

FINDING OF NO SIGNIFICANT IMPACT

Underwater Electrical Cable Replacement Project

I. INTRODUCTION

This Environmental Assessment (EA) was prepared by STV Incorporated for the U. S. Department of Agriculture, Agricultural Research Service (ARS) and documents a site specific analysis of activities supported by Federal funds, on land owned ARS. This project will provide PIADC with a new underwater electrical cable from Orient Point, NY to PIADC. The EA includes a site specific discussion of: the purpose and need for action, location, description of the proposed alternatives, the preferred alternative, background of the project site, environmental consequences of each alternative, and mitigating measures for environmental impacts.

The decisions to be made are whether or not to lay a new underwater electrical cable from Orient Point to PIADC and if so, whether potentially significant impacts exist that would require preparation of an Environmental Impact Statement for this project. The scope of these decisions pertain only to the proposed activities supported by or related to the use of Federal funds at PIADC.

The EA examines three project alternatives and four cable installation alternatives:

1. **No Action**
The No Action alternative involves leaving the current electrical cable in place without repairing or upgrading the cable.
2. **Upgrade Existing Cable**
The Upgrade Alternative involves improving or repairing the existing cables.
3. **New Cable Installation**
The New Cable Alternative requires laying a new cable from Orient Point through the Long Island Sound and Plum Gut to PIADC. New switch gear vaults would be installed at Orient Point and PIADC. There are four alternative methods of laying the cable and three alternative underwater routes described on pages 3-2 and 3- 6 of the EA.

II. ISSUES

The issues relevant to the proposed project are presented in the EA on pages 4-1 to 4-2.

III. DECISION

The effects of the alternatives were analyzed and based on this analysis Alternative 3 New Cable Installation has been selected as the preferred alternative with 3.2.5 installation alternative, 3.3.4 underwater route alternative, and 3.3.4 aboveground route alternative.. The preferred alternative is presented on pages 3-2 to 3-6.

IV. RATIONALE FOR DECISION

The selected alternative is to install a new electrical cable. This alternative will meet all regulatory requirements, limit environmental impacts and will meet the electrical and communications need of PIADC. The limited negative impacts will be temporary in nature. The short term impacts which may affect the local environment consist of localized impact to terrestrial and marine ecology, temporary disturbance to nesting Ospreys will be mitigated by construction scheduling, and temporary impact on local commercial and sport fishing. These impacts can be minimized by preventive construction techniques.

V. FINDING OF NO SIGNIFICANT IMPACT

As the Area Administrative Officer, North Atlantic Area, and delegated responsible decision maker under 7 CFR Part 520 - Procedures for Implementing National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA), I conclude that the proposed project Underwater Electrical Cable Replacement, will have no significant impact on the environment. After careful consideration of the issues relevant to this project and based on the site specific environmental analysis documented in this EA, I have determined that implementing this decision in the manner described will not cause significant environmental impacts or adverse effects. Therefore an environmental impact statement is not needed.

John A. Crew,
Area Administrative Officer

Date