeting, please contact Michael Gonczar, GSA Region 5 NEPA Program Manager, at 312-810-2326 or michael.gonczar@gsa.gov.

RAINY LAKE GAZETTE

AFFIDAVIT OF PUBLICATION

STATE OF MINNESOTA, COUNTY OF KOOCHICHING, SS:

Lacey Lund
of lawful age, being first duly sworn, deposeth and saith, he/she is Legal Representative of

RAINY LAKE GAZETTE

once weekly newspaper printed in the State of Minnesota, and published in and of general circulation in Koochiching County, Minnesota, and that said newspaper is not a trade, religious or fraternal publication.

Said newspaper is published once weekly and has been so published continuously and uninterruptedly in said county and state since July 16, 2021 and has been admitted at the post office of International Falls, Minnesota in said county.

That a notice of which a true copy is hereto attached was published

in the regular and entire issue of said Rainy Lake Gazette for 1 day(s),

the first being made on the 8th day of December A.D.,20 22

and the last on the _____ day of _____,A.D., 20_____.

Affiant further states that he/she has personal knowledge of the Statements above set forth, and that they are true.

Lacey Lund
Affidavit Signer

Subscribed and sworn to before me this

16th day of December, A.D. 20 22

Kami Kostrzak
Notary Public

Rainy Lake Gazette newspaper advertisement – December 16, 2022

COMMUNITY

Cities with the 'Scroogiest' drivers

GASBUDDY REPORT

Tucson, Arizona and Portland, Oregon top the lists for most and least aggressive holiday driving.

The holiday season is known for being merry and bright, but hectic schedules, last-minute shopping and travel both near and far can translate to the roads in the form of aggressive driving. A new survey from GasBuddy, a PDI company and the leading fuel savings platform providing the most ways and places to save money on gas, reveals that drivers in certain cities across the United States are up to 54 percent more aggressive than the average driver.

GasBuddy examined millions of drives during 2022's Thanksgiving holiday weekend. The study revealed Tucson, Arizona and Portland, Oregon as the cities with the most and least aggressive holiday drivers, respectively. Aggressive driving habits are classified as quick acceleration, hard braking and speeding. Tucson secured maintained its number one spot on the "naughty list" for the second consecutive year.

Naughty List – The Top 10 Cities with The Most Aggressive Holiday Drivers
1. Tucson, AZ
2. Jacksonville, FL
3. Nashville, TN
4. Orlando, FL
5. Birmingham, AL
6. Richmond, VA
7. Oklahoma City, OK
8. Tampa-St. Petersburg, FL
9. Salt Lake City, UT
10. Memphis, TN

Three Florida cities made the "naughty list" this year, making Florida the most aggressive driving state overall. Detroit, Michigan; Raleigh, North Carolina and St. Louis, Missouri fell off the top ten worst cities this year, replaced by Memphis, Tennessee, Birmingham, Alabama and Tampa-St. Petersburg.

Nice List – The Top 10 Cities with The Least Aggressive Holiday Drivers
1. Portland, OR
2. Cincinnati, OH
3. Seattle, WA
4. Las Vegas, NV
5. Rochester, NY
6. Providence, RI
7. Minneapolis, MN
8. Cleveland, OH
9. Columbus, OH
10. Buffalo, NY

The most frequent aggressive driving habits during the holidays are hard braking (1), speeding (2).

Notice of Intent to Prepare a Supplemental Environmental Impact Statement (SEIS) for the International Falls Land Port of Entry Modernization and Expansion Project in International Falls, Minnesota

Pursuant to the requirements of the National Environmental Policy Act of 1969 (NEPA), the Council on Environmental Quality (CEQ) Regulations, and the General Services Administration (GSA) Public Buildings Service NEPA Desk Guide, and in conjunction with the Section 106 Consultation Process of the National Historic Preservation Act (NHPA), GSA is issuing this notice to advise the public that a Supplemental Environmental Impact Statement (SEIS) will be prepared to analyze the potential impacts resulting from the modernization and expansion of the International Falls Land Port of Entry (LPOE) in International Falls, Minnesota. The NHPA and NEPA are two separate laws which require federal agencies to consider the impacts to historic properties and the human environment before making decisions. NHPA and NEPA are independent statutes which may be executed concurrently to optimize efficiencies, transparency, and accountability to better understand the effects to the human, natural, and cultural environment.

The International Falls LPOE is owned and managed by GSA and operated by the U.S. Department of Homeland Security's Customs and Border Protection (CBP). This facility serves as the port of entry to travelers crossing the International Bridge that connects to the town of Fort Frances, Ontario, Canada. CBP currently inspects private vehicular, pedestrian, and commercial truck traffic at the LPOE on the U.S.-Canada Border. This SEIS will serve as an update to the International Falls LPOE Improvements Study Final Environmental Impact Statement (EIS), released in 2011. Since 2011, GSA has identified changes to the project, which differ from the preferred alternative described in the 2011 Final EIS. The SEIS will examine the impacts on human, natural, and cultural environments from potential improvements at the LPOE, including site expansion (up to approximately 20 acres), demolition, and new construction.

The purpose of the Proposed Action is for GSA to support CBP's mission by bringing the International Falls LPOE operations in line with current land port design standards and operational requirements of CBP while addressing existing deficiencies identified with the ongoing port operations. Generally, the deficiencies described in the 2011 EIS remain at the LPOE. The deficiencies fall into two broad categories: deficiencies in the overall site layout and substandard building conditions. Therefore, in order to bring the International Falls LPOE operations in line with CBP's design standards and operational requirements, the Proposed Action is needed to 1) improve the capacity and functionality of the International Falls LPOE to meet future demand, while maintaining the capability to meet border security initiatives; 2) address spatial and layout constraints that lead to traffic congestion and safety issues for the employees and users of the LPOE; and 3) provide adequate space and facilities for the federal agencies to accomplish their missions.

The project is currently in the public scoping period. A public scoping meeting was previously announced by GSA and held on December 13, 2022 from 6 p.m. to 8 p.m. The public was invited to view or listen to the meeting online or in-person at the Koochiching County Court Administration building in International Falls, MN. The purpose of the meeting was to provide project information and to solicit public input on what resources and issues are important, which will help determine the scope and content of the SEIS. The meeting began with a presentation, followed by a public comment session, in which both in-person and virtual attendees were invited to ask questions or provide comments. Project information, including a recording of GSA's presentation during the public meeting, can be found online at: https://www.gsa.gov/real-estate/gsa-properties/land-ports-of-entry-and-the-3rd/bipartisan-infrastructure-law-construction-project/minnesota#international-falls.

Those that were not able to attend the public scoping meeting may still submit comments via mail or e-mail, as instructed below. All comments will be treated with equal importance. In order to be considered during the preparation of the Draft SEIS, comments must be received by **January 13, 2023**, by email to michael.gonczar@gsa.gov (include "International Falls SEIS Scoping Comment" in subject line), or mailed to:

ATTN: Michael Gonczar, International Falls LPOE SEIS
U.S. General Services Administration, Region 5
230 S. Dearborn St. Suite 3600
Chicago, IL 60604

For more information or questions about the project, please contact Michael Gonczar, GSA Region 5 NEPA Program Manager, at 312-810-2326 or michael.gonczar@gsa.gov.

RLMC director earns top credential

RLMC REPORT

A Rainy Lake Medical Center director recently achieved a gold standard for board certification in health management.

Andrea Pastor, RLMC director of special Projects & Strategic Initiatives, became a Fellow of the American College of Healthcare Executives, the nation's leading professional society for healthcare leaders.

Healthcare leaders who obtain the FACHE credential signify their competency, commitment to service, and recognition as an esteemed leader, according to ACHE.

"We are incredibly proud of Andrea and the dedication she has shown to RLMC and the Borderland community through achieving the FACHE credential," said Brian Raatz, RLMC chief operating officer. "This recognition is no small feat, and RLMC is incredibly fortunate to have Andrea on our team."

Dick Peterson, chairperson of the RLMC Board of Trustees, agreed.

"Andrea has shown she is committed to the continued success of RLMC," he said. "We highly value continued education and advancement at RLMC. On behalf of the board, we'd like to extend our congratulations to Andrea for this accomplishment."

ANDREA PASTOR

Fellow status represents achievement of the highest standard of professional development. In fact, only 11,866 healthcare executives hold this distinction. To obtain Fellow status, candidates must fulfill multiple requirements, including meeting academic and experiential criteria, earning continuing education hours, demonstrating professional/community involvement and passing a comprehensive examination. Fellows also are committed to ongoing professional development and undergo recertification every three years.

"The healthcare management field plays a vital role in providing high-quality care to the people in our communities, which makes having a standard of excellence promoted by a professional organization critically important," said Deborah J. Bowen, FACHE, CAE, president and CEO of ACHE. "By becoming an ACHE Fellow and earning the distinction of board certification from ACHE, healthcare leaders demonstrate a commitment to excellence in serving their patients and the community."

Pastor, of Rainy Lake Medical Center, said she is privileged to bear the FACHE credential, which signifies board certification in healthcare management as an ACHE Fellow.

rainylakegazette.com

PUBLIC NOTICE

The International Falls **CITY COUNCIL** will hold regular meetings on the **FIRST & THIRD MONDAY** [*excluding holidays—next business day] of each month at **5:30 PM** in the Council Chambers of the Municipal Building, 600 Fourth Street, International Falls, MN.

The next regular City Council Meeting is scheduled for **MONDAY, DECEMBER 19, 2022 AT 5:30 PM.** To view the agenda, please visit our website at www.ci.international-falls.mn.us or our Facebook page at "City Government of International Falls, MN". Instructions to participate in the meeting via Zoom are available on the agenda. If you would like to receive email notifications of meeting agendas and correspondence, please email info@ci.international-falls.mn.us or call (218) 283-9484.

PUBLIC NOTICE
DOG AND CAT LICENSE

Within the City of International Falls all dogs and cats are required to be licensed annually. Dog and Cat Licenses for 2023 are available at the City Administrator's Office in the Municipal Building, 600 4th Street or the Borderland Humane Society Holding Facility, 1990 Valley Pine Circle. **The annual license fee for a dog is $4.00 and a cat is $2.00.**

According to the City Code, Sec. 10-11, it is unlawful for the owner of any dog or cat to permit such animal to run at large. Any dog shall be deemed to be running at large unless it is on a durable leash secured to an object or on a leash under the control of a person. A cat shall be deemed to be running at large unless it is on the premises of the owner. The ordinance also states:

1. A license is required for any dog or cat over the age of 4 months.
2. All licenses expire December 31st.
3. All licensed dogs and cats must wear a collar with a current license tag attached.
4. Applications for dog licenses must include a certificate of immunization for rabies.
5. Any dog or cat running without a tag or at large shall be placed in the holding facility and will be released after purchase of a license and payment of an impoundment fee.

RAINY LAKE GAZETTE

AFFIDAVIT OF PUBLICATION

STATE OF MINNESOTA, COUNTY OF KOOCHICHING, SS:

Lacey Lund
of lawful age, being first duly sworn, deposeth and saith, he/she is Legal Representative of

RAINY LAKE GAZETTE

once weekly newspaper printed in the State of Minnesota, and published in and of general circulation in Koochiching County, Minnesota, and that said newspaper is not a trade, religious or fraternal publication.

Said newspaper is published once weekly and has been so published continuously and uninterruptedly in said county and state since July 16, 2021 and has been admitted at the post office of International Falls, Minnesota in said county.

That a notice of which a true copy is hereto attached was published

in the regular and entire issue of said Rainy Lake Gazette for 1 day(s),

the first being made on the 16th day of December A.D.,2022,

and the last on the _____ day of _____,A.D., 20____.

Affiant further states that he/she has personal knowledge of the Statements above set forth, and that they are true.

Affidavit Signer

Subscribed and sworn to before me this

16th day of December, A.D. 2022

Notary Public

KAMI KOSTIUK
Notary Public-Minnesota
My Commission Expires Jan 31, 2025

ATTACHMENT C: LETTER TO INTERESTED PARTIES

GSA

U.S. General Services

December 9, 2022

Email:

NAME
TITLE
ADDRESS
ADDRESS
ADDRESS

Dear NAME,

The U.S. General Services Administration (GSA) Region 5 is preparing a supplemental environmental impact statement (SEIS) for the International Falls Land Port of Entry (LPOE) project in compliance with the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) and the National Historic Preservation Act (NHPA). The existing 1.6-acre LPOE is located in International Falls, Minnesota on the south bank of the Rainy River and serves as the port of entry to people and vehicles crossing the International Bridge that connects International Falls to the town of Fort Frances, Ontario, Canada (**Figure 1**). The SEIS will examine the impacts on human, natural, and cultural resources from potential improvements at the LPOE, including site expansion (up to approximately 20 acres), demolition, and new construction. This letter is to notify your office that the GSA is initiating agency and public scoping and consultation and is seeking your comments on the project.

The *International Falls Land Port of Entry Improvements Study Final Environmental Impact Statement,* released in 2011, assessed the potential environmental impacts associated with the proposed action of replacing the undersized International Falls LPOE with a new LPOE facility "to improve safety, security, and functionality." A total of ten build alternatives were considered, and a preferred action alternative was identified. This alternative would consist of demolishing the existing building, constructing new facilities at the existing LPOE, and expanding the LPOE to meet the required space standards and increased security requirements of the Federal Inspection Services. The improvements would consist of the construction of a new main building, five primary passenger vehicle and ten secondary passenger vehicle lanes, one bus lane, one primary commercial vehicle lane, a commercial building, one passenger vehicle bay, two commercial bays, a kennel, a storage building, and parking facilities. This alternative would move the majority of the LPOE improvements and operations to an approximately 20-acre site southeast of the existing site between 4th Street and Rainy River (**Figure 2**).

GSA signed and released a Record of Decision in January 2012 that selected the preferred alternative as it best satisfied the purpose and needs of the project with the least overall adverse impacts to the environment. The ROD stated that the preferred alternative would have less-than-significant impacts on the natural and social environment of the study area and International Falls, including minor changes or impacts to surface water, surface water runoff, traffic, increased lighting, and hazardous substances.

Since 2011, GSA has identified the following changes to the project, which differ from the preferred alternative described in the 2011 Environmental Impact Statement (EIS):

U.S. General Services

- There have been proposed changes in tenants and use of the space. U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) no longer requires space at the LPOE; however, the U.S. Department of Agriculture/Animal Plant Health Inspection Services-Plant Protection and Quarantine (USDA/APHIS-PPQ), and U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) will require space and facilities at the LPOE.
- The Packaging Corporation of America (PCA) has acquired Boise, Inc. and has a different timber unloading operation occurring adjacent to the proposed acquisition parcel, which will require modifications to the original site plan.
- PCA's proposed trailer parking lot was shifted further east (beyond First Creek) and includes a paved 90-trailer parking lot for PCA, which will modify traffic patterns for the LPOE.
- A section of First Creek between Route 11 and the Rainy River that was previously contained in a culvert was identified following the 2011 EIS. The culvert has been removed and is now daylighted, and requires impacts analysis.
- There has been an increase in the proposed usable square feet (USF) for overall building space needed from 42,282 to 80,611 square feet, based on the addition of a maintenance building and expansion in the sizes of all other buildings per updated agency requirements.
- Stormwater management would be redesigned in the 300-foot section of First Creek due to two new areas of pavement crossing the creek.
- The Resolute Paper Mill in Fort Frances, Ontario has since closed, resulting in decreased rail traffic.

GSA is preparing a SEIS to assess the potential impacts of these updates, which were not assessed in the 2011 EIS. This SEIS will be developed in accordance with the NEPA, the GSA Public Buildings Service (PBS) NEPA Desk Guide, and the Council on Environmental Quality's (CEQ) NEPA implementing regulations, as well as applicable laws, regulations, and Executive Orders. An interdisciplinary team familiar with the issues and affected resources at the LPOE have preliminarily identified one action alternative that may be assessed in the SEIS:

- Alternative 1: Full Build – Construct the facilities as described in the Preferred Action Alternative assessed in the 2011 EIS and modified by the 2018 project updates (**Figure 3**).

The No Action Alternative will also be considered to satisfy federal requirements for analyzing "no action" under NEPA (40 Code of Federal Regulations 1502.14(d)). Analysis of this alternative will provide a baseline for comparison with impacts from the Proposed Action.

In addition to NEPA, the alternatives analyzed in the SEIS must comply with Section 106 of the NHPA, Section 7 of the Endangered Species Act (ESA), and other federal regulations. The Minnesota & Ontario Paper Company Office, located at 2nd Street and 4th Avenue, is listed in the NRHP. In a letter dated July 22, 2011 (No. 2009-3553), the Minnesota State Historic Preservation Office (MN SHPO) concurred that the project as then defined would have no adverse effect on the Minnesota & Ontario Paper Company Office nor any other historic structures listed in or eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places (NRHP). As part of the SEIS, the previous assessments will be verified, and recommendations will be updated by completing an above-ground historic resources survey. A Phase IA Literature Review for Archaeological Resources will be conducted on the proposed expansion site in accordance with the MN SHPO Manual for Archaeological Projects in Minnesota. Additional archaeological investigations will be conducted if warranted. All cultural resources investigations will be coordinated with the MN SHPO and consulting parties including relevant Tribal Historic

U.S. General Services

Preservation Offices as defined under Section 106 of the NHPA. A Phase I Environmental Site Assessment for hazardous materials also will be completed on the proposed expansion site.

Certain species are protected under the ESA. The USFWS Information, Planning, and Consultation (IPaC) System was reviewed for the potential occurrence of federally threatened or endangered species or their habitats at the LPOE. The IPaC System recognized the potential for three threatened mammal species (Canada lynx [*Lynx canadensis*], gray wolf [*Canis lupus*], and northern long-eared bat [*Myotis septentrionalis*]), and one candidate species (monarch butterfly [*Danaus plexippus*]) to occur within the project area. Three migratory bird species (bald eagle [*Haliaeetus leucocephalus*], chimney swift [*Chaetura pelagica*], and lesser yellowlegs [*Tringa flavipes*]) also have the potential to occur at or near the LPOE. For ESA Section 7 consultation, additional research will be conducted to determine the presence of state-listed threatened or endangered species, sensitive species or species of concern, and any additional issues/concerns related to wildlife at or near the LPOE.

Pursuant to the USFWS National Wetland Inventory (NWI), no wetlands occur on the existing or proposed expanded LPOE property. The closest NWI-mapped feature is a freshwater emergent wetland, directly south of the expanded property, on the south side of Route 11.

We would appreciate your help identifying resources that may be affected by the project. If you are interested, we would be willing to meet with you at your convenience to discuss the proposed project and its impacts, including any concerns you may have. If you wish to provide written comments, please send them to:

ATTN: Michael Gonczar, International Falls LPOE SEIS
U.S. General Services Administration, Region 5
230 S. Dearborn St. Suite 3600
Chicago, IL 60604

Comments may also be submitted electronically to **michael.gonczar@gsa.gov**. Please ensure the subject line of the email reads: **International Falls LPOE SEIS**. We request that all comments be postmarked or submitted electronically by **January 13, 2023**.

The GSA will host a hybrid in-person and virtual public and stakeholder meeting on December 13, 2022, from 6 pm to 8 pm CST. The meeting will be primarily virtual in nature and hosted via Zoom. Please follow this hyperlink to access the virtual meeting: https://us06web.zoom.us/j/81784418631. Members of the public may also attend the virtual meeting at the Koochiching County Court Administration Building at 715 4th Street, 3rd floor, International Falls, Minnesota 56649 to view the online presentation in-person. A GSA staff member will be available (in-person and virtually) to assist the public in providing public comments via the virtual platform. Interested parties are encouraged to attend and participate in this meeting.

Please contact Michael Gonczar, NEPA Program Manager, GSA at 312-810-2326 or **michael.gonczar@gsa.gov** if special assistance or accommodations are needed to participate in the public meeting.

Project-related communication and documentation is available on the GSA website at: https://www.gsa.gov/real-estate/gsa-properties/land-ports-of-entry-and-the-bil/bipartisan-infrastructure-law-construction-project/minnesota. The public meeting will be recorded and available for viewing on the GSA website in the days following the meeting

GSA

U.S. General Services

Thank you for taking the time to consider this project. If this letter has not been sent to the correct representative, please help us update our records. If you have any questions, please contact me directly by email at michael.gonczar@gsa.gov.

Sincerely,

Michael Gonczar
NEPA Program Manager
GSA | Public Buildings Service | Region 5

Attachments:

Figure 1. General Location of International Falls LPOE
Figure 2. Existing LPOE and Proposed Expansion Area
Figure 3. 2011 EIS Preferred Action Alternative, with 2018 Project Updates

GSA U.S. General Services

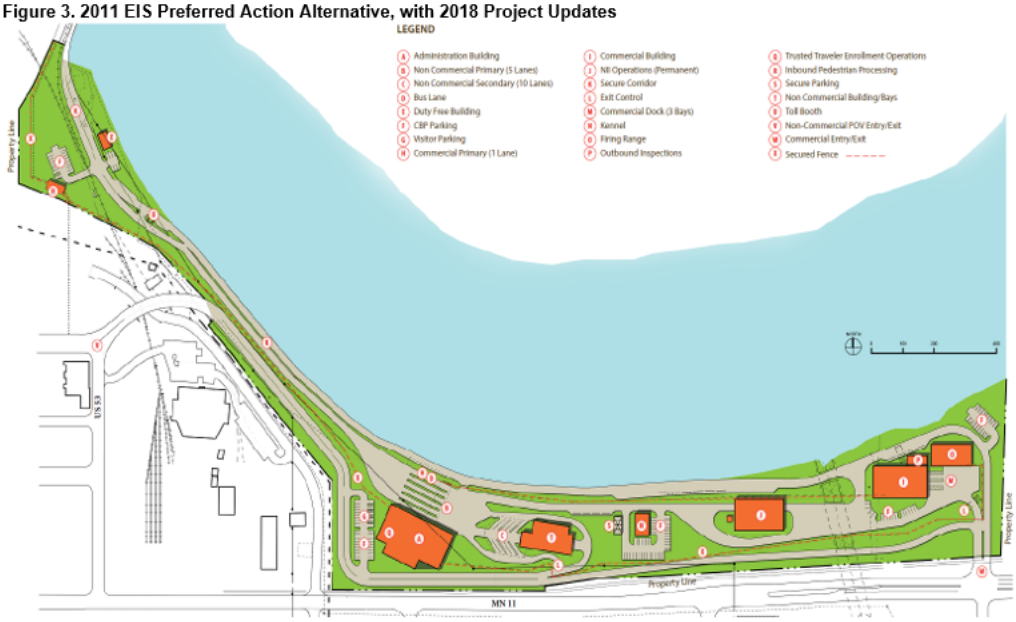
Figure 1. General Location of International Falls LPOE

GSA U.S. General Services

Figure 2. Existing LPOE and Proposed Expansion Area

U.S. General Services

Figure 3. 2011 EIS Preferred Action Alternative, with 2018 Project Updates



Note: this figure does not reflect the removal of the culverted section of First Creek between Route 11 and the Rainy River. The culvert has been removed and is now daylighted. The figure likewise does not reflect the redesign of stormwater management required as a result of the culvert removal to account for two new areas of pavement crossing First Creek. Refer to Figure 2 for a depiction of the daylighted culvert near the east end of the parcel.

Interested Party Letter - Distribution List

Canada Border Services Agency, Northwestern Ontario District	Marcus Powlowski, MP Canadian Parliament	Greg Rickford, MPP Ontario Provincial Parliament	June Caul, Mayor Town of Fort Frances
Craig Miller, Environmental Superintendent Town of Fort Frances	Cody Vangel, Chief Building Official / Municipal Planner Town of Fort Frances	Pete Stauber, Representative United States House of Representatives 8th District	Amy Klobuchar, Senator United States Senate
Tina Smith, Senator United States Senate	Customs and Border Protection Port of Entry-International Falls	Thomas Sivak, Regional Administrator Federal Emergency Management Agency	Chris Dingman, Northern Border Transportation Specialist Federal Highway Administration
William Lohr, Field Operations Engineer Federal Highway Administration	Kelley Brookins, Regional Administrator Federal Transit Administration	Allison Vogleson Zejnati, Public Affairs Specialist International Joint Commission, Great Lakes	David Calease, Architectural Historian National Park Service
Bob DeGross, Superintendent National Park Service Voyageurs National Park	Mike Rokus, MLRA Soil Survey Leader National Resources Conservation Service	Michael Pentony, Regional Administrator NOAA Fisheries	Duluth Regulatory Branch Project Management Team, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, St. Paul District
Mark Borkowski, Assistant Commissioner / Chief Acquisition Officer U.S. Department of Homeland Security Customs and Border Protection, Office of Finance-Asset Management Division	Diane Shelley, Regional Administrator U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development	Stephen Tryon, Director U.S. Department of Interior, Office of Environmental Policy & Compliance	Debra Shore, Regional Administrator U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, Region 5
Cindy Barger, Director U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, Office of Federal Activities, NEPA Compliance Division	Shauna Marquardt, Field Supervisor, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Minnesota-Wisconsin Ecological Services Field Office	John Walker, Center Director, U.S. Geological Survey, Upper Midwest Water Science Center	Border Bob's International Falls, MN
Merv Ahrens	Richard D. Koeneman	Allan and Myrna Meadows	Terry Randolph
Eric Rude	Betty Bergstrom, City Administrator, City of International Falls	Walt Buller, West Ward Councilor, City of International Falls	Leon Ditsch, East Ward Councilor, City of International Falls
Harley Droba, Mayor City of International Falls	Mike Holden, At-Large Councilor City of International Falls	Joe Krause, Center Ward Councilor City of International Falls	Ted Brokaw, Director International Falls Department of Public Works
Adam Mannausau, Fire Chief/Ambulance Director International Falls Fire Department	Kevin Adee, Commissioner Koochiching County Commission	Terry Murray, Vice Chair Koochiching County Commission	Wade Pavleck, Chair Koochiching County Commission District 1

Jason Sjoblom, Commissioner, Koochiching County Commission	Wayne Skoe, Commissioner, Koochiching County Commission	Matthew Gouin, Director, Koochiching County, Environmental Services Department	Ashley LaVigne, Executive Director, Koochiching County Historical Society
Pam Tomevi District Administrator Koochiching County Soil and Water Conservation District	Andy Hubley ARDC Planning Director Arrowhead Regional Development Commission	Duty Free Americas International Falls, MN	Heather Johnson Chamber Director Fort Frances Chamber of Commerce
Denise King Chamber Executive Director International Falls Area Chamber of Commerce	Director International Falls, Rainer, and Rainy Lake Convention and Visitors Bureau	Kathryn Hoffman Chief Executive Officer Minnesota Center for Environmental Advocacy	Brad Gausman Executive Director Minnesota Conservation Federation
Kristen Wold General Manager Minnesota, Dakota, and Western Railway	Tom Waters, General Manager, Northern Ontario, Aazhogan – The BMI Group	Lori Lyman Public Affairs Manager Packaging Corporation of America	Dennis and Wendy Wagner
Chris Belden, Vice-chair Transportation Advisory Committee	International Falls Public Library	Tim Walz, Governor Office of the Governor	Thomas Bakk State Senator
Rob Ecklund State Representative	Gerald Van Amburg, Chair Minnesota Board of Water and Soil Resources	Grace Arnold, Commissioner Minnesota Department of Commerce	Gabrielle Gerbaud Executive Director Minnesota Department of Employment and Economic Development Minnesota Trade Office
Lisa Joyal, Endangered Species Environmental Review Coordinator Minnesota Department of Natural Resources, Natural Heritage and Nongame Research Program	Shelly Patten, Regional Director, Minnesota Department of Natural Resources Northeast Regional Office	Duane Hill Transportation District Engineer Minnesota Department of Transportation	Pat Huston Assistant District Engineer Major Projects Minnesota Department of Transportation
Alex Peritz Lead Project Manager Minnesota Department of Transportation	Denise Wilson Director Environmental Review Program Minnesota Environmental Quality Board	Shannon Geshick Executive Director Minnesota Indian Affairs Council	Amanda Gronhovd State Archaeologist Minnesota Office of the State Archaeologist
Katrina Kessler, Commissioner, Minnesota Pollution Control Agency	Katie Sieben, Chair Minnesota Public Utilities Commission	Sarah Beimers Environmental Review Program Manager Minnesota State Historic Preservation Office	Harvey Thorleifson Director Minnesota Geological Survey
Chris Holm Ecological Resources Program Director Boise Forte Band of Chippewa	Melanie Benjamin Chief Executive Mille Lacs Band of Chippewa Indians	Catherine Chavers President Minnesota Chippewa Tribal Executive Committee	Darrell Seki Chairman Red Lake Band of Chippewa Indians of Minnesota
Michael Fairbanks Chairman White Earth Reservation Tribal Council	Jaylen Strong THPO Boise Forte Band of Chippewa	Evan Shroeder THPO Fond du Lac Band of Lake Superior Chippewa	Rob Hull THPO Grand Portage Band of Ojibwe

Amy Burnette THPO Leech Lake Band of Ojibwe	Cheyanne St. John THPO Lower Sioux Indian Community	Terry Kemper THPO Mille Lacs Band of Chippewa Indians	Noah White THPO Prairie Island Indian Community
Kade Ferris Archaeologist Red Lake Nation	Leonard Wabasha THPO Shakopee Mdewakanton Sioux Community	Samantha Odegard THPO Upper Sioux Community	Jaime Arsenault THPO White Earth Nation
Canada Border Services Agency Northern Ontario Region Northwestern Ontario District Fort Frances Bridge	Marcus Powlowski MP Canadian Parliament	Greg Rickford MPP Ontario Provincial Parliament	

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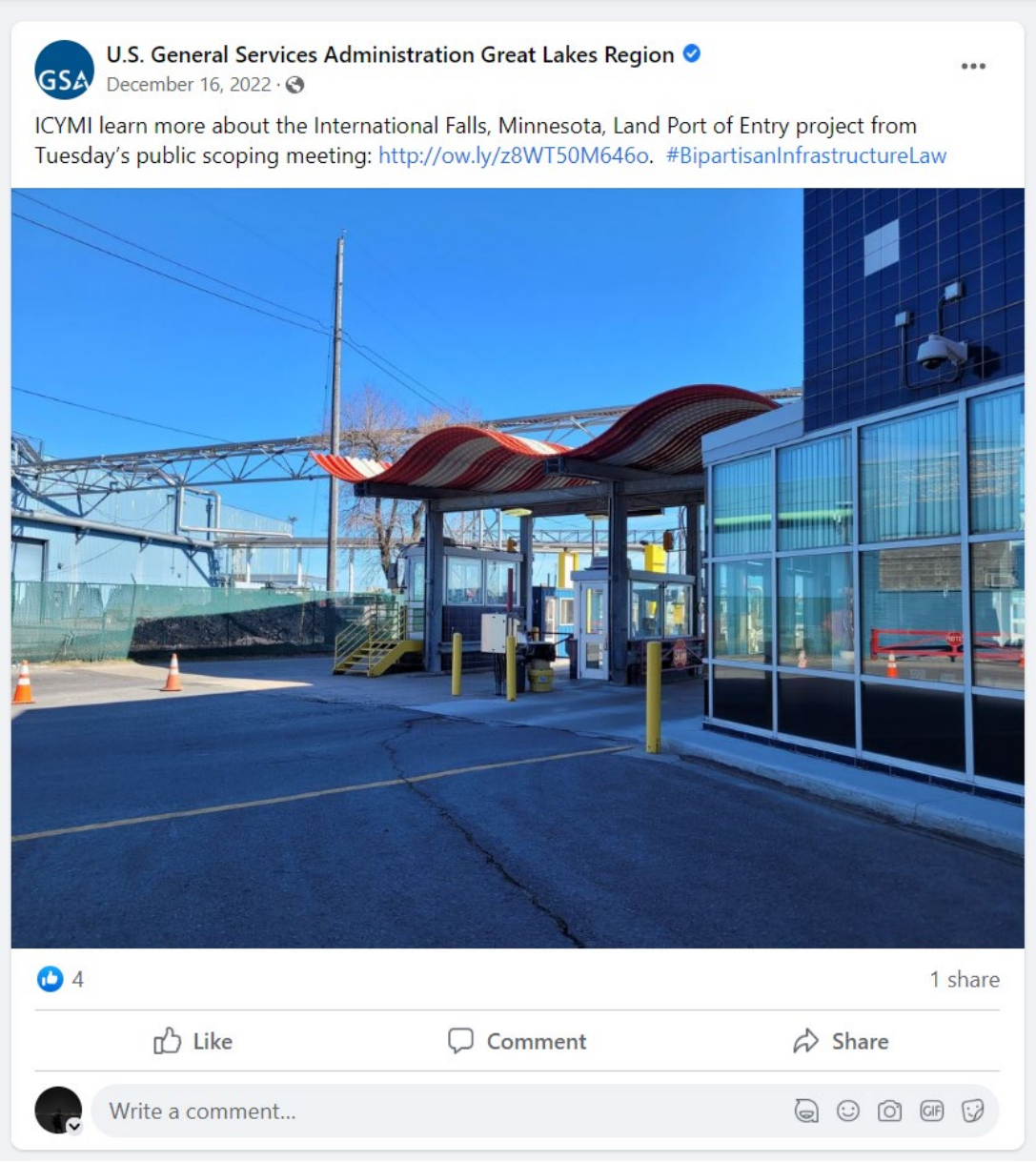
ATTACHMENT D: ADVERTISING ON SOCIAL MEDIA

Social Media Posts by GSA

Facebook 12/9/2022

Facebook 12/16/2022 (post-scoping meeting)



GSA Region 5 Newsroom 12/7/2022

GSA to host public scoping meeting for International Falls Land Port of Entry expansion

December 7, 2022

Contact: tanya.schusler@gsa.gov

CHICAGO – The U.S. General Services Administration will host a public scoping meeting in support of a Supplemental Environmental Impact Statement (SEIS) to address the expansion and modernization of the International Falls Land Port of Entry (LPOE) in northern Minnesota on Tuesday, Dec. 13, 6-8 p.m. CT.

This meeting will provide project information and solicit public input on what resources and issues are most important. That input will help determine the scope and content of the SEIS.

Members of the public may attend in-person or virtually, and a GSA staff member will assist virtual attendees in providing comments. The event will be at the Koochiching County Court Administration Building, 715 4th Street, 3rd floor, International Falls, Minnesota, and webcast via Zoom.

The International Falls LPOE is owned and managed by GSA and operated by the U.S. Department of Homeland Security's Customs and Border Protection (CBP). This facility serves as the port of entry to travelers crossing the international bridge that connects to the town of Fort Frances, Ontario, Canada. CBP currently inspects private vehicular, pedestrian, and commercial truck traffic at the LPOE on the U.S.-Canada Border.

This SEIS will serve as an update to the International Falls LPOE Improvements Study Final Environmental Impact Statement, released in 2011. Since 2011, GSA has identified changes to the project, which differ from the preferred alternative described in the 2011 EIS. The SEIS will examine the impacts on human, natural, and cultural environments from potential improvements at the LPOE, including site expansion (up to approximately 20 acres), demolition, and new construction.

Members of the public who do not have access to a personal computer may join the meeting by calling 646-931-3860, entering Meeting ID 817 8441 8631 and the pound (#) key, and then pressing # again when prompted for a participant ID. Dialing into the meeting is only necessary if you are not accessing the meeting through a personal computer or mobile app, or if you would like to provide oral comments during the meeting but do not have a computer microphone.

The meeting will include a presentation followed by a public comment session, in which both in-person and virtual attendees may participate. Those not able to attend in person or virtually may submit comments via mail or e-mail as instructed below. All written or verbal comments will be treated with equal importance.
In order to be considered during the preparation of the draft SEIS, comments must be received by January 13, 2023. Comments may be submitted at the scoping meeting, by email to michael.gonczar@gsa.gov (include "International Falls SEIS Scoping Comment" in subject line), or mailed to:

ATTN: Michael Gonczar, International Falls LPOE SEIS
U.S. General Services Administration, Region 5
230 S. Dearborn St., Suite 3600
Chicago, IL 60604

For more information or if special assistance is needed to participate in the public scoping meeting, contact Michael Gonczar, GSA Region 5 NEPA program manager, at 312-810-2326 or michael.gonczar@gsa.gov.

WHAT: Supplemental Environmental Impact Statement Public Scoping Meeting
WHEN: Tuesday, Dec. 13, 6-8 p.m. CT.
WHERE: 715 4th Street, 3rd floor, International Falls, MN 56649.
WHO: General public.
HOW: Virtual meeting option: https://us06web.zoom.us/j/31. A GSA staff member will be available to assist the public in providing public comments via the virtual platform.

###

About GSA: We provide centralized procurement and shared services for the federal government, managing a nationwide real estate portfolio of nearly 370 million rentable square feet, overseeing approximately $75 billion in annual contracts, and delivering technology services that serve millions of people across dozens of federal agencies. Our mission is to deliver the best customer experience and value in real estate, acquisition, and technology services to the government and the American people. For more information, visit GSA.gov and follow us at @USGSA.

Twitter 12/12/2022

← Tweet

GSA Great Lakes
@GSAGreatLakes

The public is invited to attend a public scoping meeting for the expansion & modernization of the International Falls Land Port of Entry Supplemental Environmental Impact Statement tomorrow, Dec. 13, 6-8 p.m. CST ow.ly/2SgE50M1Egz #BipartisanInfrastructureLaw #Minnesota

6:52 PM · Dec 12, 2022

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The Great Lakes Region (R5) serves IL, IN, MI, MN, OH and WI. Service, Accountability, Innovation. (Following, RTs & links ≠ endorsement)

What's happening

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Hawks at Thunder

Technology · Trending
RIP Randy
2,971 Tweets

Politics · Trending
Scott Baio
2,058 Tweets

Trending in United States
Paul Pelosi
18.7K Tweets

Sports · Trending
#JayBriscoeRIP

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Twitter 12/16/2022

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@GSAGreatLakes

ICYMI learn more about the International Falls, Minnesota, Land Port of Entry project from Tuesday's public scoping meeting: ow.ly/z8WT50M646o #BipartisanInfrastructureLaw

6:05 PM · Dec 16, 2022 · **29** Views

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What's happening

NBA · LIVE
Hawks at Thunder

Technology · Trending
RIP Randy
3,041 Tweets

Politics · Trending
Scott Baio
2,079 Tweets

Trending in United States
Mark Adams

Sports · Trending
Anthony Grant

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ATTACHMENT E: INDEX OF COMMENTS BY SOURCE AND DATE

Commenter ID	Total Comments	Date	Name	Affiliation (if any)	Comment Method
Agency / Government Unit					
A1	1	12/9/2022	Regina Swanson	Minnesota Pollution Control Agency (MPCA), Environmental Quality Board	Email / Letter
A2	5	12/15/2022	Dave Reimer	Koochiching County	Email
A3	1	12/15/2022	Duane Castaldi	Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA)	Email
A4	2	12/19/2022	Philip Forst	Federal Highway Administration (FHWA)	Email
A5	6	1/3/2023	Jason Fisher	Bolt & Menk (on behalf of International Falls)	Email
A6	4	1/13/2023	Duane Hill	Minnesota Department of Transportation (MnDOT), District 1	Email / Letter
A7	17	1/13/2023	Kathy Triantafillou	U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (USEPA)	Email / Letter
Public					
P1	2	12/13/2022	Rick W		Zoom Q&A (during Public Scoping Meeting)
P2	1	12/13/2022	Jason McBride		Zoom Q&A (during Public Scoping Meeting)
P3	1	12/13/2022	Mike Krueger	Aazhogan Limited Partnership (owner of International Bridge)	Verbal (during Public Scoping Meeting)
P4	1	12/13/2022	Matt Gouim		Verbal (during Public Scoping Meeting)
P5	1	12/13/2022	Phillip Powers	EFG Centra Pipelines LLC Minnesota	Email
P6	9	12/18/2022	Steven G Lindberg	Lindberg Enterprises of Rainy Lake LLC	Email
P7	1	12/21/2022	Leonard Wabasha	Shakopee Mdewakanton Sioux Community	Email
P8	1	12/22/2022	Dave Tomevi		Email
P9	9	1/9/2023	Mike Wagner	PCA	Email / Letter

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APPENDIX B. CONSULTATION AND COORDINATION

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B.1 SECTION 7 ENDANGERED SPECIES ACT

B.1.1 USFWS (Minnesota-Wisconsin Ecological Services Field Office) Letter – Record of Project Representative's No Effect Determination for Northern Long-Eard Bat (May 19, 2023)

United States Department of the Interior

FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE
Minnesota-Wisconsin Ecological Services Field Office
3815 American Blvd East
Bloomington, MN 55425-1659
Phone: (952) 858-0793 Fax: (952) 646-2873

In Reply Refer To: May 19, 2023
Project code: 2023-0066439
Project Name: Proposed Expansion and Modernization of the Land Port of Entry (LPOE) in International Falls, MN

Federal Nexus: yes
Federal Action Agency (if applicable): General Services Administration

Subject: Record of project representative's no effect determination for 'Proposed Expansion and Modernization of the Land Port of Entry (LPOE) in International Falls, MN'

Dear Erin Kouvousis:

This letter records your determination using the Information for Planning and Consultation (IPaC) system provided to the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (Service) on May 19, 2023, for 'Proposed Expansion and Modernization of the Land Port of Entry (LPOE) in International Falls, MN' (here forward, Project). This project has been assigned Project Code 2023-0066439 and all future correspondence should clearly reference this number. **Please carefully review this letter.**

Ensuring Accurate Determinations When Using IPaC

The Service developed the IPaC system and associated species' determination keys in accordance with the Endangered Species Act of 1973 (ESA; 87 Stat. 884, as amended; 16 U.S.C. 1531 et seq.) and based on a standing analysis. All information submitted by the Project proponent into the IPaC must accurately represent the full scope and details of the Project. Failure to accurately represent or implement the Project as detailed in IPaC or the Northern Long-eared Bat Rangewide Determination Key (Dkey), invalidates this letter.

Determination for the Northern Long-Eared Bat

Based upon your IPaC submission and a standing analysis, your project has reached the determination of "No Effect" on the northern long-eared bat. To make a no effect determination, the full scope of the proposed project implementation (action) should not have any effects (either positive or negative), to a federally listed species or designated critical habitat. Effects of the action are all consequences to listed species or critical habitat that are caused by the proposed action, including the consequences of other activities that are caused by the proposed action. A consequence is caused by the proposed action if it would not occur but for the proposed action

and it is reasonably certain to occur. Effects of the action may occur later in time and may include consequences occurring outside the immediate area involved in the action. (See § 402.17).

Under Section 7 of the ESA, if a federal action agency makes a no effect determination, no consultation with the Service is required (ESA §7). If a proposed Federal action may affect a listed species or designated critical habitat, formal consultation is required except when the Service concurs, in writing, that a proposed action "is not likely to adversely affect" listed species or designated critical habitat [50 CFR §402.02, 50 CFR§402.13].

Other Species and Critical Habitat that May be Present in the Action Area

The IPaC-assisted determination for the northern long-eared bat does not apply to the following ESA-protected species and/or critical habitat that also may occur in your Action area:

- Canada Lynx *Lynx canadensis* Threatened
- Gray Wolf *Canis lupus* Threatened
- Monarch Butterfly *Danaus plexippus* Candidate
- Tricolored Bat *Perimyotis subflavus* Proposed Endangered

Critical Habitats:

- Canada Lynx Lynx canadensis Threatened

You may coordinate with our Office to determine whether the Action may affect the animal species listed above and, if so, how they may be affected.

Next Steps

Based upon your IPaC submission, your project has reached the determination of “No Effect” on the northern long-eared bat. If there are no updates on listed species, no further consultation/ coordination for this project is required with respect to the northern long-eared bat. However, the Service recommends that project proponents re-evaluate the Project in IPaC if: 1) the scope, timing, duration, or location of the Project changes (includes any project changes or amendments); 2) new information reveals the Project may impact (positively or negatively) federally listed species or designated critical habitat; or 3) a new species is listed, or critical habitat designated. If any of the above conditions occurs, additional coordination with the Service should take place to ensure compliance with the Act.

If you have any questions regarding this letter or need further assistance, please contact the Minnesota-Wisconsin Ecological Services Field Office and reference Project Code 2023-0066439 associated with this Project.

Action Description
You provided to IPaC the following name and description for the subject Action.

1. Name

Proposed Expansion and Modernization of the Land Port of Entry (LPOE) in International Falls, MN

2. Description

The following description was provided for the project 'Proposed Expansion and Modernization of the Land Port of Entry (LPOE) in International Falls, MN':

> The Proposed Action includes the acquisition of property, demolition of existing facilities, and construction of new facilities associated with an expanded and modernized land port of entry (LPOE) in International Falls, MN. Approximately 20.5 acres would be acquired by GSA and a new LPOE would constructed. Some existing buildings and utilities would need to be relocated to surrounding lands, which could disturb up to an additional 30 acres of land. This would primarily occur on previously disturbed property associated with the nearby paper mill. Renewable energy technologies may be considered, including solar, geothermal, and closed-loop river cooling technologies.
>
> Demolition and construction activities are estimated to begin in 2025, with substantial completion anticipated in 2029. Due to weather conditions, it is anticipated that peak construction would occur during the months of April through October. From November through March, it is anticipated construction activities would primarily consist of interior building work.
>
> The northern long-eared bat (Myotis septentrionalis) is not anticipated to hibernate or forage within the Region of Influence (ROI); however, there is potential for the species to utilize nearby trees or structures as daytime roosting sites. The tricolored bat (Perimyotis subflavus) is not anticipated to hibernate within the ROI, although there is potential for tricolored bats to forage along the Rainy River or to utilize nearby trees or structures as daytime roosting sites. GSA anticipates adverse effects to these species would be avoided with adherence to the following measures, to be adopted as part of the Proposed Action:
> • Pre-construction presence/absence surveys will be completed if there is a need to remove potentially suitable habitat within the proposed project area during the pup season (June 1 to July 31). If required, surveys will be conducted pursuant to local USFWS field office and state resource agency requirements. The need for any additional tree clearing restrictions, if any, will be determined in coordination with applicable state and federal resource agencies pending survey results.
> • If presence/absence surveys detect hibernaculum, no tree removal will occur within 0.25 mile of a known occupied hibernaculum.
> • If presence/absence surveys detect maternity roosts, no tree removal will occur within 150 feet of a known occupied maternity roost tree during the pup season

(June 1 to July 31).

Pre-construction presence/absence surveys will be completed for chimney swift (Chaetura pelagica) and bald eagle (Haliaeetus leucocephalus) to determine if nests exist within any proposed structures to be demolished. Surveys would be conducted pursuant to local USFWS field office and state resource agency requirements. The need for seasonal restrictions around demolition, if any, will be determined in coordination with applicable state and federal resource agencies pending survey results.

Regarding the monarch butterfly:
• If milkweed plants are observed within the proposed expansion area, they would be avoided to the extent practicable in order to reduce potential impacts to the federal candidate monarch butterfly.
• Only approved, native species would be used for revegetation. When possible, pollinator-friendly plant species would be used. These plant species would not be invasive or noxious species, and disturbed areas would be promptly restored or revegetated to the extent practicable following construction.

Landscaping would consider Minnesota's insect pollinators by:
• Planting a variety of native flowers that bloom in the spring, summer, and fall;
• Providing nesting sites by allowing dead branches, stems, and logs to remain and leaving bare earth for ground-nesting insects;
• Reducing the use of pesticides; and
• Allowing native flowering plants to grow along roadsides and drainage ditches.

The approximate location of the project can be viewed in Google Maps: https://www.google.com/maps/@48.60261185,-93.39275643304406,14z

DETERMINATION KEY RESULT

Based on the information you provided, you have determined that the Proposed Action will have no effect on the Endangered northern long-eared bat (Myotis septentrionalis). Therefore, no consultation with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service pursuant to Section 7(a)(2) of the Endangered Species Act of 1973 (87 Stat. 884, as amended 16 U.S.C. 1531 *et seq.*) is required for those species.

QUALIFICATION INTERVIEW

1. Does the proposed project include, or is it reasonably certain to cause, intentional take of the northern long-eared bat or any other listed species?

   Note: Intentional take is defined as take that is the intended result of a project. Intentional take could refer to research, direct species management, surveys, and/or studies that include intentional handling/encountering, harassment, collection, or capturing of any individual of a federally listed threatened, endangered or proposed species?

   No

2. Do you have post-white nose syndrome occurrence data that indicates that northern long-eared bats (NLEB) are likely to be present in the action area?

   Bat occurrence data may include identification of NLEBs in hibernacula, capture of NLEBs, tracking of NLEBs to roost trees, or confirmed acoustic detections. With this question, we are looking for data that, for some reason, may have not yet been made available to U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service.

   No

3. Does any component of the action involve construction or operation of wind turbines?

   Note: For federal actions, answer 'yes' if the construction or operation of wind power facilities is either (1) part of the federal action or (2) would not occur but for a federal agency action (federal permit, funding, etc.).

   No

4. Is the proposed action authorized, permitted, licensed, funded, or being carried out by a Federal agency in whole or in part?

   Yes

5. Is the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA), Federal Railroad Administration (FRA), or Federal Transit Administration (FTA) funding or authorizing the proposed action, in whole or in part?

   No

6. Are you an employee of the federal action agency or have you been officially designated in writing by the agency as its designated non-federal representative for the purposes of Endangered Species Act Section 7 informal consultation per 50 CFR § 402.08?

   Note: This key may be used for federal actions and for non-federal actions to facilitate section 7 consultation and to help determine whether an incidental take permit may be needed, respectively. This question is for information purposes only.

   Yes

7. Is the lead federal action agency the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) or Federal Communications Commission (FCC)? Is the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) or Federal Communications Commission (FCC) funding or authorizing the proposed action, in whole or in part?

   No

8. Is the lead federal action agency the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission (FERC)?

   No

9. Have you determined that your proposed action will have no effect on the northern long-eared bat? Remember to consider the effects of any activities that would not occur but for the proposed action.

   If you think that the northern long-eared bat may be affected by your project or if you would like assistance in deciding, answer "No" below and continue through the key. If you have determined that the northern long-eared bat does not occur in your project's action area and/or that your project will have no effects whatsoever on the species despite the potential for it to occur in the action area, you may make a "no effect" determination for the northern long-eared bat.

   Note: Federal agencies (or their designated non-federal representatives) must consult with USFWS on federal agency actions that may affect listed species [50 CFR 402.14(a)]. Consultation is not required for actions that will not affect listed species or critical habitat. Therefore, this determination key will not provide a consistency or verification letter for actions that will not affect listed species. If you believe that the northern long-eared bat may be affected by your project or if you would like assistance in deciding, please answer "No" and continue through the key. Remember that this key addresses only effects to the northern long-eared bat. Consultation with USFWS would be required if your action may affect another listed species or critical habitat. The definition of Effects of the Action can be found here: https://www.fws.gov/media/northern-long-eared-bat-assisted-determination-key-selected-definitions

   Yes

PROJECT QUESTIONNAIRE

Will all project activities by completed by April 1, 2024?

No

IPAC USER CONTACT INFORMATION

Agency: General Services Administration
Name: Erin Kouvousis
Address: 77 Upper Rock Circle
Address Line 2: Suite 302
City: Rockville
State: MD
Zip: 20850
Email erin.kouvousis@phe.com
Phone: 4403209607

B.1.2 USFWS (Minnesota-Wisconsin Ecological Services Field Office) Letter: Consistency Letter (May 19, 2023)

United States Department of the Interior

FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE
Minnesota-Wisconsin Ecological Services Field Office
3815 American Blvd East
Bloomington, MN 55425-1659
Phone: (952) 858-0793 Fax: (952) 646-2873

In Reply Refer To: May 19, 2023
Project code: 2023-0066439
Project Name: Proposed Expansion and Modernization of the Land Port of Entry (LPOE) in International Falls, MN

Subject: Consistency letter for 'Proposed Expansion and Modernization of the Land Port of Entry (LPOE) in International Falls, MN' for specified threatened and endangered species that may occur in your proposed project location consistent with the Minnesota-Wisconsin Endangered Species Determination Key (Minnesota-Wisconsin DKey).

Dear Erin Kouvousis:

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (Service) received on **May 19, 2023** your effect determination(s) for the 'Proposed Expansion and Modernization of the Land Port of Entry (LPOE) in International Falls, MN' (Action) using the Minnesota-Wisconsin DKey within the Information for Planning and Consultation (IPaC) system. You have submitted this key to satisfy requirements under Section 7(a)(2). The Service developed this system in accordance of with the Endangered Species Act of 1973 (ESA) (87 Stat. 884, as amended; 16 U.S.C 1531 et seq.).

Based on your answers and the assistance of the Service's Minnesota-Wisconsin DKey, you made the following effect determination(s) for the proposed Action:

Species	**Listing Status**	**Determination**
Canada Lynx (*Lynx canadensis*)	Threatened	NLAA
Gray Wolf (*Canis lupus*)	Threatened	NLAA
Monarch Butterfly (*Danaus plexippus*)	Candidate	No effect
Tricolored Bat (*Perimyotis subflavus*)	Proposed Endangered	No effect

Critical Habitat	**Listing Status**	**Determination**
Canada Lynx (*Lynx canadensis*)	Final	NLAA

Determination Information

Thank you for informing the Service of your "NLAA" determination(s). No further coordination is necessary for the species you determined may be affected, but not likely to be adversely affected, by the Action.

Additional Information

Sufficient project details: Please provide sufficient project details on your project homepage in IPaC (Define Project, Project Description) to support your conclusions. Failure to disclose important aspects of your project that would influence the outcome of your effects determinations may negate your determinations and invalidate this letter. If you have site-specific information that leads you to believe a different determination is more appropriate for your project than what the Dkey concludes, you can and should proceed based on the best available information.

Future project changes: The Service recommends that you contact the Minnesota-Wisconsin Ecological Services Field Office or re-evaluate the project in IPaC if: 1) the scope or location of the proposed Action is changed; 2) new information reveals that the action may affect listed species or designated critical habitat in a manner or to an extent not previously considered; 3) the Action is modified in a manner that causes effects to listed species or designated critical habitat; or 4) a new species is listed or critical habitat designated. If any of the above conditions occurs, additional consultation with the Service should take place before project changes are final or resources committed.

Species-specific information

Bald and Golden Eagles: Bald eagles, golden eagles, and their nests are protected under the Bald and Golden Eagle Protection Act (54 Stat. 250, as amended, 16 U.S.C. 668a-d) (Eagle Act). The Eagle Act prohibits, except when authorized by an Eagle Act permit, the "taking" of bald and golden eagles and defines "take" as "pursue, shoot, shoot at, poison, wound, kill, capture, trap, collect, molest or disturb." The Eagle Act's implementing regulations define disturb as "… to agitate or bother a bald or golden eagle to a degree that causes, or is likely to cause, based on the best scientific information available, (1) injury to an eagle, (2) a decrease in its productivity, by substantially interfering with normal breeding, feeding, or sheltering behavior, or (3) nest abandonment, by substantially interfering with normal breeding, feeding, or sheltering behavior."

If you observe a bald eagle nest in the vicinity of your proposed project, you should follow the National Bald Eagle Management Guidelines (May 2007). For more information on eagles and conducting activities in the vicinity of an eagle nest, please visit our regional eagle website or contact Margaret at Margaret_Rheude@fws.gov. **If the Action may affect bald or golden eagles, additional coordination with the Service under the Eagle Act may be required.**

The following species and/or critical habitats may also occur in your project area and **are not** covered by this conclusion:

- Northern Long-eared Bat *Myotis septentrionalis* Endangered

Coordination with the Service is not complete if additional coordination is advised above for any species.

Action Description
You provided to IPaC the following name and description for the subject Action.

1. Name

Proposed Expansion and Modernization of the Land Port of Entry (LPOE) in International Falls, MN

2. Description

The following description was provided for the project 'Proposed Expansion and Modernization of the Land Port of Entry (LPOE) in International Falls, MN':

> The Proposed Action includes the acquisition of property, demolition of existing facilities, and construction of new facilities associated with an expanded and modernized land port of entry (LPOE) in International Falls, MN. Approximately 20.5 acres would be acquired by GSA and a new LPOE would constructed. Some existing buildings and utilities would need to be relocated to surrounding lands, which could disturb up to an additional 30 acres of land. This would primarily occur on previously disturbed property associated with the nearby paper mill. Renewable energy technologies may be considered, including solar, geothermal, and closed-loop river cooling technologies.
>
> Demolition and construction activities are estimated to begin in 2025, with substantial completion anticipated in 2029. Due to weather conditions, it is anticipated that peak construction would occur during the months of April through October. From November through March, it is anticipated construction activities would primarily consist of interior building work.
>
> The northern long-eared bat (Myotis septentrionalis) is not anticipated to hibernate or forage within the Region of Influence (ROI); however, there is potential for the species to utilize nearby trees or structures as daytime roosting sites. The tricolored bat (Perimyotis subflavus) is not anticipated to hibernate within the ROI, although there is potential for tricolored bats to forage along the Rainy River or to utilize nearby trees or structures as daytime roosting sites. GSA anticipates adverse effects to these species would be avoided with adherence to the following measures, to be adopted as part of the Proposed Action:
> • Pre-construction presence/absence surveys will be completed if there is a need to remove potentially suitable habitat within the proposed project area during the pup season (June 1 to July 31). If required, surveys will be conducted pursuant to local USFWS field office and state resource agency requirements. The need for any additional tree clearing restrictions, if any, will be determined in coordination with applicable state and federal resource agencies pending survey results.
> • If presence/absence surveys detect hibernaculum, no tree removal will occur within 0.25 mile of a known occupied hibernaculum.
> • If presence/absence surveys detect maternity roosts, no tree removal will occur within 150 feet of a known occupied maternity roost tree during the pup season

(June 1 to July 31).

Pre-construction presence/absence surveys will be completed for chimney swift (Chaetura pelagica) and bald eagle (Haliaeetus leucocephalus) to determine if nests exist within any proposed structures to be demolished. Surveys would be conducted pursuant to local USFWS field office and state resource agency requirements. The need for seasonal restrictions around demolition, if any, will be determined in coordination with applicable state and federal resource agencies pending survey results.

Regarding the monarch butterfly:
• If milkweed plants are observed within the proposed expansion area, they would be avoided to the extent practicable in order to reduce potential impacts to the federal candidate monarch butterfly.
• Only approved, native species would be used for revegetation. When possible, pollinator-friendly plant species would be used. These plant species would not be invasive or noxious species, and disturbed areas would be promptly restored or revegetated to the extent practicable following construction.

Landscaping would consider Minnesota's insect pollinators by:
• Planting a variety of native flowers that bloom in the spring, summer, and fall;
• Providing nesting sites by allowing dead branches, stems, and logs to remain and leaving bare earth for ground-nesting insects;
• Reducing the use of pesticides; and
• Allowing native flowering plants to grow along roadsides and drainage ditches.

The approximate location of the project can be viewed in Google Maps: https://www.google.com/maps/@48.60261185,-93.39275643304406,14z

QUALIFICATION INTERVIEW

1. This determination key is intended to assist the user in evaluating the effects of their actions on Federally listed species in Minnesota and Wisconsin. It does not cover other prohibited activities under the Endangered Species Act (e.g., for wildlife: import/export, Interstate or foreign commerce, possession of illegally taken wildlife, etc.; for plants: import/export, reduce to possession, malicious destruction on Federal lands, commercial sale, etc.) or other statutes. Additionally, this key DOES NOT cover wind development, purposeful take (e.g., for research or surveys), communication towers that have guy wires or are over 450 feet in height, aerial or other large-scale application of any chemical (such as insecticide or herbicide), and approval of long-term permits or plans (e.g., FERC licenses, HCP's).

   Click **YES** to acknowledge that you must consider other prohibitions of the ESA or other statutes outside of this determination key.

   Yes
2. Is the action being funded, authorized, or carried out by a Federal agency?

   No
3. Are you the Federal agency or designated non-federal representative?

   Yes
4. Does the action involve the installation or operation of wind turbines?

   No
5. Does the action involve purposeful take of a listed animal?

   No
6. Does the action involve a new communications tower?

   No
7. Does the activity involve aerial or other large-scale application of ANY chemical, including pesticides (insecticide, herbicide, fungicide, rodenticide, etc)?

   No
8. Does the action occur near a bald eagle nest?

   Note: Contact the Minnesota or Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources for an up-to-date list of known bald eagle nests.

   No
9. Will your action permanently affect local hydrology?

   Yes

10. Does your project have the potential to impact the riparian zone or indirectly impact a stream/river (e.g., cut and fill; horizontal directional drilling; construction; vegetation removal; pesticide or fertilizer application; discharge; runoff of sediment or pollutants; increase in erosion, etc.)?

    Note: Consider all potential effects of the action, including those that may happen later in time and outside and downstream of the immediate area involved in the action.

    Endangered Species Act regulation defines "effects of the action" to include all consequences to listed species or critical habitat that are caused by the proposed action, including the consequences of other activities that are caused by the proposed action. A consequence is caused by the proposed action if it would not occur but for the proposed action and it is reasonably certain to occur. Effects of the action may occur later in time and may include consequences occurring outside the immediate area involved in the action. (50 CFR 402.02).

    Yes

11. Will your action disturb the ground or existing vegetation?

    Note: This includes any off-road vehicle access, soil compaction (enough to collapse a rodent burrow), digging, seismic survey, directional drilling, heavy equipment, grading, trenching, placement of fill, pesticide application (herbicide, fungicide), vegetation management (including removal or maintenance using equipment or prescribed fire), cultivation, development, etc.

    Yes

12. Will your action include spraying insecticides?

    Yes

13. Does your action area occur entirely within an already developed area?

    Note: Already developed areas are already paved, covered by existing structures, manicured lawns, industrial sites, or cultivated cropland, AND do not contain trees that could be roosting habitat. Be aware that listed species may occur in areas with natural, or semi-natural, vegetation immediately adjacent to existing utilities (e.g. roadways, railways) or within utility rights-of-way such as overhead transmission line corridors, and can utilize suitable trees, bridges, or culverts for roosting even in urban dominated landscapes (so these are not considered "already developed areas" for the purposes of this question). If unsure, select NO..

    No

14. Is there any potential for this action to harm Canada lynx directly (e.g., mammal trapping, poison bait, broadcasting disease control agents for wild animals, capturing animals for research projects, or regular human activity that may exclude lynx from forested habitat including blasting or explosives)?

    No

15. Is your action associated with the U.S. Forest Service?

    No

16. Is there any potential for this action to harm Canada lynx indirectly (e.g., increased traffic volume and speed that may result in vehicle strikes, regular human activity that may disturb or exclude lynx from forested habitat, blasting or explosives)?

    No

17. Will the action result in changes to Canada lynx or snowshoe hare habitat quality, quantity, or availability that is greater than 10 acres?
    E.g., thinning and/or other timber management and logging practices; residential and commercial development; road, railroad and utility corridors development; mining activities; prescribed fire; trail development; winter activities that compact snow such as winter road use, snowmobiling, cross country skiing, and dog sledding.

    No

18. Does the action area intersect with a known gray wolf denning or rendezvous area?

    No

19. Is there any potential for the action to harm wolves directly (e.g., mammal trapping, poison bait), or indirectly (e.g., increasing vehicle use that may result in vehicle strikes, exposure to potential human persecution)?

    No

20. [Hidden Semantic] Does the action area intersect the Threatened gray wolf AOI?

    Automatically answered

    Yes

21. [Hidden Semantic] Does the action area intersect the monarch butterfly species list area?

    Automatically answered

    Yes

22. Under the ESA, monarchs remain warranted but precluded by listing actions of higher priority. The monarch is a candidate for listing at this time. The Endangered Species Act does not establish protections or consultation requirements for candidate species. Some Federal and State agencies may have policy requirements to consider candidate species in planning. We encourage implementing measures that will remove or reduce threats to these species and possibly make listing unnecessary.

    If your project will have no effect on monarch butterflies (for example, if your project won't affect their habitat or individuals), then you can make a "no effect" determination for this project.

    Are you making a "no effect" determination for monarch?

    Yes

23. [Hidden semantic] Does the action intersect the Tricolored bat species list area?

    Automatically answered

    Yes

24. The tricolored bat was proposed for listing as endangered on September 13, 2022. During winter, tricolored bats hibernate in caves, abandoned mines, and abandoned tunnels ranging from small to large in size. During spring, summer and fall months, they roost primarily among leaf clusters of live or recently dead deciduous/hardwood trees.

    What effect determination do you want to make for the tricolored bat (Only make a "may affect" determination if you think the project is likely to jeopardize the continued existence of the species)?

    1. "No effect"

IPAC USER CONTACT INFORMATION

Agency: General Services Administration
Name: Erin Kouvousis
Address: 77 Upper Rock Circle
Address Line 2: Suite 302
City: Rockville
State: MD
Zip: 20850
Email erin.kouvousis@phe.com
Phone: 4403209607

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B.2 SECTION 106 OF THE NATIONAL HISTORIC PRESERVATION ACT (NHPA)

B.2.1 Initial GSA Letter Sent to Minnesota SHPO (January 5, 2023)

U.S. General Services Administration

January 5, 2023

Email: sarah.beimers@state.mn.us, ENReviewSHPO@state.mn.us

Sarah Beimers
Environmental Review Program Manager
State Historic Preservation Office
203 Administration Building
50 Sherburne Avenue
St. Paul, MN 55155

Subject: **Continue Consultation and Request Concurrence with Area of Potential Effects for the International Falls Land Port of Entry Modernization Project (SHPO No.: 2009-3553, 2022-2374)**

Dear Ms. Beimers,

The U.S. General Services Administration (GSA) Great Lakes Region (Region 5) is preparing a Supplemental Environmental Impact Statement (SEIS) for the International Falls Land Port of Entry (LPOE) Modernization Project in compliance with the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) of 1969 and the National Historic Preservation Act (NHPA) of 1966. The LPOE is located in International Falls, Koochiching County, Minnesota on the south bank of the Rainy River at the northern terminus of U.S. Highway 53 (**Figure 1)**. This letter continues State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO) consultation (SHPO No.: 2009-3553, 2022-2374) and seeks concurrence with the Area of Potential Effects (APE) defined below.

The *International Falls Land Port of Entry Improvements Study Final Environmental Impact Statement,* released in 2011, assessed the potential environmental impacts associated with the proposed action of replacing the undersized International Falls LPOE with a new LPOE facility "to improve safety, security, and functionality." A Feasibility Study for this project considered ten (10) alternatives and dismissed five (5). The 2011 Environmental Impact Statement ended up analyzing five (5) alternatives, and a preferred action alternative was identified. This alternative would consist of demolishing the existing building, constructing new facilities at the existing LPOE, and expanding the LPOE to meet the required space standards and increased security requirements of the Federal Inspection Services. The improvements would consist of the construction of a new main building, five primary passenger vehicle and ten secondary passenger vehicle lanes, one bus lane, one primary commercial vehicle lane, a commercial building, one passenger vehicle bay, two commercial bays, a kennel, a storage building, and parking facilities. This alternative would move the majority of the LPOE improvements and operations to an approximately 20-acre site southeast of the existing site between 4th Street and Rainy River (**Figure 2**).

GSA signed and released a Record of Decision in January 2012 that selected the preferred alternative and stated that the preferred alternative would have less-than-significant impacts on

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the study area environment. In a letter dated 22 July 2011, SHPO acknowledged selection of the preferred alternative and concurred that the preferred alternative would have no adverse effect on the Minnesota & Ontario Paper Company Office Building, or on any other historic structures listed in or eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places.

Since 2011, GSA has identified the following changes to the project, which differ from the preferred alternative described in the 2011 Environmental Impact Statement (EIS):

- There have been proposed changes in tenants and use of the space. U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) no longer requires space at the LPOE; however, the U.S. Department of Agriculture/Animal Plant Health Inspection Services-Plant Protection and Quarantine (USDA/APHIS-PPQ), and U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) will require space and facilities at the LPOE.
- The Packaging Corporation of America (PCA) has acquired Boise, Inc. and has a different timber unloading operation occurring adjacent to the proposed acquisition parcel, which will require modifications to the original site plan.
- PCA's proposed trailer parking lot was shifted further east (beyond First Creek) and includes a paved 90-trailer parking lot for PCA, which will modify traffic patterns for the LPOE.
- A section of First Creek between Route 11 and the Rainy River that was previously contained in a culvert was identified following the 2011 EIS. The culvert has been removed and is now daylighted, and requires impacts analysis.
- There has been an increase in the proposed usable square feet for overall building space needed from 42,282 to 80,611 square feet, based on the addition of a maintenance building and expansion in the sizes of all other buildings per updated agency requirements.
- Stormwater management would be redesigned in the 300-foot section of First Creek due to two new areas of pavement crossing the creek.
- The Resolute Paper Mill in Fort Frances, Ontario has since closed, resulting in decreased rail traffic.

The SEIS will consider construction of the facilities as described for the preferred alternative assessed in the 2011 EIS and modified by the project updates described above. The project area boundary and location remain unchanged from the preferred alternative considered in the 2011 EIS. In addition, the SEIS will consider a No Action Alternative to satisfy federal requirements for analyzing "no action" under NEPA. Analysis of the No Action Alternative will provide a baseline for comparison with impacts from the preferred alternative as modified by the project updates. Together the preferred action and project updates are herein defined as the Undertaking for the purposes of Section 106 consultation.

GSA defines the APE for archaeological resources as the project area encompassed by the preferred alternative, which includes all areas of potential ground disturbance and where changes to land use and public access might take place (**Figure 3** and **Figure 4**). GSA defines the proposed APE for above-ground historic resources as the project area encompassed by the preferred alternative as well as adjacent parcels to the west beyond 2nd Avenue to include the PCA facility, to the south towards the PCA timber unloading operation, and to the north towards the United States-Canada border to encompass the United States half of the International Bridge (see **Figure 3** and **Figure 4**). To define this APE, GSA has assumed based on current project plans that all proposed new buildings will be three stories or less in height. GSA has

defined the above-ground APE of the Undertaking to account for possible physical effects, as well as potential visual, noise, and atmospheric effects on adjacent historic properties during construction and operation of the new facility. The APE is defined by the tax parcel boundaries of all adjacent parcels that can reasonably be expected to be within the project viewshed based on proposed building heights. If project plans change, GSA will adjust the APEs accordingly and consult with your office to ensure potential effects on cultural resources are appropriately addressed in the SEIS.

GSA has hired a contractor to perform an archaeological literature search to include the proposed project area (APE for archaeological resources) and a 1-mile (1.6-kilometer) buffer around the proposed project area. The literature search will identify previous cultural resource surveys and supplement the results of the 2011 EIS. In addition, GSA has hired a contractor to perform an above-ground historic resources survey to identify historic properties within the proposed above-ground APE and update the results of the cultural resource investigation conducted for the 2011 EIS.

GSA is continuing SHPO consultation on this project and seeks your concurrence with the aforementioned APEs. We will continue to communicate relevant project updates as they occur. If you have any questions, please contact me directly by email at regina.nally@gsa.gov.

Sincerely,

for

Regina A. Nally
Historic Preservation Officer
US General Services Administration
Public Buildings Service, Great Lakes Region
230 S. Dearborn St., Suite 3600
Chicago, IL 60604
312 848 0266 (m)

Cc: Beth L. Savage, GSA Federal Preservation Officer

Attachments:
Figure 1. General Location of the International Falls LPOE.
Figure 2. 2011 EIS Preferred Action Alternative, with 2018 Project Updates.
Figure 3. Proposed APEs on an Aerial Photograph Map.
Figure 4. Proposed APEs on a USGS Map.

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Figure 1. General Location of the International Falls LPOE.

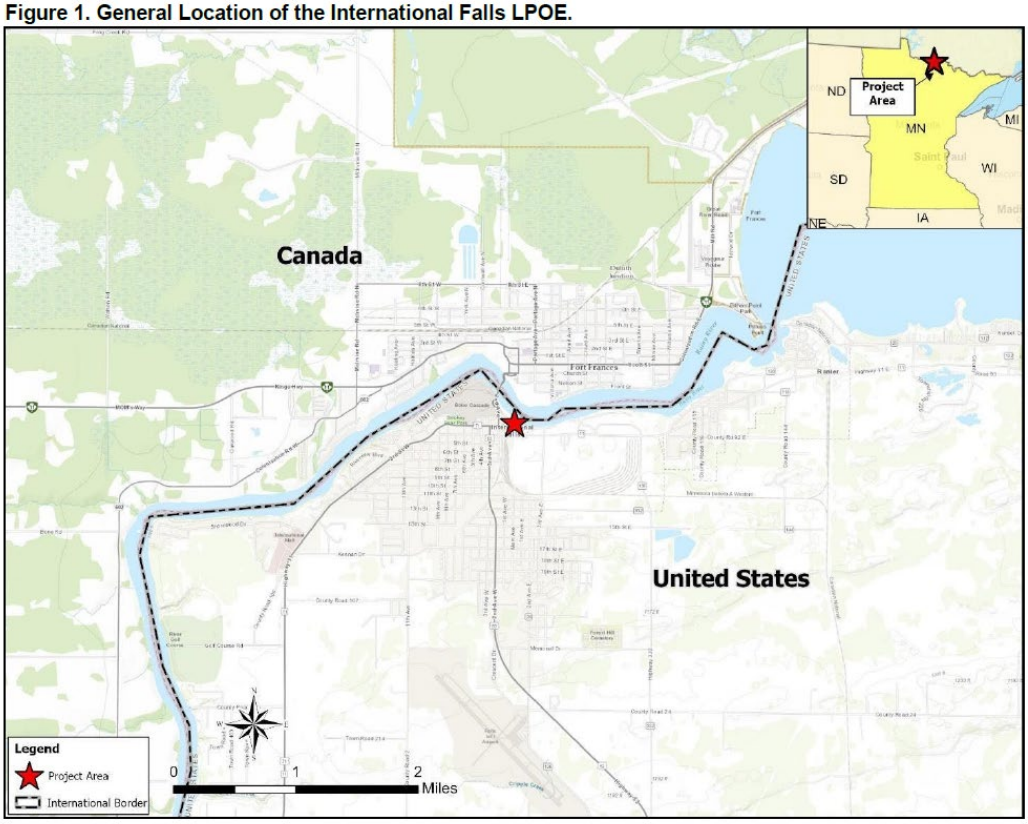

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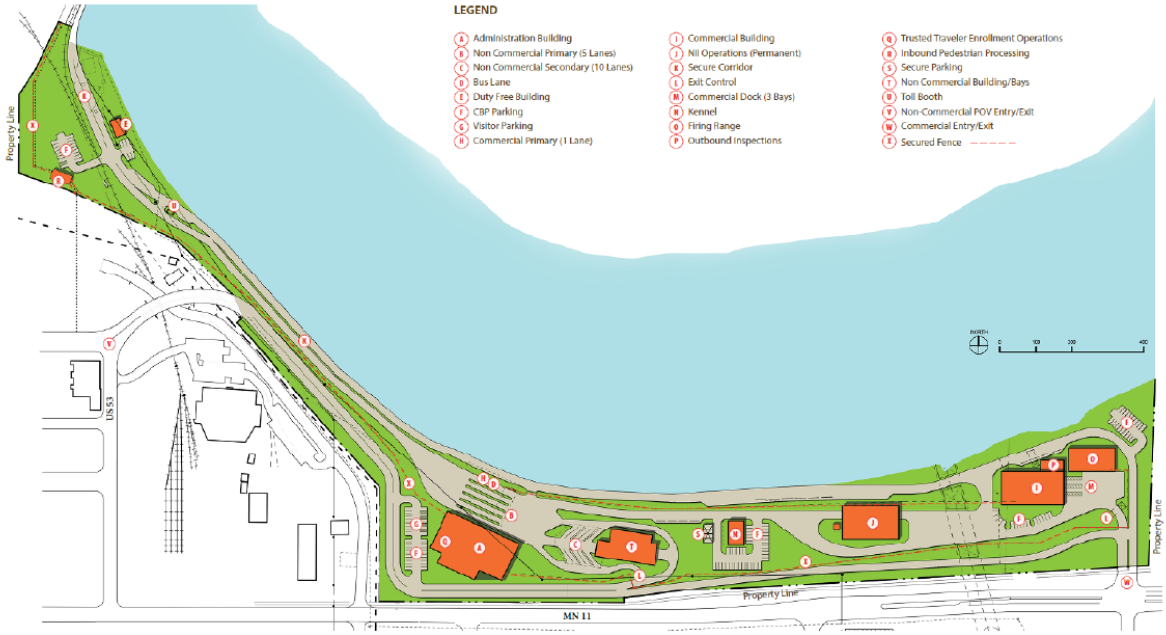
Figure 2. 2011 EIS Preferred Action Alternative with 2018 Project Updates.



Note: this figure does not reflect the removal of the culverted section of First Creek between Route 11 and the Rainy River. The culvert has been removed and is now daylighted. The figure likewise does not reflect the redesign of stormwater management required as a result of the culvert removal to account for two new areas of pavement crossing First Creek. Refer to Figure 3 for a depiction of the daylighted culvert.

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Figure 3. Proposed APEs on an Aerial Photograph Map.

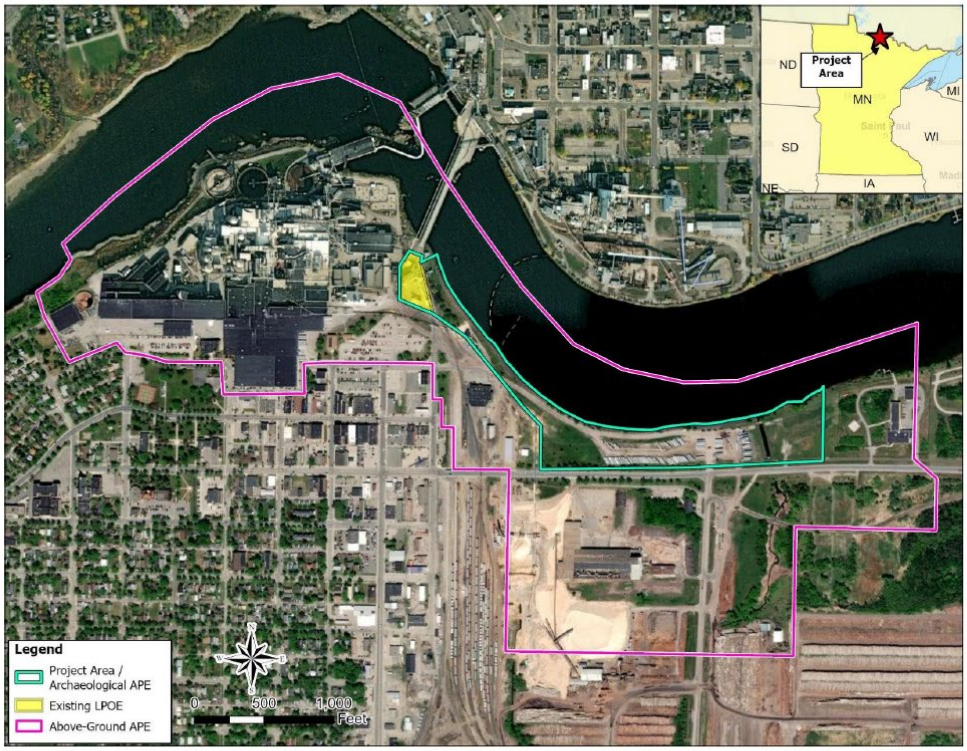

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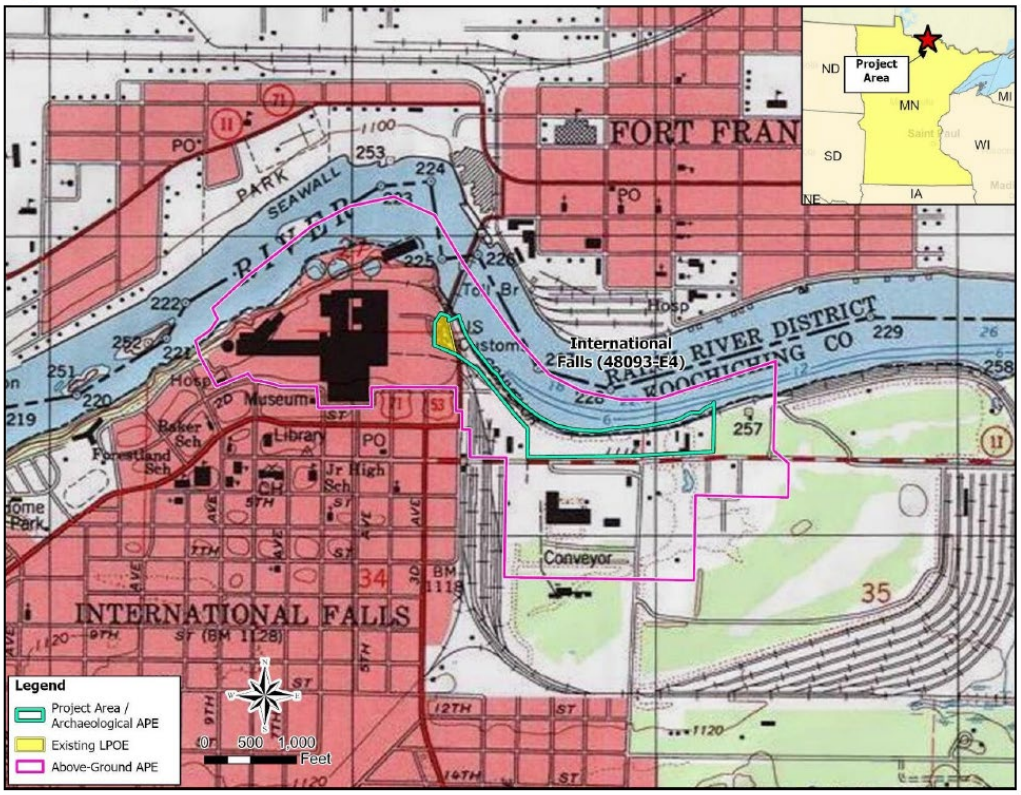
Figure 4. Proposed APEs on a USGS Map.



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B.2.2 Letter from MN SHPO (February 27, 2023)

DEPARTMENT OF ADMINISTRATION
STATE HISTORIC PRESERVATION OFFICE

February 27, 2023 **VIA E-MAIL ONLY**

Regina Nally
Historic Preservation Officer
U.S. General Services Administration
230 South Dearborn Street, Suite 3600
Chicago IL 60604

RE: Land Port of Entry Modernization Project
International Falls, Koochiching County
SHPO Number: 2022-2374

Dear Ms. Nally,

Thank you for initiating consultation regarding the above-referenced project. Information received in our office via e-mail on January 5, 2023 has been reviewed pursuant to the responsibilities given the State Historic Preservation Officer by Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act (54 U.S.C. § 306108) and its implementing federal regulations, "Protection of Historic Properties" (36 CFR Part 800).

We have completed a review of your letter dated January 5, 20223, a submission which included the following documentation regarding your agency's definition of the federal undertaking and the Area of Potential Effect:

- Figure 1: General Location Map of the International Falls Land Port of Entry;
- Figure 2: Site Plan of 2011 EIS Preferred Action Alternative with 2018 Project Updates;
- Figure 3: Proposed Area of Potential Effects on Aerial Photograph; and
- Figure 4: Proposed Area of Potential Effects on USGS Quad Map.

Definition of the Federal Undertaking and Area of Potential Effect
We understand by your January 5th letter that the proposed federal undertaking involves construction of a new Land Port of Entry (LPOE) at the international border crossing between Fort Frances, Ontario and International Falls, Minnesota. The proposed LPOE project, including a summary of the preferred alternative which was identified in 2012 and modifications to scope of the LPOE project that have occurred since that time, is clearly described in your letter.

We appreciate the narrative provided in your letter as it pertains to your agency's assessment of the scope and nature of the federal undertaking and corresponding definition of the Area of Potential Effect (APE). It is important to note that current best practices and guidance from the Advisory Council on Historic Preservation direct federal agencies to define and document a single APE encompassing all potential direct, indirect, and cumulative effects. As such, while we appreciate your agency's narrative description of areas of direct, physical effects to archaeological resources and for above-ground resources, we recommend that you define and reference a single, comprehensive APE as we move forward in the Section 106 review of this undertaking.

Based upon documentation provided to our office at this time, we agree that this APE, as defined in narrative in your January 5th letter and documented on the maps included as Figures 3-4, is generally appropriate to take into account the potential direct effects of the undertaking as it is currently proposed at a very schematic design phase.

We note a potential discrepancy as your letter indicates inclusion of the LPOE project site as well as adjacent parcels. While the boundary to the south of the LPOE project site may, in fact, include adjacent individual property parcels, it will be important to include any areas, whether through current or historic ownership or function, relate to parcels associated with Packaging Corporation of America/Boise Cascade/Minnesota & Ontario Paper Company

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including material storage areas and transportation facilities (rail spurs and railyards) associated with the forestry products manufacturing industry. The APE as it is currently delineated, appears to exclude rail facilities and materials storage areas associated with this industry.

As the undertaking's scope is further defined, or if it is significantly altered from the current scope, then additional consultation with our office may be necessary in order to revise the APE. Considering the fact that the above-ground facilities are still being designed, which is beneficial at this stage of Section 106 consultation, as we move forward in the review process, it will be especially important to provide more accurate, on-the-ground, renderings and/or photo simulations of the new buildings associated with the redevelopment project from vantage points outside of the project construction area, but within the larger APE. Depending on final size, massing, and placement of buildings, it is likely that many of the new 3 story residential buildings will be seen from further distances from what is currently delineated on the APE map. It will also be important to clarify the potential impact that increased traffic and changing traffic patterns may have on the surrounding area. This does not only pertain to increased traffic noise, but also if increase in traffic and new circulation patterns has the potential to impact the character and use of neighboring areas.

Please consider the comments and recommendations provided in this letter as your agency finalizes the definition of an appropriate APE for the proposed federal undertaking. We look forward to continuing consultation with your agency and others regarding the proposed federal undertaking.

Feel free to contact me if you have any questions regarding our comment letter or would like to arrange for a consultation meeting. I can be reached by email at sarah.beimers@state.mn.us or by phone at (651) 201-3290.

Sincerely,

Sarah J. Beimers
Environmental Review Program Manager

B.2.3 GSA Letter Sent to MN SHPO (May 15, 2023)

DocuSign Envelope ID: 821D5FAF-8F87-40F3-B996-7969B2CB276C

GSA

U.S. General Services Administration

May 15, 2023

Email: sarah.beimers@state.mn.us

Sarah Beimers
Environmental Review Program Manager
State Historic Preservation Office
203 Administration Building
50 Sherburne Avenue
St. Paul, MN 55155

Subject: **Continue Consultation, Notification of Project Updates for the International Falls Land Port of Entry Modernization Project (SHPO Number: 2022-2374)**

Dear Ms. Beimers,

The U.S. General Services Administration (GSA) Great Lakes Region (Region 5) is preparing a Supplemental Environmental Impact Statement (SEIS) for the International Falls Land Port of Entry (LPOE) Modernization Project in compliance with the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) of 1969 and the National Historic Preservation Act (NHPA) of 1966. The LPOE is located in International Falls, Koochiching County, Minnesota on the south bank of the Rainy River at the northern terminus of U.S. Highway 53. This letter continues State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO) consultation (SHPO Number: 2022-2374) and seeks concurrence with the findings and recommendations of an archaeological literature search prepared for the undertaking. This letter also provides notification of project changes (described below), including revision of the Area of Potential Effect (APE) for the undertaking, and seeks concurrence with the APE revision.

As part of the ongoing NEPA and NHPA efforts, an archaeological literature search was produced by SEARCH, Inc. (SEARCH) (enclosed). The report is intended to inform GSA's SEIS in compliance with NEPA and the NHPA. In addition, the results of this archaeological literature search will help determine if previously recorded archaeological sites and/or unknown archaeological resources will be impacted by the proposed undertaking.

SEARCH identified three archaeological sensitivity zones within the archaeological study area. Based on the proximity to potentially significant historic resources and lack of previous formal archaeological testing, SEARCH recommends conducting a Phase I archaeological survey of the three proposed archaeological sensitivity zones totaling approximately 4.8 acres (1.9 hectares). The Phase I archaeological survey would be conducted in accordance with the guidelines set forth in the *SHPO Manual for Archaeological Projects in Minnesota*. Minimally, the survey would include pedestrian reconnaissance of the archaeological study area, excavation of shovel tests at 15-meter (49-foot) intervals across the proposed archaeological sensitivity zones, excavation of judgmental shovel tests in other unpaved portions of the archaeological study area to evaluate the horizontal extent of ground disturbing activity, and judgmental auger probes to evaluate the potential for archaeological deposits beyond the range of standard

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shovel testing and the vertical extent of potential disturbances. A visual reconnaissance (i.e., walkover) of the shoreline near the footprint for a potential geothermal system would also be conducted. If an archaeological site is identified during the Phase I archaeological survey in proximity to the shoreline in an area to be impacted by a potential geothermal system, cartographic analysis would be conducted to assess the potential for submerged precontact landscapes in addition to near shore auger testing to determine the boundaries of the identified archaeological site.

This letter also serves as notification that the Area of Potential Effects (APE) for the undertaking has expanded and we have adjusted terminology since the 5 January 2023 letter to your office, as shown in **Figure 1**. The updates were made in an attempt to incorporate feedback from our call with your office on 4 April 2023, as well as to address additional actions being considered as part of the proposed undertaking. These actions include various relocation and/or land preparation activities to be conducted by Packaging Corporation of America (PCA) on parcels adjacent to the proposed expansion area for the LPOE, which are being conducted as a result of GSA's acquisition and development of the proposed expansion area, as shown in **Figure 2**. PCA would retain ownership of these areas.

A description of the undertaking was similarly e-mailed to the Tribal Historic Preservation Officers (THPOs) of the White Earth Nation, Leech Lake Band of Ojibwe, Red Lake Nation, Grand Portage Band of Ojibwe, Mille Lacs Band of Chippewa Indians, Upper Sioux Community, Fond du Lac Band of Lake Superior Chippewa, Shakopee Mdewakanton Sioux Community, Prairie Island Indian Community, Bois Forte Band of Chippewa, and the Lower Sioux Indian Community on 10 January 2023. The Fond du Lac Band of Lake Superior Chippewa THPO, Mr. Evan Schroeder, responded on 23 January 2023 deferring to the Bois Forte Band of Chippewa and requesting project updates and notification of any unanticipated discoveries made during construction. The Shakopee Mdewakanton Sioux Community THPO, Mr. Leonard Wabasha, responded on 10 January 2023 deferring to Federally Recognized Tribes and Tribal Nations with historical ties to the area and requesting project updates. All aforementioned THPOs will be notified of the project changes and updates communicated in this letter as part of continued consultation, and your office will be copied on the correspondence.

This letter also is intended to serve as notification to your office that as part of ongoing environmental investigations GSA plans on conducting a Phase II Environmental Site Assessment, which would include collecting shallow soil samples using a hand auger, as well as up to 55 soil borings using direct-push technology (DPT). The soil borings will be approximately 4 inches in diameter and up to 20 feet in depth with the majority only 5 feet in depth. Borings would be collected across the proposed project area shown in **Figure 2**. Within the archaeological sensitivity zones identified for further archaeological investigation, approximately 10 borings would be collected. At boring locations, any excess soil collected within each macrocore after sample collection would be placed back in the hole along with bentonite and water, if needed. Due to the size and quantity of the borings, minimal disturbance to any potential archaeological resources is anticipated.

GSA appreciates the opportunity to continue SHPO consultation on this project and seeks your concurrence with the findings and recommendations of the archaeological literature search, as well as the revised APE. If you have any questions, please contact me directly by email at regina.nally@gsa.gov.

Sincerely,

DocuSigned by:
Regina Nally
42FE68C663B24AA...

Regina A. Nally
Historic Preservation Officer
US General Services Administration
Public Buildings Service, Great Lakes Region
Chicago, IL
312 848 0266 (m)

Enclosures:

An Archaeological Literature Search for the International Falls Land Port of Entry Modernization and Expansion Project in Koochiching County, Minnesota

Attachments:

Figure 1. Revised APE on an Aerial Photograph Map.
Figure 2. Site Preparation of PCA Lands.

GSA

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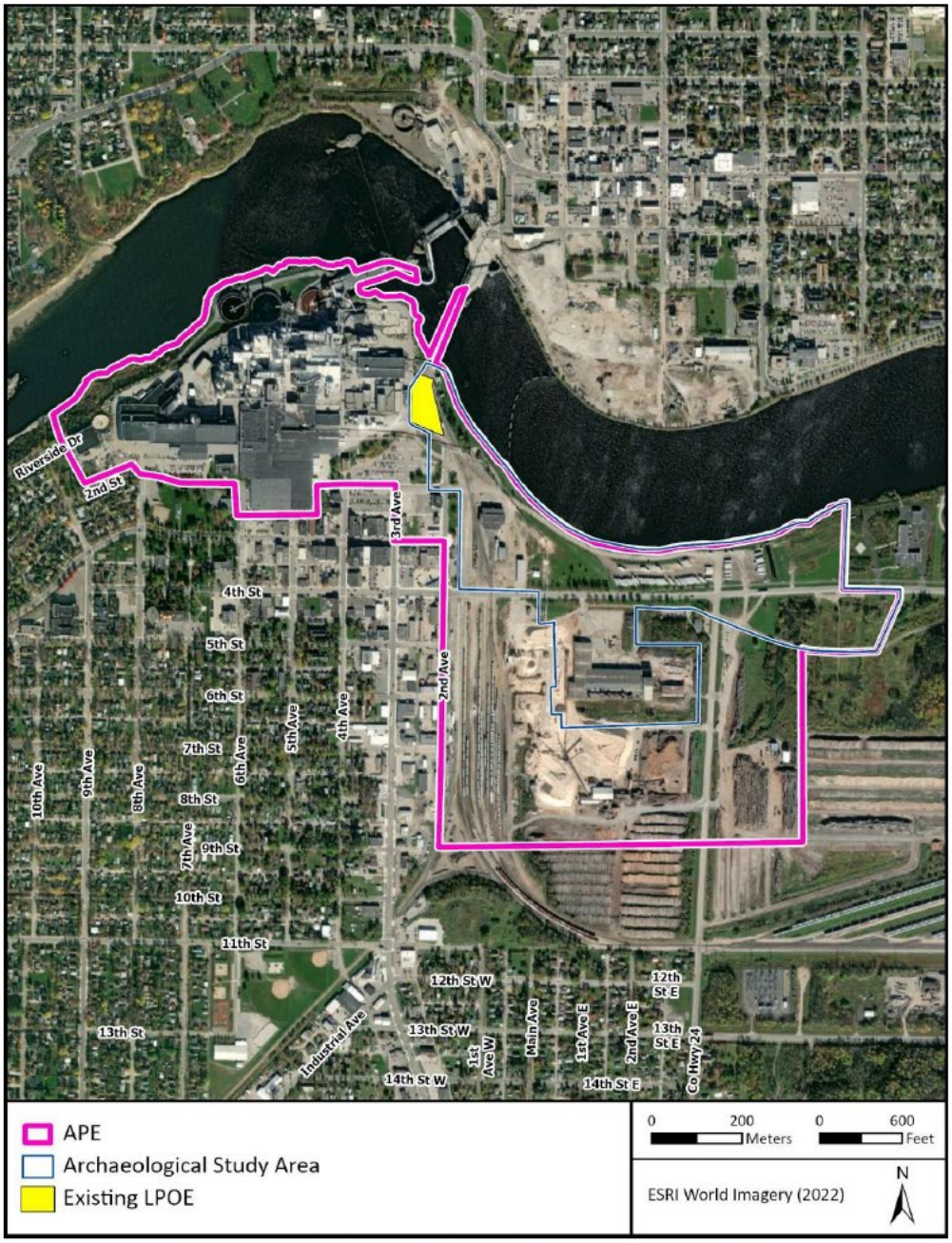

Figure 1. Revised APE on an Aerial Photograph Map.

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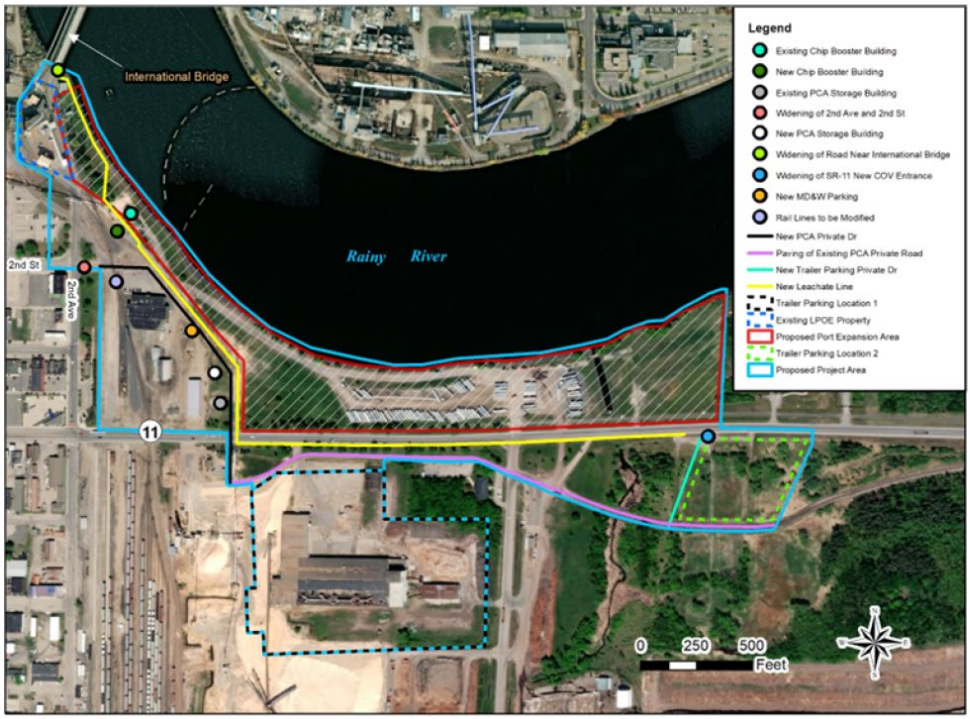

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Figure 2. Site Preparation of PCA Lands

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B.2.4 Letter from MN SHPO (July 17, 2023)

DEPARTMENT OF ADMINISTRATION
STATE HISTORIC PRESERVATION OFFICE

July 17, 2023 **VIA E-MAIL ONLY**

Regina Nally
Historic Preservation Officer
U.S. General Services Administration
230 South Dearborn Street, Suite 3600
Chicago IL 60604

RE: Land Port of Entry Modernization Project
International Falls, Koochiching County
SHPO Number: 2022-2374

Dear Ms. Nally,

Thank you for continuing consultation regarding the above-referenced project. Information received in our office via e-mail on May 23, 2023 has been reviewed pursuant to the responsibilities given the State Historic Preservation Officer by Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act (54 U.S.C. § 306108) and its implementing federal regulations, "Protection of Historic Properties" (36 CFR Part 800).

We last wrote to your agency on February 27, 2023 providing comments on your agency's definition of the federal undertaking and Area of Potential Effect (APE). We appreciated the subsequent opportunity to participate in a Section 106 consultation meeting with your agency and others on April 4, 2023.

We have now completed a review of your letter dated May 15, 2023, a submission which included the following documentation regarding your agency's revised definition of the APE and the results of initial efforts to identify archaeological resources within the APE:

- Figure 1: Revised APE on an Aerial Photograph Map;
- Figure 2: Site Preparation of PCA Lands; and
- Report titled *An Archaeological Literature Search for the International Falls Land Port of Entry Modernization and Expansion Project in Koochiching County, Minnesota* (May 2023) as prepared by SEARCH.

Revised Definition of Area of Potential Effect
We understand by your that the definition of the proposed federal undertaking has not changed since our previous review.

Thank you for taking into consideration comments we provided in our February 27th letter and during the April 4th consultation meeting as it pertains to an appropriately defined and documented APE for the federal undertaking.

Based upon documentation provided to our office in your May 15th submission, we agree that the revised APE, as described in your letter and documented on Figure 1, is generally appropriate to take into account the potential direct effects of the undertaking as it is currently proposed at a schematic design phase.

While the boundary to the south of the LPOE project site may, in fact, include adjacent individual property parcels, it will be important to include any areas, whether through current or historic ownership or function, relate to parcels associated with Packaging Corporation of America (PCA)/Boise Cascade/Minnesota & Ontario Paper Company complex including material storage areas and transportation facilities (rail spurs and railyards) associated with the forestry products manufacturing industry. The APE as it is currently delineated, appears to include portions, but not all, of associated rail facilities and materials storage areas associated with this industry. We

MINNESOTA STATE HISTORIC PRESERVATION OFFICE
50 Sherburne Avenue ■ Administration Building 203 ■ Saint Paul, Minnesota 55155 ■ 651-201-3287
mn.gov/admin/shpo ■ mnshpo@state.mn.us
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assume that the level of effort to identify historic-architectural properties within this APE will include the entire functionally related property even if only a portion of the property falls within the APE. If this assumption is incorrect, then please reach out to our office to discuss further.

Also, we believe that comments provided in our February 27th letter may still be relevant to this review. While Figure 2 of your May 15th submission provides plan view of proposed LPOE facility and building locations, we continue to understand that the above-ground facilities are still being designed and, as such, we have not yet been provided renderings or plans for review and comment as it relates to potential visual effects of the new construction. As discussed during the April 4th consultation meeting, it will also be important for your agency to document the potential impact that increased traffic and changing traffic patterns may have on the surrounding area, if any. This does not only pertain to increased traffic noise, but also if increase in traffic and new circulation patterns has the potential to impact the character and use of neighboring areas.

Archaeological Literature Review
We agree with the results of the literature search and recommendation to perform a Phase I archaeological survey in the archaeological sensitivity zone identified in Figure 9 (p. 24). We also recommend that if there will be impacts to the shoreline or the existing rip rap will be removed, an archaeological survey of the shoreline and adjacent underwater area may be necessary. As you know, the Rainy River water levels are higher today than they were prior to the construction of the International Falls Dam and there may be preserved archaeological sites below the current water line.

Please consider the comments and recommendations provided in this letter as your agency takes steps to identify historic properties within the APE. We look forward to continuing consultation with your agency and others regarding the proposed federal undertaking. Feel free to contact me if you have any questions regarding our comment letter or would like to arrange for a consultation meeting. I can be reached by email at sarah.beimers@state.mn.us or by phone at (651) 201-3290.

Sincerely,

Sarah J. Beimers
Environmental Review Program Manager

Cc via email:
Paul DiPaolo, Potomac-Hudson Engineering, Inc.

B.2.5 GSA Letter Sent to MN SHPO (October 3, 2023)

U.S. General Services Administration

October 3, 2023

Email: sarah.beimers@state.mn.us

Sarah Beimers
Environmental Review Program Manager
State Historic Preservation Office
203 Administration Building
50 Sherburne Avenue
St. Paul, MN 55155

Subject: **Continue Consultation and Submission of Historic Architectural Survey Report (SHPO No.: 2022-2374)**

Dear Ms. Beimers,

The U.S. General Services Administration (GSA) Great Lakes Region (Region 5) is preparing a Supplemental Environmental Impact Statement (SEIS) for the International Falls Land Port of Entry (LPOE) Modernization Project in compliance with the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) of 1969 and the National Historic Preservation Act (NHPA) of 1966. The LPOE is located in International Falls, Koochiching County, Minnesota on the south bank of the Rainy River at the northern terminus of U.S. Highway 53. This letter continues State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO) consultation (SHPO Number: 2022-2374) and seeks concurrence with the findings and recommendations of a historic architectural survey report prepared for the proposed undertaking. This letter also provides notification of updates (described below), including a connected action.

The enclosed *Historic Architectural Survey for the International Falls Land Port of Entry Modernization and Expansion Project, Koochiching County, Minnesota* details the results of a reconnaissance level survey (Phase I) to determine if historic architectural resources will be impacted by the proposed undertaking. Per the recommendations in SHPO's July 17, 2023 letter, the level of effort for the survey included the functionally related Packaging Corporation of America (PCA)/Boise Cascade/Minnesota & Ontario Paper Company complex even though only a portion of the property falls within the APE identified in GSA's May 23, 2023 letter. SEARCH, Inc. (SEARCH) identified 17 historic-age architectural resources within the project APE—11 previously recorded and six newly recorded. Three previously recorded resources are recommended as eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places (NRHP): Minnesota and Ontario Paper Company Office (KC-IFC-027), International Falls Power Company Dam (KC-IFC-043), and Minnesota Dakota & Western (MD&W) Railway (KC-IFC-065).

Also enclosed is an Assessment of Effects letter with an evaluation of whether the undertaking will have No Effect, No Adverse Effect, or an Adverse Effect on historic properties. There is also a discussion of traffic patterns and volume as considered in the draft SEIS. GSA has determined that the undertaking will have No Adverse Effect on historic properties.

1

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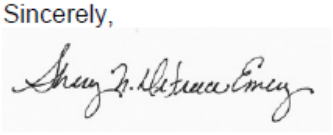
As a result of the Proposed Action and the need to relocate the chip pipeline booster building (non-historic), PCA is considering replacing the existing elevated pneumatic chip line system with a new elevated belt conveyor system at another location within the APE farther west from the existing chip line. This would require demolition of the existing pneumatic chip line (KC-IFC-064, recommended as not eligible) and construction of two new elevated structures consisting of conveyor belts to transport chipped wood from staging piles near the PCA Processing Center to the PCA mill. The new structures would require support columns which may be of comparable sizing, height (approximately 30 feet high), and spacing as the existing elevated chip line. Given the ground disturbance associated with replacing the chip line, the archaeological study area has been expanded to include this connected action (**Figure 1**). The connected action does not change SEARCH's determinations of archaeological sensitivity zones nor recommendation for a Phase I archaeological survey; however, SEARCH recommends placing a shovel test within the footprint of each support beam that lies outside the archaeological sensitivity zone and does not replace old support beams.

GSA is also moving forward with SHPO's July 17th recommendation to perform a Phase I archaeological survey as well as a maritime archaeological survey along the project area shoreline and adjacent areas of the Rainy River.

GSA is continuing SHPO consultation on this project and seeks your concurrence with the aforementioned APEs for architectural and archaeological resources including the connected action, determinations of eligibility in the enclosed historic architectural survey, and the enclosed determinations of effects for architectural resources. We will continue to communicate relevant project updates as they occur. If you have any questions, please contact me directly by email at sherry.emery@gsa.gov.

Sincerely,



Sherry N. DeFreece Emery
Preservation Architect
US General Services Administration
Public Buildings Service, Great Lakes Region
Chicago, IL
(312) 259-4963 (m)

Cc: Regina Nally, Regional Historic Preservation Officer
Beth L. Savage, GSA Federal Preservation Officer

Enclosures:
Historic Architectural Survey for the International Falls Land Port of Entry Modernization and Expansion Project, Koochiching County, Minnesota

Assessment of Effects Letter

Attachments:
Figure 1. Revised APE Boundary Map.

2

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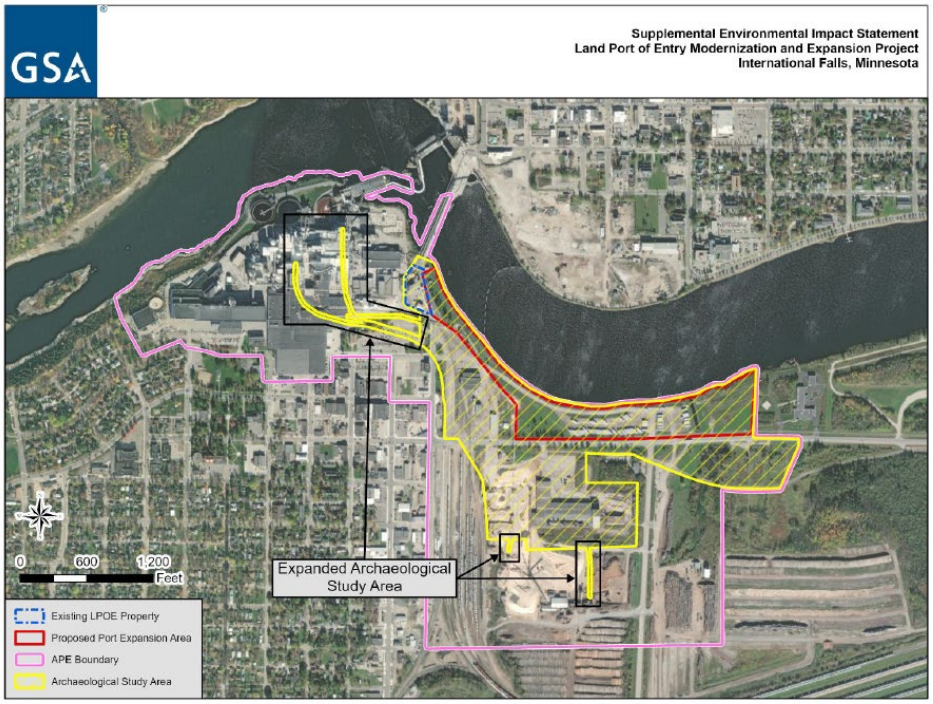
Figure 1. Revised APE Boundary Map.



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B.3 TRIBAL CONSULTATION

B.3.1 Initial GSA Letter Sent to Tribal Organizations (January 10, 2023)

Letters sent to (see a representative letter on next page):

- Leech Lake Band of Ojibwe
- Red Lake Nation
- Grand Portage Band of Ojibwe
- Mille Lacs Band of Chippewa Indians
- Upper Sioux Community
- Fond du Lac Band of Lake Superior Chippewa
- Shakopee Mdewakanton Sioux Community
- Prairie Island Indian Community
- White Earth Nation
- Bois Forte Band of Chippewa
- Lower Sioux Indian Community

U.S. General Services Administration

January 9, 2023

Email: amy.burnette@llojibwe.net

Amy Burnette
Leech Lake Band of Ojibwe
115 6th Street NW, Suite E
Cass Lake, MN 56633

Subject: **Initial Project Notification and Tribal Consultation for the International Falls Land Port of Entry Modernization Project**

Dear Ms. Burnette:

The U.S. General Services Administration (GSA) Great Lakes Region 5 (Region 5) hopes this letter finds you and the members of the Leech Lake Band of Ojibwe safe and well. With this letter, we are initiating consultation regarding the proposed International Falls Land Port of Entry (LPOE) Modernization Project. The LPOE is located in International Falls, Koochiching County, Minnesota on the south bank of the Rainy River at the northern terminus of U.S. Highway 53 (**Figure 1**). The GSA is preparing a Supplemental Environmental Impact Statement (SEIS) for the project under the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) of 1970, which requires process under the National Historic Preservation Act (NHPA) of 1966 (36 Code of Federal Regulations 800). As such, this letter is intended to provide a description of proposed Undertaking and formally initiate consultation between your Government and the U.S. Government, per Section 106 of the NHPA, among other Federal Codes, Presidential Memoranda, and treaties. Please note that this letter is being sent via e-mail and hardcopy for your convenience.

Project Description

The *International Falls Land Port of Entry Improvements Study Final Environmental Impact Statement*, released in 2011, assessed potential environmental impacts associated with the proposed action of replacing the undersized International Falls LPOE with a new LPOE facility "to improve safety, security, and functionality." A Feasibility Study for this project considered ten (10) alternatives and dismissed five (5). The 2011 Environmental Impact Statement resulted in analysis of five (5) alternatives, and a preferred action alternative was identified. This alternative would consist of demolishing the existing building, constructing new facilities at the existing LPOE, and expanding the LPOE to meet the required space standards and increased security requirements of the Federal Inspection Services. Improvements would consist of construction of a new main building, five primary passenger vehicle and ten secondary passenger vehicle lanes, one bus lane, one primary commercial vehicle lane, a commercial building, one passenger vehicle bay, two commercial bays, a kennel, a storage building, and parking facilities. This alternative would move the majority of the LPOE improvements and operations to an approximately 20-acre site southeast of the existing site between 4th Street and Rainy River (**Figure 2**).

GSA signed and released a Record of Decision in January 2012 that selected the preferred alternative and stated that the preferred alternative would have less-than-significant impacts on the study area environment. In a letter dated 22 July 2011, the Minnesota State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO) acknowledged selection of the preferred alternative and concurred that the preferred alternative would

1

have no adverse effect on the Minnesota & Ontario Paper Company Office Building, or on any other historic structures listed in or eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places.

Since 2011, GSA has identified the following changes to the project, which differ from the preferred alternative described in the 2011 Environmental Impact Statement (EIS):

- There have been proposed changes in tenants and use of the space. U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) no longer requires space at the LPOE; however, the U.S. Department of Agriculture/Animal Plant Health Inspection Services-Plant Protection and Quarantine (USDA/APHIS-PPQ), and U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) will require space and facilities at the LPOE.
- The Packaging Corporation of America (PCA) has acquired Boise, Inc. and has a different timber unloading operation occurring adjacent to the proposed acquisition parcel, which will require modifications to the original site plan.
- PCA's proposed trailer parking lot was shifted further east (beyond First Creek) and includes a paved 90-trailer parking lot for PCA, which will modify traffic patterns for the LPOE.
- A section of First Creek between Route 11 and the Rainy River that was previously contained in a culvert was identified following the 2011 EIS. The culvert has been removed and is now daylighted, and requires impacts analysis.
- There has been an increase in the proposed usable square feet for overall building space needed from 42,282 to 80,611 square feet, based on the addition of a maintenance building and expansion in the sizes of all other buildings per updated agency requirements.
- Stormwater management would be redesigned in the 300-foot section of First Creek due to two new areas of pavement crossing the creek.
- The Resolute Paper Mill in Fort Frances, Ontario has since closed, resulting in decreased rail traffic.

The SEIS will consider construction of the facilities as described for the preferred alternative assessed in the 2011 EIS and modified by the project updates described above. The project area boundary and location remain unchanged from the preferred alternative considered in the 2011 EIS. In addition, the SEIS will consider a No Action Alternative to satisfy federal requirements for analyzing "no action" under NEPA. Analysis of the No Action Alternative will provide a baseline for comparison with impacts from the preferred alternative as modified by the project updates.

GSA has defined the area of potential effect (APE) for archaeological resources for the proposed Undertaking as the area encompassed by the preferred alternative, which includes all areas of potential ground disturbance and where changes to land use and public access might take place (**Figure 3** and **Figure 4**). GSA defines the proposed APE for above-ground historic resources as the project area encompassed by the preferred alternative as well as adjacent parcels to the west beyond 2nd Avenue to include the PCA facility, to the south towards the PCA timber unloading operation, and to the north towards the United States-Canada border to encompass the United States half of the International Bridge (see **Figure 3** and **Figure 4**). To define this APE, GSA has assumed based on current project plans that all proposed new buildings will be three stories or less in height. GSA has defined the above-ground APE to account for possible physical effects, as well as potential visual, noise, and atmospheric effects on adjacent historic properties during construction and operation of the new facility. The APE is defined by the tax parcel boundaries of all adjacent parcels that can reasonably be expected to be within the project viewshed based on proposed building heights.

Considerations of potential impacts to archaeological, historic, and architectural resources (collectively referred to as "cultural resources") are being considered with the support of GSA's third-party contractor Potomac-Hudson Engineering, Inc. (PHE) and PHE's cultural resources consultant (SEARCH, Inc.).

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Communications Plan

The GSA is concurrently initiating consultation with the Minnesota SHPO, but also strives to facilitate a process by which to conduct meaningful, informative, and equitable dialogue with Native American Tribes/Tribal Nations to support socially responsible project development.

The GSA invites your comments, input, and guidance regarding the planned project. We also welcome your interest in being involved in the project's development. If you would like to participate, please notify us in writing within thirty calendar days of receipt of this invitation. The GSA will provide you with forthcoming draft documents for your review and comment, and you will be kept apprised of project progress, including agency consultation. If you are aware of a stakeholder group that is interested in consulting on this planned undertaking, please respond with the appropriate contact information.

Thank you for your time. The GSA understands that meaningful engagement is critical to maintaining a collaborative working relationship with Tribes/Tribal Nations, and therefore intends to achieve open communication, coordination, and collaboration during the project process.

Formal responses to this invitation, as well as any questions or requests for additional information should be directed to me at regina.nally@gsa.gov.

Sincerely,

Regina A. Nally
Historic Preservation Officer
US General Services Administration
Public Buildings Service, Great Lakes Region
230 S. Dearborn Street, Ste 3600
Chicago, IL 60604
312 848 0266 (m)

CC: Sarah Beimers, Minnesota SHPO
Beth L. Savage, GSA Federal Preservation Officer

Attachments:

Figure 1. General Location of the International Falls LPOE.
Figure 2. 2011 EIS Preferred Action Alternative, with 2018 Project Updates.
Figure 3. Proposed APEs on an Aerial Photograph Map.
Figure 4. Proposed APEs on a USGS Map.

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Figure 1. General Location of the International Falls LPOE.

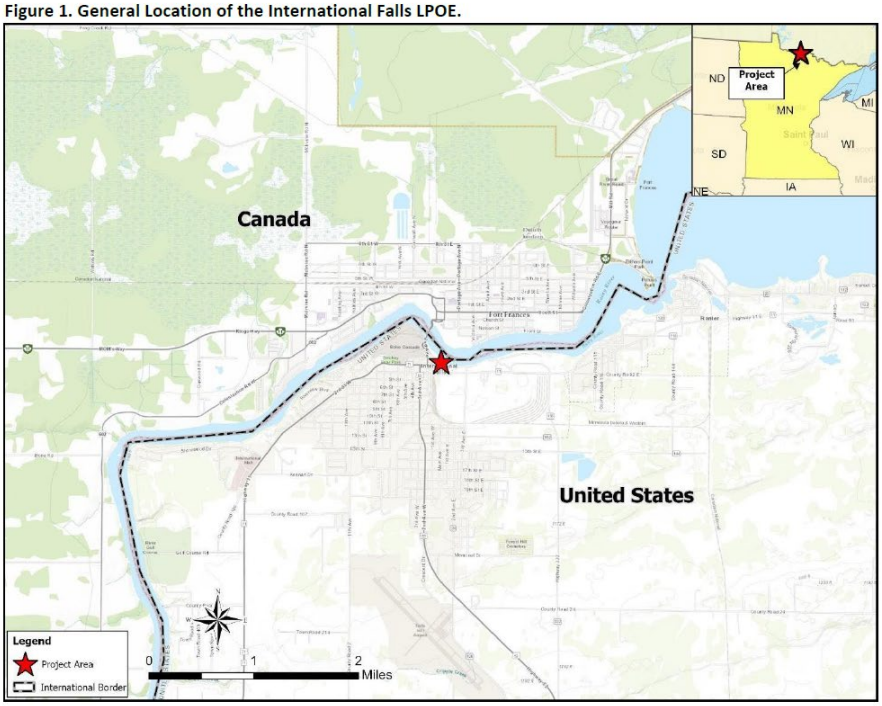

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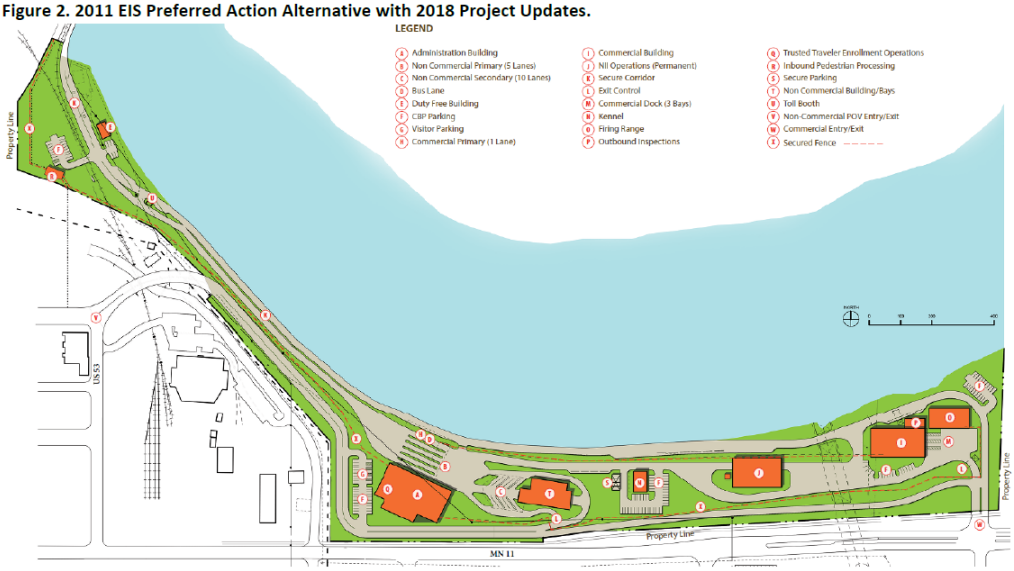
Figure 2. 2011 EIS Preferred Action Alternative with 2018 Project Updates.



Note: this figure does not reflect the removal of the culverted section of First Creek between Route 11 and the Rainy River. The culvert has been removed and is now daylighted. The figure likewise does not reflect the redesign of stormwater management required as a result of the culvert removal to account for two new areas of pavement crossing First Creek. Refer to Figure 3 for a depiction of the daylighted culvert.

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Figure 3. Proposed APEs on an Aerial Photograph Map.

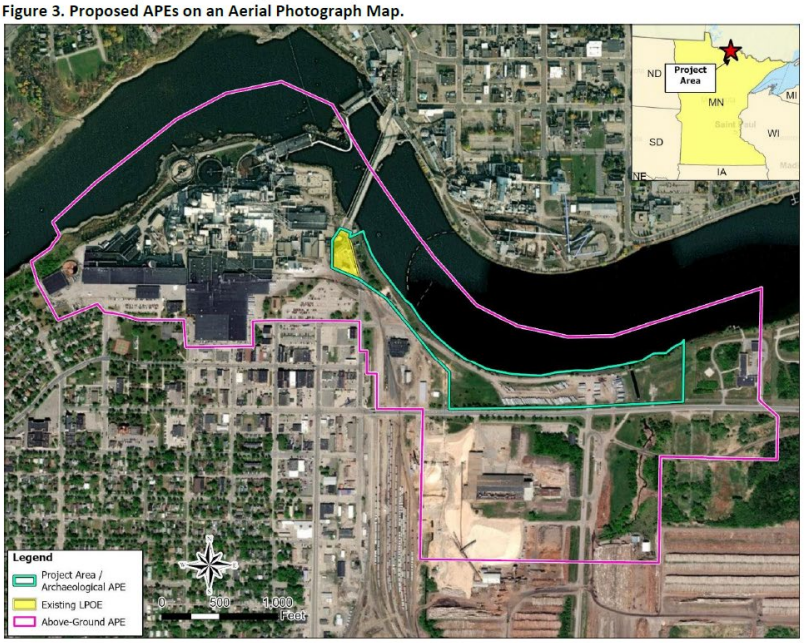

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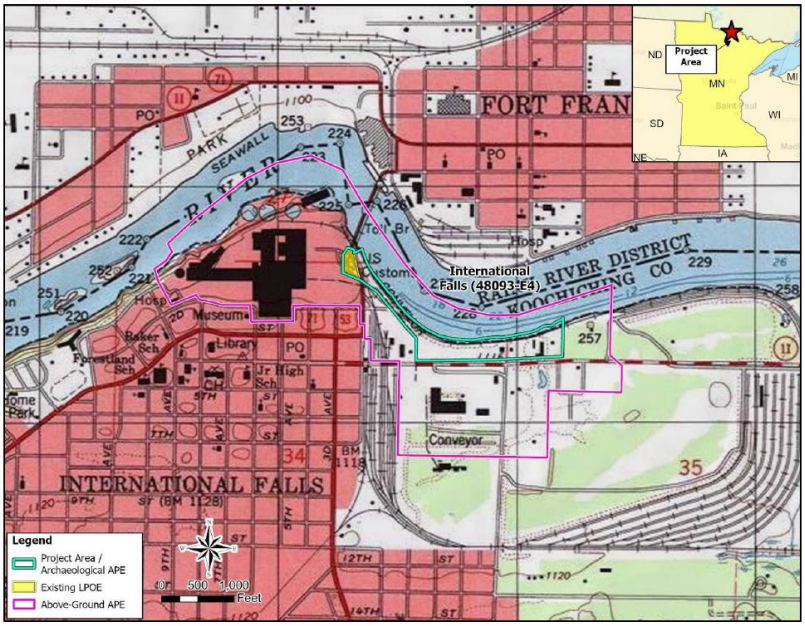
Figure 4. Proposed APEs on a USGS Map.



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B.3.2 Response from Shakopee Mdewakanton Sioux Community THPO (January 10, 2023)

From: Leonard Wabasha (TO) <leonard.wabasha@shakopeedakota.org>
Sent: Tuesday, January 10, 2023 9:15 AM
To: Paul DiPaolo <paul.dipaolo@phe.com>
Cc: regina.nally@gsa.gov; sherry.emery@gsa.gov; Michael Gonczar - 5P1FB <michael.gonczar@gsa.gov>; sarah.beimers@state.mn.us; beth.savage@gsa.gov; Bill Rudnicki (TO) <bill.rudnicki@shakopeedakota.org>; Steve Albrecht (TO) <Steve.Albrecht@shakopeedakota.org>
Subject: RE: Initiation of Tribal Consultation for International Falls LPOE SEIS

Dear Paul DiPaolo and Regina Nally
Thank you for the information and opportunity to consult. Currently the Shakopee Mdewakanton Sioux Community chooses to leave direct consultation to the local and closer Federally Recognized Tribes of the area and any other interested Tribal Nation with historical ties to the area. However, Please send an electronic copy of the SEIS when available. Also, please keep us informed of the progress of this project. Thank you and Have a Great Day!

Respectfully,

LEONARD WABASHA
Director of Cultural Resources • Cultural Resources
Shakopee Mdewakanton Sioux Community
d: 952.496.6120
shakopeedakota.org
Leonard.Wabasha@shakopeedakota.org

B.3.3 Response letter from Fond du Lac Band of Lake Superior Chippewa (January 23, 2023)

From: Evan J. Schroeder
To: Paul DiPaolo
Cc: regina.nally@gsa.gov; sherry.emery@gsa.gov; Michael Gonczar - 5P1FB; sarah.beimers@state.mn.us; beth.savage@gsa.gov
Subject: RE: Initiation of Tribal Consultation for International Falls LPOE SEIS
Date: Monday, January 23, 2023 11:40:50 AM
Attachments: image001.png

Paul,

Thanks for reaching out to the Fond du Lac Band of Lake Superior Chippewa Tribal Historic Preservation Office.

Have you been in contact with Jaylen Strong, Bois Forte THPO?

We intend on differing to Bois Forte to provide guidance on this project, as this is much closer to them.

We ask to be notified about any unanticipated discoveries made during construction. We would also like to be provided updates on the project, and information on Bands/Communities currently consulting.

Thanks,

Evan Schroeder
Tribal Historic Preservation Officer
Anishinaabe Izhitwaawin Ganawenjigewin Ozhibii'gewigamig
Fond du Lac Band of Lake Superior Chippewa
P: (218) 878-7129

From: Paul DiPaolo <paul.dipaolo@phe.com>
Sent: Tuesday, January 10, 2023 10:37 AM
To: Evan J. Schroeder <EvanSchroeder@FDLREZ.COM>
Cc: regina.nally@gsa.gov; sherry.emery@gsa.gov; Michael Gonczar - 5P1FB <michael.gonczar@gsa.gov>; sarah.beimers@state.mn.us; beth.savage@gsa.gov
Subject: [External] Initiation of Tribal Consultation for International Falls LPOE SEIS

--- Always use caution when opening attachments or clicking links received in any email. Thank you FDL IT Division---

Good morning,

The United States General Services Administration (GSA) is preparing a Supplemental Environmental Impact Statement (SEIS) for the proposed International Falls Land Port of Entry (LPOE) Modernization Project, as per the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) of 1970, which requires process under the National Historic Preservation Act (NHPA) of 1966 (36 Code of Federal Regulations

800). The attached letter is intended to provide a description of proposed Undertaking and formally initiate consultation between your Government and the U.S. Government, per Section 106 of the NHPA, among other Federal Codes, Presidential Memoranda, and treaties. Please note, this letter is also being sent via hard copy to your physical mailing address on file with the Minnesota Indian Affairs Council listed here: https://mn.gov/indianaffairs/thpo.html

GSA invites your comments, input, and guidance regarding the planned project. Formal responses to this invitation, as well as any questions or requests for additional information should be directed to regina.nally@gsa.gov.

Respectfully,

Paul DiPaolo, PMP
Associate Principal
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B.3.4 GSA Letter Regarding Project Updates Sent to Tribal Organizations (May 19, 2023)

Letters sent to:

- Leech Lake Band of Ojibwe
- Red Lake Nation
- Grand Portage Band of Ojibwe
- Mille Lacs Band of Chippewa Indians
- Upper Sioux Community
- Fond du Lac Band of Lake Superior Chippewa
- Shakopee Mdewakanton Sioux Community
- Prairie Island Indian Community
- White Earth Nation
- Bois Forte Band of Chippewa
- Lower Sioux Indian Community

U.S. General Services Administration

May 18, 2023

Email: jaylen.strong@boisforte-nsn.gov

Jaylen Strong
Boise Forte Band of Chippewa
1500 Bois Forte Road
Tower, MN 55790

Subject: Continue Tribal Consultation, Notification of Project Updates for the International Falls Land Port of Entry Modernization Project

Dear Mr. Strong:

The U.S. General Services Administration (GSA) Great Lakes Region (Region 5) hopes this letter finds you and the members of the Boise Forte Band of Chippewa safe and well. As communicated in a letter previously provided on January 10, 2023, GSA is preparing a Supplemental Environmental Impact Statement (SEIS) for the International Falls Land Port of Entry (LPOE) Modernization Project in compliance with the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) of 1969 and the National Historic Preservation Act (NHPA) of 1966. The LPOE is located in International Falls, Koochiching County, Minnesota on the south bank of the Rainy River at the northern terminus of U.S. Highway 53. This letter continues tribal consultation and provides updates on the findings and recommendations of an archaeological literature search prepared for the undertaking. This letter also provides notification of project changes (described below), including revision of the Area of Potential Effect (APE) for the undertaking.

As part of the ongoing NEPA and NHPA efforts, an archaeological literature search was produced by SEARCH, Inc. (SEARCH). The report is intended to inform GSA's SEIS in compliance with NEPA and the NHPA. In addition, the results of this archaeological literature search will help determine if previously recorded archaeological sites and/or unknown archaeological resources will be impacted by the proposed undertaking. This report has been transmitted via email to your office; hard copies may be provided upon request (refer to contact information at the end of this letter).

SEARCH identified three archaeological sensitivity zones within the archaeological study area. Based on the proximity to potentially significant historic resources and lack of previous formal archaeological testing, SEARCH recommends conducting a Phase I archaeological survey of the three proposed archaeological sensitivity zones totaling approximately 4.8 acres (1.9 hectares). The Phase I archaeological survey would be conducted in accordance with the guidelines set forth in the *SHPO Manual for Archaeological Projects in Minnesota*. Minimally, the survey would include pedestrian reconnaissance of the archaeological study area, excavation of shovel tests at 15-meter (49-foot) intervals across the proposed archaeological sensitivity zones, excavation of judgmental shovel tests in other unpaved portions of the archaeological study area to evaluate the horizontal extent of ground disturbing activity, and judgmental auger probes to evaluate the potential for archaeological deposits beyond the range of standard shovel testing and the vertical extent of potential disturbances. A visual

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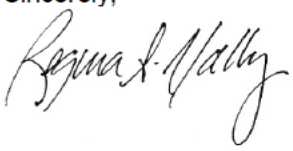
reconnaissance (i.e., walkover) of the shoreline near the footprint for a potential geothermal system would also be conducted. If an archaeological site is identified during the Phase I archaeological survey in proximity to the shoreline in an area to be impacted by a potential geothermal system, cartographic analysis would be conducted to assess the potential for submerged precontact landscapes in addition to near shore auger testing to determine the boundaries of the identified archaeological site.

This letter also serves as notification that the Area of Potential Effects (APE) for the undertaking has expanded and we have adjusted terminology since the 9 January 2023 letter initially provided to your office, as shown in **Figure 1**. The updates were made in an attempt to incorporate feedback from the State Historic Preservation Officer, as well as to address additional actions being considered as part of the proposed undertaking. These actions include various relocation and/or land preparation activities to be conducted by Packaging Corporation of America (PCA) on parcels adjacent to the proposed expansion area for the LPOE, which are being conducted as a result of GSA's acquisition and development of the proposed expansion area, as shown in **Figure 2**. PCA would retain ownership of these areas.

This letter also is intended to serve as notification that as part of ongoing environmental investigations GSA plans on conducting a Phase II Environmental Site Assessment, which would include collecting shallow soil samples using a hand auger, as well as up to 55 soil borings using direct-push technology (DPT). The soil borings will be approximately 4 inches in diameter and up to 20 feet in depth with the majority only 5 feet in depth. Borings would be collected across the proposed project area shown in **Figure 2.** Within the archaeological sensitivity zones identified for further archaeological investigation, approximately 10 borings would be collected. At boring locations, any excess soil collected within each macrocore after sample collection would be placed back in the hole along with bentonite and water, if needed. Due to the size and quantity of the borings, minimal disturbance to any potential archaeological resources is anticipated.

Thank you for your time. GSA invites your comments, input, and guidance regarding the planned project. Formal responses to this invitation, as well as any questions or requests for additional information should be directed to me at regina.nally@gsa.gov.

Sincerely,



Regina A. Nally
Historic Preservation Officer
US General Services Administration
Public Buildings Service, Great Lakes Region
Chicago, IL
312 848 0266 (m)

CC: Sarah Beimers, Minnesota SHPO
Michael Gonczar, GSA
Seth LaRocque, GSA
Nicky Emery, GSA

2

Kate Gill, GSA
Marshall Popkin, GSA

Enclosures:

An Archaeological Literature Search for the International Falls Land Port of Entry Modernization and Expansion Project in Koochiching County, Minnesota (note: this report has been transmitted via email to your office; if a hard copy is required, please contact Regina Nally by email at regina.nally@gsa.gov or by phone/text at 312.848.0266)

Attachments:

Figure 1. Revised APE on an Aerial Photograph Map.
Figure 2. Site Preparation of PCA Lands.

3

U.S. General Services Administration

Figure 1. Revised APE on an Aerial Photograph Map.

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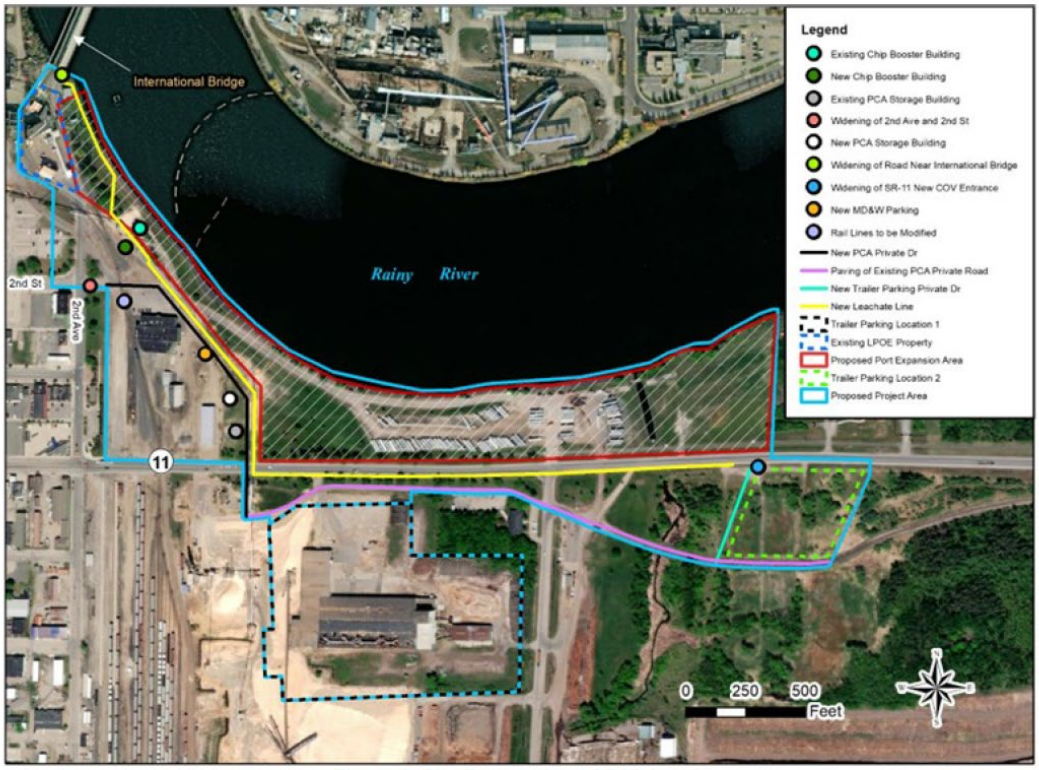

Figure 2. Site Preparation of PCA Lands

5

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B.3.5 Response letter from Shakopee Mdewakanton Sioux Community THPO

From: Leonard Wabasha (TO)
To: Paul DiPaolo
Cc: regina.nally@gsa.gov; sherry.emery@gsa.gov; Michael Gonczar - 5P1FB; sarah.beimers@state.mn.us; beth.savage@gsa.gov
Subject: RE: Continuation of Tribal Consultation for International Falls LPOE SEIS
Date: Friday, May 19, 2023 10:11:44 AM
Attachments: image002.png
image003.png

Thank you for the update, I would have only comment/recommendation, rather than shovel tests at 15 meters I would ask that they be closer together, say 7 or 10 meter intervals … Otherwise, thank you again and have a great day!!

LEONARD WABASHA
Director of Cultural Resources • Cultural Resources
Shakopee Mdewakanton Sioux Community
d: 952.496.6120
shakopeedakota.org
Leonard.Wabasha@shakopeedakota.org

The Shakopee Mdewakanton Sioux Community is a federally recognized, sovereign Indian tribe located southwest of Minneapolis/St. Paul. With a focus on being a good neighbor, good steward of the earth, and good employer, the SMSC is committed to charitable donations, community partnerships, a healthy environment, and a strong economy.

From: Paul DiPaolo <paul.dipaolo@phe.com>
Sent: Friday, May 19, 2023 11:21 AM
To: Leonard Wabasha (TO) <leonard.wabasha@shakopeedakota.org>
Cc: regina.nally@gsa.gov; sherry.emery@gsa.gov; Michael Gonczar - 5P1FB <michael.gonczar@gsa.gov>; sarah.beimers@state.mn.us; beth.savage@gsa.gov
Subject: Continuation of Tribal Consultation for International Falls LPOE SEIS

Good morning,

The United States General Services Administration (GSA) is preparing a Supplemental Environmental Impact Statement (SEIS) for the proposed International Falls Land Port of Entry (LPOE) Modernization Project, as per the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) of 1969, which requires process under the National Historic Preservation Act (NHPA) of 1966 (36 Code of Federal Regulations 800). The attached letter is intended to provide updates on the proposed undertaking. GSA is also sharing the results of an archaeological literature search prepared for the undertaking, which is also attached.

Please note, this letter is also being sent via hard copy to your physical mailing address on file with the Minnesota Indian Affairs Council listed here: https://mn.gov/indianaffairs/thpo.html

GSA invites your comments, input, and guidance regarding the planned project. Formal responses to this notification, as well as any questions or requests for additional information should be directed

to regina.nally@gsa.gov.

Respectfully,

Paul DiPaolo, PMP
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APPENDIX C. FLOODPLAIN ASSESSMENT AND STATEMENT OF FINDINGS

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FLOODPLAIN ASSESSMENT AND STATEMENT OF FINDINGS

C.1 INTRODUCTION

In accordance with 44 Code of Federal Regulations (CFR) Part 9 (*Floodplain Management and Protection of Wetlands*), Executive Order (EO) 11988 (*Floodplain Management*), and General Services Administration's (GSA) Public Buildings Service Desk Guide for Floodplain Management, GSA is required 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. If no practicable alternative exists, then GSA is required to provide justification for no practicable alternatives and evaluate the potential impacts on the floodplain.

In accordance with EO 11990 (*Wetland Protection*) and GSA's Public Building Service's *Wetlands Impact Management Desk Guide*, GSA is required to avoid to the extent possible the long- and short-term adverse impacts associated with the destruction or modification of wetlands and to avoid direct or indirect support of new construction in wetlands, unless the head of the agency finds "*(1) that there is no practicable alternative to such construction, and (2) that the proposed action includes all practicable measures to minimize harm to wetlands which may result from such use. In making this finding the head of the agency may take into account economic, environmental and other pertinent factors*." As provided in EO 11990, wetlands are defined as "*those areas that are inundated by surface or ground water with a frequency sufficient to support and under normal circumstances does or would support a prevalence of vegetative or aquatic life that requires saturated or seasonally saturated soil conditions for growth and reproduction. Wetlands generally include swamps, marshes, bogs, and similar areas such as sloughs, potholes, wet meadows, river overflows, mud flats, and natural ponds*."

GSA is proposing to modernize and expand the International Falls Land Port of Entry (LPOE) in International Falls, Koochiching County, Minnesota (MN). Based on a review of Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) mapping, the project area would be within and/or encroach on regulatory floodplains. Additionally, the project area would be located within and/or encroach on wetland areas. As such, GSA prepared this floodplain assessment in accordance with EO 11988 and EO 11990, and guidance outlined in the floodplain management and wetlands desk guides.

This document is also prepared as part of a National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) review process for the project and incorporates analysis and results from the Draft Supplemental Environmental Impact Statement (SEIS) for the Land Port of Entry Modernization and Expansion Project in International Falls, Minnesota. This assessment is being distributed to appropriate government agencies and other interested parties for review and comments as part of the Draft SEIS 45-day comment period. Comments received during the comment period will be considered in the Final SEIS and floodplain assessment.

According to GSA's *Public Building Service Desk Guide for Floodplain Management*, a "critical action" is any activity or action for which even a slight chance of flooding would be too great. The Proposed Action would qualify as a critical action since damage or disruption from a local flooding event at the International Falls LPOE could lead to regional or national catastrophic impacts (e.g., the LPOE being closed for a period following a storm event would have an impact on transportation of goods nationally and internationally. The minimum floodplain of concern for critical actions is the 0.2-percent-annual-chance floodplain (also known as the critical action floodplain). As such, GSA analyzes the Proposed Action as a critical action and considers impacts to both the 1-percent-annual-chance floodplain (also referred to as the base floodplain or 100-year floodplain) and the 0.2-percent-annual-chance floodplain (also referred to as the 500-year floodplain).

C.2 BACKGROUND

In September 2011, GSA published a Final Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) for the *International Falls Land Port of Entry Improvements Study* in accordance with NEPA. The 2011 Final EIS analyzed five viable conceptual Build alternatives and a No-Build Alternative as described in Section 2.1 of the SEIS. After detailed consideration and analysis, a Record of Decision (ROD) that identified GSA's Preferred Alternative was signed by GSA on January 12, 2012. GSA selected its 2011 Final EIS Preferred Alternative based on which alternative would best meet the purpose and need of the project with the least overall adverse impacts to the natural, social, and economic environment of the area and region.

Since the issuance of GSA's 2012 ROD, project changes have occurred and GSA has prepared a Draft SEIS for the purpose of analyzing potential environmental impacts, including impacts to floodplains and wetlands, based on project updates.

C.3 PURPOSE AND NEED FOR THE PROPOSED ACTION

The Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act (2021), also known as the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law, includes $3.4 billion for GSA to undertake 26 major construction and modernization projects at land ports of entry (LPOEs) nationwide. Many of the nation's LPOEs are outdated and long overdue for modernization. Many LPOEs, including the International Falls LPOE, operate at full capacity and have surpassed the needs for which they were originally designed. The purpose of the Proposed Action is for GSA to support the mission of the U.S. Customs and Border Protection (CBP) and other tenant agencies by bringing the International Falls LPOE operations in line with current land port design standards and operational requirements while addressing existing deficiencies identified with the ongoing port operations. Generally, the International Falls LPOE's deficiencies fall into two broad categories: deficiencies in the overall site layout and substandard building conditions. To bring the International Falls LPOE operations in line with design standards and operational requirements, the Proposed Action is needed to:

- Improve the capacity and functionality of the International Falls LPOE to meet future demand, while maintaining the capability to meet border security initiatives;
- Address spatial and layout constraints that lead to traffic congestion and safety issues for the employees and users of the LPOE;
- Provide adequate space and facilities for the federal agencies to accomplish their missions; and
- Address the project updates that have occurred since the 2011 Final EIS.

C.4 PROJECT DESCRIPTION

C.4.1 Site Description

The International Falls LPOE is located in International Falls, Koochiching County, MN on the southern bank of the Rainy River. The LPOE serves as the port of entry to people and vehicles crossing the International Bridge that connects International Falls, Minnesota to the town of Fort Frances, Ontario, Canada.

The existing LPOE site is approximately 1.6 acres and is surrounded by the industrial buildings of the PCA paper mill facilities (formerly owned by Boise, Inc.) to the west and south; International Bridge to the north; the Rainy River to the east; and the Minnesota, Dakota, & Western (MD&W) Railway (wholly owned by Packaging Corporation of America [PCA]) to the east. The site layout aligns non-commercial primary and secondary inspections and the main building along US-53 in a north-to-south configuration. The LPOE is crisscrossed by railroad tracks and utility easements, which traverse in an east-west direction, between the LPOE and the bridge.

C.4.2 Project Alternatives Analyzed in the Draft SEIS

The Proposed Action for the Draft SEIS remains the same as the Proposed Action stated in the 2011 Final EIS: to replace the existing International Falls LPOE with a new LPOE facility "to improve safety, security, and functionality." Similar to the 2011 Final EIS, the Proposed Action would involve the acquisition of property, demolition of existing facilities, and construction of new buildings and facilities to meet the space requirements of the CBP and other federal agencies. GSA analyzed two alternatives in the Draft SEIS:

- **Alternative 1: Full Build –** Alternative 1 for the Draft SEIS is defined as the acquisition of property, demolition of existing facilities, and construction of the new facilities, as identified under GSA's Preferred Alternative in the 2011 Final EIS (see Section 2.1.2.2 of the Draft SEIS), but with modifications based on project updates (see Sections 1.1.2 and 2.2.1 of the Draft SEIS).

- **No Action Alternative –** Under the No Action Alternative, GSA would not move forward with the Proposed Action. The No Action Alternative serves as a baseline scenario for which potential environmental consequences can be compared to Alternative 1 for the Draft SEIS (see Section 2.2.2 of the Draft SEIS).

C.4.3 Alternative 1 – Full Build

Alternative 1 is based on acquisition of additional acreage to expand the current LPOE site (see Figure C-1). The proposed site acquisition (herein referred to as the proposed expansion area) encompasses a 20.5-acre area that stretches east from the LPOE along the Rainy River shoreline to an area just west of a U.S. Border Patrol Station and primarily bordered by SR-11 on the south. This is the same expansion area as previously considered under the 2011 Preferred Alternative. Approximately 16.4 and 4.1 acres are owned by PCA and Recreational Land Development, LLC (RLD), respectively. Most of the LPOE functions would be relocated in the expanded portion of the parcel between the Rainy River and SR-11.

Figure C-2 provides a conceptual site layout of the proposed new facilities under Alternative 1. This site layout is a conceptual representation used for discussion and environmental analysis. The exact layout of the LPOE would be determined by the design contractor but would be similar in scope to what is described in the Draft SEIS. Final design would be coordinated with the city and county governments, Minnesota Department of Transportation (MnDOT), and other relevant stakeholders including PCA, MD&W, Aazhogan, CentraGas and other utility providers.

Demolition and Construction

The International Falls LPOE main building, inspection canopies, storage facilities, utility and paved areas, including inspection lanes, and other auxiliary buildings would be demolished and disposed of. Construction would require shoreline improvements to include repair of the existing shoreline hardening, as well as placement of riprap and landscaping, as necessary, to stabilize riparian areas and accommodate new construction. To prepare the proposed expansion area for development, some existing utilities and PCA infrastructure would need to be accommodated in a new way, either within the LPOE via easements or moved off site to the west or south on PCA-owned land. The initial assumptions that were followed in the 2011 Final EIS for the relocation of a new site are no longer valid due to a change in operations by PCA. These changes have also triggered the reconfiguration of some of the existing PCA operations on PCA lands. Relocation and site work outside of the proposed expansion area would primarily occur on land both west of the LPOE and south of SR-11. Relocation of utilities and infrastructure may be conducted by either GSA or PCA, depending on final acquisition negotiations. If GSA does not directly perform the relocation of the infrastructure, PCA would be fairly compensated to conduct such actions. Infrastructure relocation is subject to final design but would occur within the project area shown in Figure C-3 and as described in Section 2.2.1.1 of the Draft SEIS under *Site Preparation*.

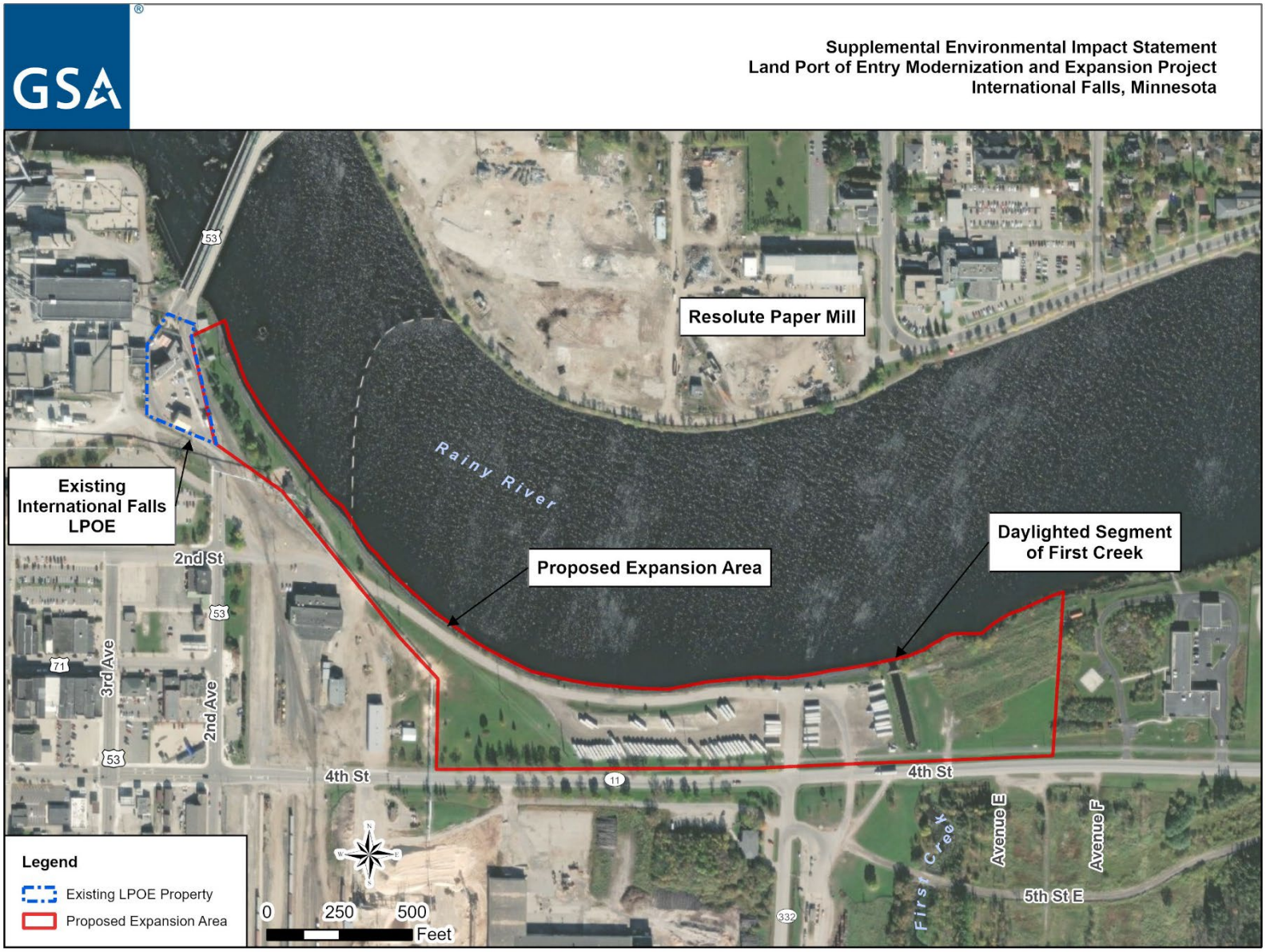


Figure C-1. International Falls LPOE and Proposed Land Acquisition under Alternative 1

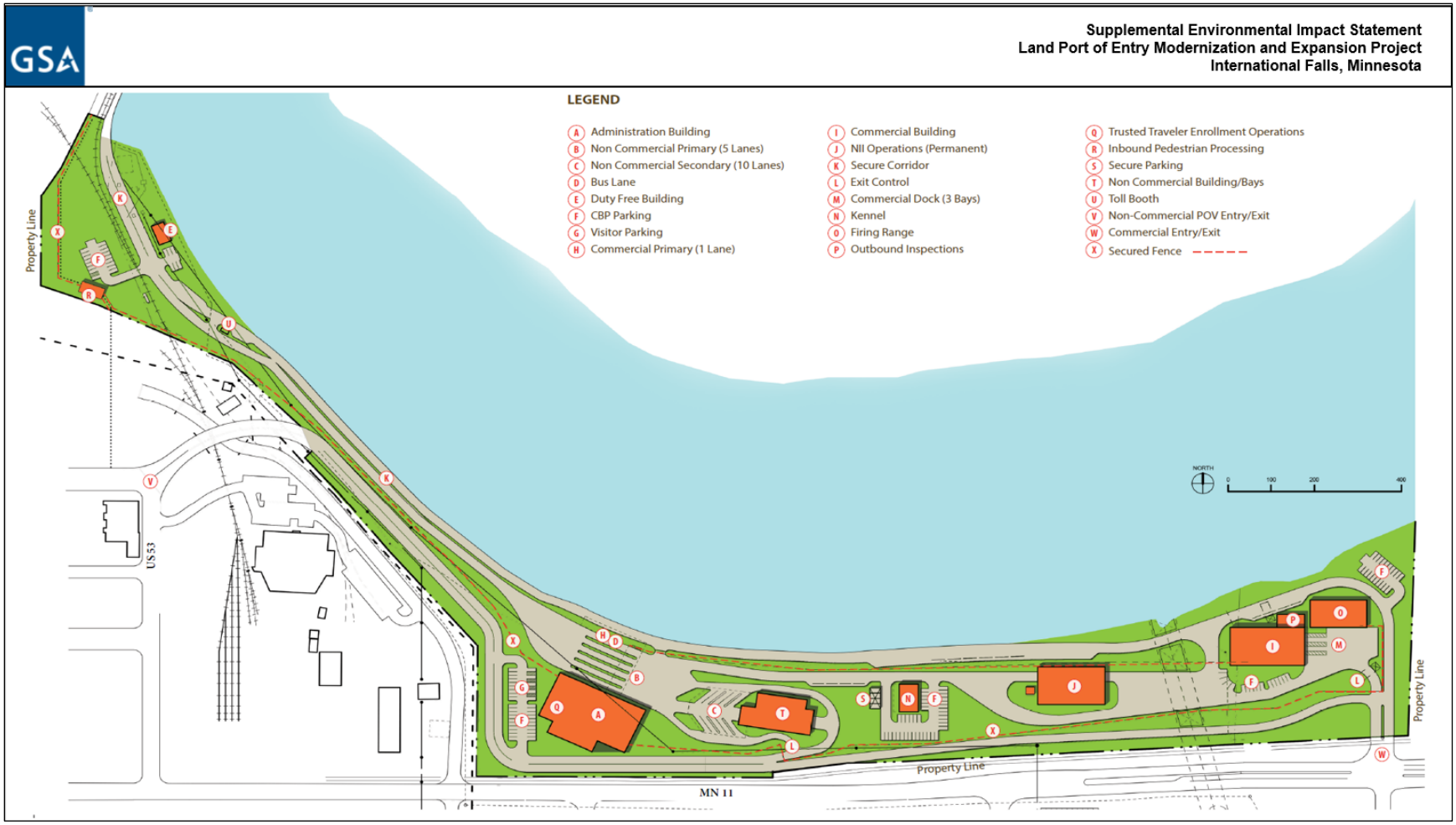


Figure C-2. Alternative 1 (2011 Preferred Alternative with Project Updates)

Note: This figure does not reflect the removal of the culverted section of First Creek between SR-11 and the Rainy River. The culvert has been removed and is now daylighted. The figure likewise does not reflect the redesign of stormwater management required as a result of the culvert removal to account for two new areas of pavement crossing First Creek. Refer to Figure C-1 for a depiction of the daylighted culvert near the east end of the parcel.

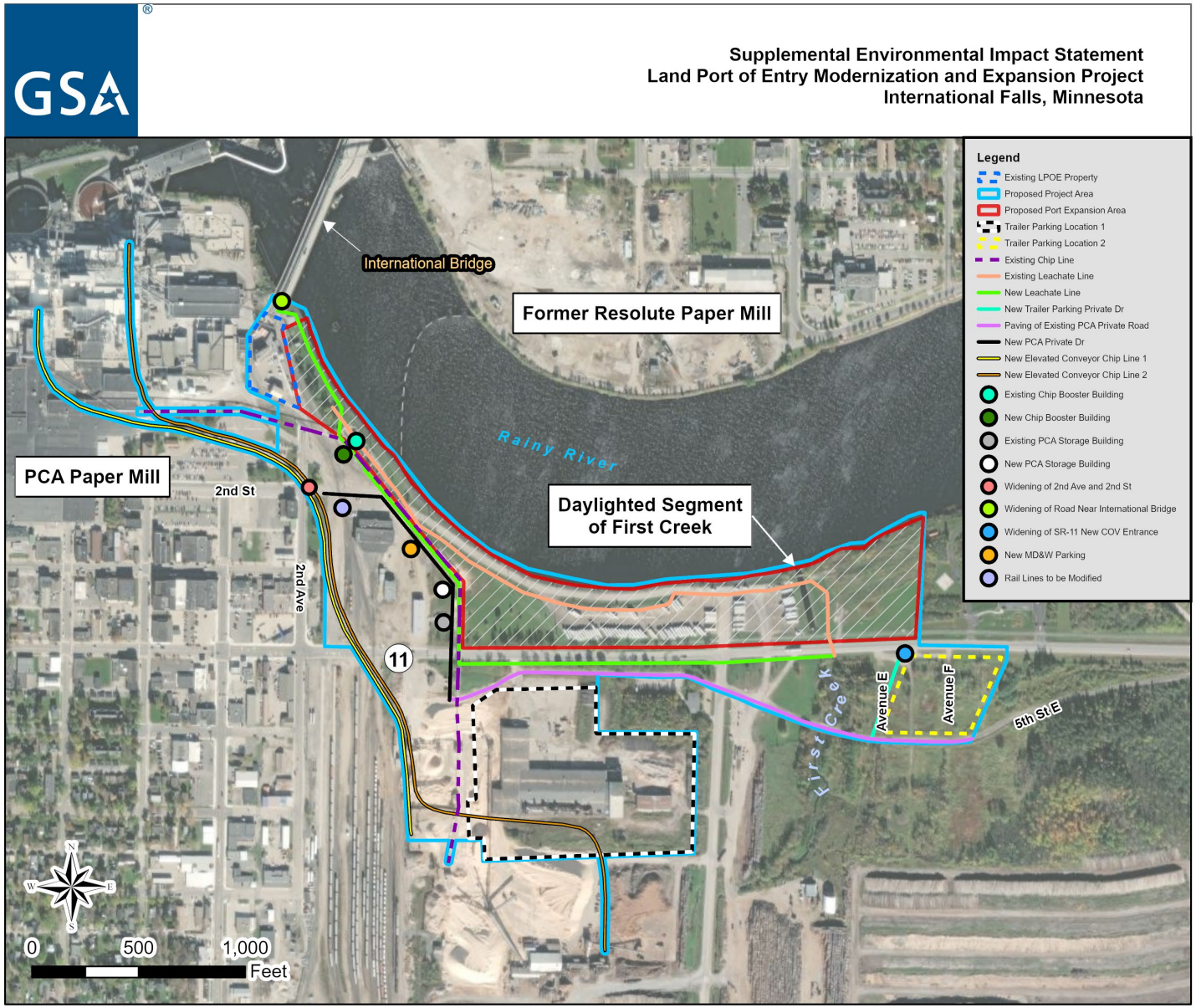


Figure C-3. Site Preparation of PCA Lands for Alternative 1

Operations

Alternative 1 would consider implementation of renewable energy technologies within the expanded and modernized LPOE. These technologies were not considered in the 2011 Final EIS but have since been proposed for inclusion in future site plans. Renewable technologies that may be incorporated into the facility design include solar (photovoltaic or solar collectors) and certain types of closed-loop geothermal heat pumps. Selection of each technology, to include final sizing, is dependent on final design. It is possible a combination of these technologies could be selected during final design. With the exception of the geothermal technology that would utilize the Rainy River, all associated infrastructure would be constructed within the newly expanded and modernized LPOE footprint. See Section 2.2.1.3 of the Draft SEIS for greater details on the type of renewable energy technologies that could be implemented at the proposed LPOE facility.

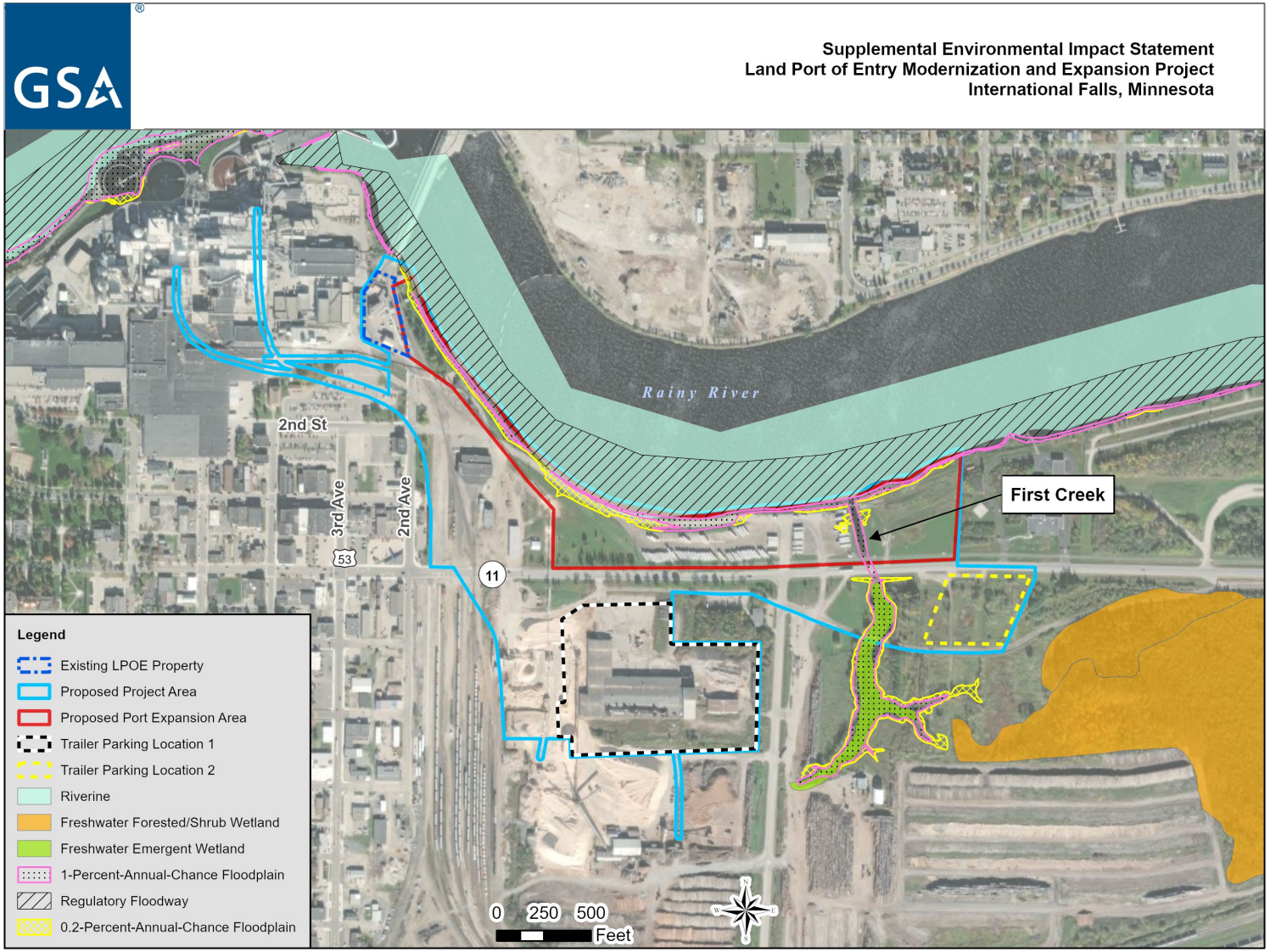
C.5 DESCRIPTION OF EXISTING FLOODPLAINS AND WETLANDS

Figure C-4 illustrates the surface water features within and adjacent to the project area. The northern boundary of the project area is comprised of approximately 3,600 feet of Rainy River shoreline. This boundary is fairly steep and fortified with riprap.

A small tributary, First Creek, is located on the eastern portion of the proposed expansion area, meandering from an area south of the expansion area, continuing north under SR-11, and then discharging into the Rainy River. Because First Creek is a tributary that drains into Rainy River (recognized as a navigable water by U.S. Army Corps of Engineers [USACE]), it is considered a "*waters of the United States*" (WOTUS). The segment of the creek located within the proposed expansion area was formerly running through a culvert; however, since completion of the 2011 Final EIS, parts of the culvert collapsed, and the creek segment was widened and daylighted to its current state around 2013. Within the proposed expansion area, the creek is 30 feet wide and 300 feet long, with the banks of the creek consisting mostly of riprap and a bed of natural clay.

Based on a review of FEMA mapping (FIRM panel 27071C0450D), the proposed expansion area includes 2.1 acres and 1.6 acres of FEMA-designated 1-percent-annual-chance and 0.2-percent-annual-chance floodplains along the Rainy River and First Creek, respectively. According to Koochiching County, First Creek provides drainage for portions of a PCA woodyard, 3rd Avenue E, SR-11, and south International Falls. Flooding near the woodyard and 3rd Avenue E occurs almost every year.

The Rainy River shoreline within the project area has been previously disturbed and consists mainly of riprap and the riverbank is mainly landscaped grass with a few scattered trees (see Figure C-5 for images of the shoreline).



Note: The former culvert within the proposed expansion area that drains First Creek into the Rainy River currently is not classified as a wetland in the NWI; this segment was formerly covered, but then daylighted around 2013 because of the collapsed culvert.

Figure C-4. Hydrologic Features at the International Falls LPOE Project Area

Looking East

Looking Northwest

Figure C-5. Rainy River Shoreline Within the Project Area

Per the NWI mapping, the segment of First Creek that was covered by a former culvert within the proposed expansion area currently is not classified as a wetland in the NWI, most likely because the culvert collapsed and the segment was then daylighted around 2013; however, since the daylighting of the culvert in First Creek, some vegetation has emerged (see Figure C-6). Additional wetland features that are not included within disturbed areas associated with the project area but are adjacent to such areas include (see Figure C-4): the portion of First Creek south of SR-11, which is classified as a 2.88-acre Freshwater Emergent wetland; and an additional, larger wetland feature located south and east of proposed Trailer Parking Location 2 encompasses approximately 41.4 acres, which is classified as Freshwater Forested/Shrub wetland.

Figure C-6. First Creek, Looking Towards Rainy River

C.6 POTENTIAL IMPACTS TO FLOODPLAINS AND WETLANDS

The new LPOE footprint would expand south and east, along approximately 3,600 feet of the Rainy River shoreline. Construction activities would result in up to approximately 52 acres of ground disturbance, with some conversion of pervious areas into impervious areas. For conservative measures, this acreage estimate includes the entire project area, except for Trailer Parking Location 2 (as Trailer Parking Location 1 is the larger of the two proposed storage lots and only one parking location would be developed; see Figure C-3).

Direct impacts to waterbodies include the potential construction of riverbank structures along the Rainy River and within associated floodplains for the support of a new access road and the potential construction of a new culvert to cover the First Creek segment, which would be within the creek's floodplains. Alternatively, instead of a new culvert, a bridging structure would be constructed to cross over First Creek. GSA may implement a geothermal energy system, which could require construction of horizonal trenches or vertical borings within the proposed expansion area and/or construction of pipes and heat exchanger

within and adjacent to the river, depending on the type and final design of the system. Additionally, a leachate line that is collecting effluent from a nearby landfill would be located along SR-11, the western boundary of the proposed Expansion Area, and a small portion of the eastern boundary of the Expansion Area near International Bridge (see Figure C-3).

Direct adverse local impacts to wetlands are expected. Overall impacts would be long-term, minor to moderate as the area of impact is relatively small and would occur in previously disturbed wetlands. First Creek within the proposed expansion area is not mapped as NWI wetlands; however, since the daylighting of the culvert in First Creek, some vegetation has emerged. Additional, minimal amounts of wetlands disturbance could occur during relocation of the existing leachate line south of the proposed expansion area over First Creek, as well as during widening of SR-11 over First Creek, depending on final alignment. Based on conservative estimates using NWI mapping and assuming presence of wetlands near the daylighted section of First Creek, it is assumed that no more than 1 acre of potential wetlands could be removed and/or disturbed due to construction. The Rainy River shoreline has been fortified with riprap and consists of previously disturbed, sloped areas. Trailer Parking Location 2 is located directly east of, but would be expected to avoid, nearby wetlands along First Creek. A road crossing of First Creek south of SR-11 would also require re-paving but is not expected to require disturbance to wetlands associated with First Creek.

As necessary, GSA would conduct a wetland delineation within the project area during project design and finalization of site layout prior to any construction activities to confirm any wetland areas and to support any required federal/state/local approval process (e.g., Section 404 permitting process with USACE, 401 Certification process with the Minnesota Pollution Control Agency [MPCA], or Public Waters Permit with the MN Department of Natural Resources [MNDNR]). Depending on the acreage of wetlands disturbed and coordination with USACE, GSA would be required to obtain a General Permit (less than 0.5 acres disturbed), a Letter of Permission (between 0.5 and 3 acres disturbed), or an Individual Permit (over 3 acres disturbed). A Local Government Unit permit under Minnesota's Wetland Conservation Act may also be required from International Falls, depending on the total acreage of wetlands disturbed. Depending on the extent of wetlands impacts, GSA would consider options to minimize, avoid, or mitigate potential impacts.

Long-term, minor, direct and indirect adverse impacts could arise due to construction within the designated 1-percent-annual-chance floodplain (2.1 acres) and 0.2-percent-annual-chance floodplain (1.6 acres). The short- and long-term additions of new structures and/or impervious surfaces could reduce these floodplains' capacities to store water, depending on final design and configuration of the International Falls LPOE, or may result in the potential to expand the floodplains, thus increasing the spread or intensity of a flood event.

C.7 CONCLUSIONS AND FINDINGS

Modernization and expansion of the existing International Falls LPOE is necessary to improve the capacity and functionality of the LPOE. Expansion of the LPOE site is necessary to accommodate increases in building and parking requirements for CBP operations. Furthermore, additional land requirements are needed to address conflicts between rail and vehicular traffic as this issue continues to pose safety issues for workers and users of the LPOE. Because the LPOE is surrounded by a bridge, the Rainy River, PCA facilities, rail lines, and utilities, proposed site layout options are limited. Modernization-only would not allow GSA to fully support CBP's mission by bringing the LPOE operations in line with current land port design standards and operational requirements. Therefore, this option was not carried forward for further analysis in the Draft SEIS. The 2011 Final EIS considered additional project locations with different site footprints than the Alternative 1 project footprint considered in the attached SEIS, as described in Section 2.1.2.1 of the SEIS. However, the 2011 Preferred Alternative, which consists of the Alternative 1 project footprint considered in this SEIS, was selected in the 2012 ROD as it was the alternative that best satisfied GSA's purpose and needs and had the least impact on the human and natural environment. With Alternative 1 of this Draft SEIS, GSA finds that complete avoidance of the 1-percent-annual-chance and 0.2-percent-annual-chance floodplains and wetlands is not practicable for this project due to the fact that the 2011

Preferred Alternative is the basis for Alternative 1 in this SEIS and is the only alternative that meets the Purpose and Need for the SEIS as described in Section B.3. Further, due to the site's proximity to the floodplain and border constraints, avoidance of 1-percent-annual-chance and 0.2-percent-annual-chance floodplains and wetlands is not practicable.

It is anticipated that this project would not result in major adverse impacts to the 1-percent-annual-chance and 0.2-percent-annual-chance floodplains or wetlands. No effects to lives and property associated with floodplain disturbance are anticipated. In general, compliance with conditions under applicable federal, state, and local permits and the consideration of local zoning ordinances prior to construction would be expected to minimize potential adverse impacts to floodplains and wetlands. Potential permits and approval processes related to water resources are discussed in Section 3.3.2.3 of the Draft SEIS.

Final design of the International Falls LPOE would incorporate standard measures, including those specified in GSA's *Facilities Standards for the Public Buildings Service (P100)*, to reduce or manage stormwater flows as well as impacts to floodplains and from flooding on the proposed facility's buildings. This would include reviewing plans for structures to be in compliance with FEMA's National Flood Insurance Program's Building Standards requirements for nonresidential structures, which require elevating the lowest floor to or above the base flood level. Furthermore, in accordance with Section 438 of the Energy Independence and Security Act, GSA would use site planning, design, construction, and maintenance strategies to maintain or restore, to the maximum extent technically feasible, the predevelopment hydrology of the property with regard to the temperature, rate, volume, and duration of flow. GSA would also consider green infrastructure and low impact development practices, such as reducing impervious surfaces, using vegetated swales and revegetation, protection and restoration of the shoreline of Rainy River, and using porous pavements. Final design plans would also adhere to local requirements regarding development within the shoreland areas as outlined in the City of International Falls' code of ordinance, Shoreland Management for development along the Rainy River.

GSA would also consider the *Minnesota Stormwater Manual* when designing the permanent stormwater management system for the proposed LPOE facility. This manual provides specific stormwater management objectives and associated design considerations, as well as landscape designs to enhance stormwater treatment. It also provides a framework for addressing stormwater sizing based on the following criteria: recharge, water quality, channel protection, over bank flooding, and extreme storms. New stormwater lines and features, including a potentially new culvert in First Creek, would be sized based on criteria as outlined in the stormwater manual and in consideration of regional climate trends.

Additional impact reduction measures related to water resources are summarized in Section 3.3.2.5 of the Draft SEIS.

C.8 NOTICE OF FLOODPLAIN ACTION AND COMMENT PERIOD

In accordance with 44 CFR Part 9, GSA is providing this Floodplain Assessment and Statement of Findings to appropriate government agencies and other interested parties for review and comments. GSA published a Notice of Availability in the *Rainy Lake Gazette* regarding the availability of the Draft SEIS and Floodplain Assessment. The Draft SEIS is available electronically on the GSA website at: https://www.gsa.gov/about-us/regions/welcome-to-the-great-lakes-region-5/buildings-and-facilities/minnesota/international-falls-land-port-of-entry. Comments received during the 45-day comment period will be considered in preparation of the Final SEIS and this floodplain assessment.

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APPENDIX D. GSA'S SUSTAINABLE DESIGN CHECKLIST

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GSA's 2022 Sustainable Design Checklist for New Construction and Major Modernization Projects

Meeting all of these Sustainable Design Criteria (SDCs) qualifies a building as "sustainable" for Federal Real Property Portfolio reporting.

2022 GSA SDC #	2020 NC&M Guiding Principle	Criteria Names	Sustainable Design Criteria (SDC) Language
			I. Third-Party CERTIFICATION
1	Multiple. 2020 Guiding Principles Appendix C details "Using Third-Party Building Certification Systems": https://www.sustainability.gov/pdfs/guiding_principles_for_sustainable_federal_buildings.pdf#page=45	***LEED***	Certify building as: LEED® v4 or later BD+C, at Silver level or higher. Upload LEED submittals and scorecards in GSA's Kahua project management software, and report certification details in Kahua> Sustainability> Goals> LEED. (Per P100 § 1.9.2.1: "all BA51 (new construction) and BA55 (major repairs and alterations that include work to a majority of the systems) must achieve, at a minimum, a Gold rating" through LEED version 4 BD+C or later.) Reference: - 2020 Guiding Principles for Sustainable Federal Buildings and Associated Instructions, Appendix C - Assessing a New Construction, Modernization, Major Renovation or Existing Building Using Third-Party Building Certification System: https://www.sustainability.gov/pdfs/guiding_principles_for_sustainable_federal_buildings.pdf
			II. Optimize ENERGY Performance
2	2.1 - Energy Efficiency (mandatory, statutory)	***Energy Efficient Products***	Specify and install Energy Star and FEMP-designated energy efficient products, e.g. windows, roof products, boilers, and appliances. (Per EISA 2007 § 323 [40 U.S.C. 3307(b) and § 525 [42 U.S.C. 8259(b)(1)], EPAct 2005 § 104(a) [42 U.S.C. § 8259b], and FAR clause 52.223-15) References: - Energy Star Certified Products: https://www.energystar.gov/products - Energy-Efficient Product Categories: https://www.energy.gov/eere/femp/search-energy-efficient-products - LEED credit EAc14 "High-Efficiency Appliances": https://www.usgbc.org/credits/homes/v4-draft/eac14
3	2.1 - Energy Efficiency (mandatory, statutory)	***Energy Efficient Buildings***	(a) Earn at least seven (7) points within LEED v4.1 credit EAc2 "Optimize Energy Performance", using Option 1 "Energy Performance Compliance"; OR (b) ensure that the project's energy performance target is at least 30% more efficient than ASHRAE 90.1-2019; OR (c) the project's energy performance target meets ASHRAE 90.1-2019, AND is the highest efficiency that is life cycle cost-effective. (Per 10 CFR § 433.100 Energy Efficiency Standards, and P100 § 1.9.3 "Energy Use Targets") Reference: - GSA Energy Use Target Guidance: gsa.gov/sustainabledesign
4	2.2 - Energy Metering (mandatory, statutory)	***Energy Metering***	Earn LEED credit EAc3 "Advanced Energy Metering". This will ensure the project installs advanced meters for all whole-building energy sources. (Per EISA 2007 § 434 [42 U.S.C. § 8253(e)] and P100 § 6.5.3.4 "Advanced Building Metering and Control") Reference: - Federal Energy Management Program Metering Guidance: https://www.energy.gov/eere/femp/downloads/federal-building-metering-guidance-usc-8253e-metering-energy-use
5	2.3 - Renewable Energy (optional, statutory)	***Renewable Energy***	(a) Earn at least one LEED EAc5 "Renewable Energy" credit by installing an onsite renewable energy system; OR (b) provide analysis showing that onsite renewable energy was evaluated (including solar thermal to meet 30% of building's anticipated hot water demand), and found not to be life cycle cost-effective. This will ensure that the project evaluates and implements life cycle cost-effective onsite renewable energy projects. (Per EISA 2007 § 523 [42 USC 6834 (a)(3)(A)(iii)], P100 § 1.7.2 "Sustainable Performance Requirements" and P100 § 5.4.4 "Solar Water Heating".) References: - PV Watts evaluation tool: https://pvwatts.nrel.gov/ - Solar Hot Water Cost and Efficiency Estimation Guide: http://energy.gov/energysaver/estimating-cost-and-energy-efficiency-solar-water-heater - Integrating Renewable Energy in Federal Construction: http://www.wbdg.org/ffc/doe/criteria/guide-integrating-renewable-energy-federal-construction - Renewable Energy Projects and Resources: http://energy.gov/eere/femp/federal-renewable-energy-projects-and-technologies

GSA's 2022 Sustainable Design Checklist for New Construction and Major Modernization Projects

Meeting all of these Sustainable Design Criteria (SDCs) qualifies a building as "sustainable" for Federal Real Property Portfolio reporting.

2022 GSA SDC #	2020 NC&M Guiding Principle	Criteria Names	Sustainable Design Criteria (SDC) Language
			III. Protect and Conserve WATER
6	3.1 - Indoor Water Use (mandatory, statutory)	***Cooling Towers***	Earn LEED credit WEc3: "Cooling Tower Water Use". This will ensure that the project (a) does not use single-pass cooling with potable water; and (b) optimizes cooling tower operations to minimize makeup water -- e.g. by using condensate recovery, limiting discharge water, and/or using efficient drift eliminators. (Per EPAct 2005 § 109 [42 U.S.C. §6834(a)(3)] - Use of water conservation technologies (cooling towers)) Reference: - Water Conservation (Cooling Equipment and Cooling Tower Management): http://www.wbdg.org/resources/water_conservation.php?r=fhpsb_new
7	1.3 - Stormwater Management (mandatory, statutory)	***Stormwater Management***	Earn LEED credit SSc4: "Rainwater Management" OR six points for Sustainable SITES credit 3.3 "Manage precipitation beyond baseline". This will ensure that projects disturbing at least 5,000 SF of site surface area manage the 95th percentile rain event onsite through infiltration, reuse, and/or evapotranspiration. Design strategies include permeable paving, vegetated roofs, rain gardens, or other low-impact development techniques. (Per EISA 2007 § 438 [42 U.S.C. § 17094] and P100 § 2.4 "Landscape Performance Table") References: - Stormwater Runoff Mitigation: http://www.wbdg.org/references/mou_sw.php - EPA Stormwater Technical Guidance: https://www.epa.gov/sites/production/files/2015-09/documents/eisa-438.pdf
			IV. Reduce the Environmental Impact of MATERIALS
8	5.1 - Materials - Recycled Content, and 5.2 - Materials - Biobased Content (mandatory, statutory)	***Materials and Embodied Carbon***	(a) Follow GSA's standards for low embodied carbon concrete and environmentally preferable asphalt by providing an environmental product declaration and specified material details. (gsa.gov/p100). (b) Specify products that GSA's material specifications in P100 §§ 1.9.2.10 "GSA Buy Clean Product Standards" and 3.4 "Interior Performance Table". (c) Earn at least one Building Life-Cycle Impact Reduction LEED BD+C: NC credit. Use Option 2 "Whole-Building Life-Cycle Assessment" to conduct a cradle-to-grave life-cycle assessment of the project's structure and enclosure. Target a 20% reduction in whole-building embodied carbon from materials, compared to a standard baseline building design. (Per P100 §§ 1.9.2.10 "Key Sustainable Products", 1.9.2.9 "Decarbonization", 4.8.5 "Low Embodied Carbon Concrete", and 4.8.6 "Environmentally Preferable Asphalt") References: - Key Sustainable Product list: https://sftool.gov/greenprocurement/green-products/1037/key-sustainable-products/9 - GSA Embodied Carbon Reduction Measure - Green Procurement Compilation (lists all Federal green purchasing requirements): https://sftool.gov/greenprocurement
			V. Assess and Consider Building RESILIENCE
9	6.1 - Risk Assessment, and 6.2 - Building Resilience and Adaptation	***Resilience***	Earn LEED pilot credit "Assessment and Planning for Resilience" and/or "Design for Enhanced Resilience". (Per P100 § 1.10.1 "Management of Climate Related and Extreme Weather Risks") Reference: Executive Order 14008 "Tackling the Climate Crisis at Home and Abroad" § 211 "Climate Action Plans . . . to Improve Adaptation and Increase Resilience"

GSA's new construction and major modernization projects must follow this checklist to the maximum feasible extent during design and construction, per GSA's 2021 P100 Facilities Standards for the Public Buildings Service § 1.9.2.6 "Guiding Principles for Sustainable Federal Buildings", and Executive Order 14057 "Catalyzing Clean Energy Industries and Jobs Through Federal Sustainability" § 205(c)(iii).

New construction and major modernization project delivery teams must report which of these Criteria are being implemented, and how, in GSA's Kahua Sustainability App. This checklist does not capture all P100 sustainability requirements.

Reference: Guiding Principles on SFTool.gov: https://sftool.gov/guidingprinciples
Crosswalk between all Guiding Principles and each relevant LEED prerequisite or credit: https://sftool.gov/learn/GRScrosswalk