



FINDING OF NO SIGNIFICANT IMPACT
Construct New Sugarcane Research Greenhouses at Ardoyne Farm
501 Bull Run Road
Schriever, LA 70395

Finding of No Significant Impact (FONSI)

In accordance with the requirements of the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) and implementing procedures, an environmental assessment (EA) was prepared to analyze the potential impacts of constructing the research laboratory facility at Ardoyne Farm in Schriever, LA and the No-Action Alternative.

Purpose and Need

The purpose of the proposed action is to consolidate the Sugarcane Research Lab (SRL) in one locale, to improve efficiency and to provide an updated facility with more space for the research efforts of the USDA SRL. These objectives would allow for the current research projects to expand and explore new sugarcane varieties. The greenhouse facilities currently utilized by the Unit are located approximately 9 miles south-southeast of the Unit near downtown Houma, Louisiana and are in poor condition. In an effort to improve efficiency, connectivity, and quality of operations, all SRLs are being consolidated to one locale. Currently the SRL is capable of supporting a varietal development program with emphasis exclusively on increases in per acre yields of sugar. This facility is too small to support new directions of research such as “energy canes” and “pharma-cane.” This type of research is estimated to require expansion of the SRL facilities by approximately 25%, as well as an increase in staff.

Proposed Action and Alternatives

The US Department of Agriculture (USDA), Agricultural Research Service (ARS) considered 2 alternatives in this EA:

- Under the Proposed Action alternative, the USDA would construct two (2) new greenhouse buildings on the Ardoyne Farm Sugarcane Research Unit. The construction of the new greenhouses would support the expansion of research into energy cane and pharma-cane. The addition of greenhouses on the Unit improves efficiency, connectivity, and quality of operations. This expansion also creates new employment opportunities for the public. All construction activities would take place on USDA owned land.
- Under the No Action alternative, the two (2) proposed greenhouse buildings would not be constructed at the Ardoyne Farm Sugarcane Research Unit. This would not alter current operations at the Unit; however, this alternative would not support new research efforts as space is limited. Connectivity issues would not be addressed, and the quality of the existing greenhouses would remain in poor condition.

Public Engagement

ARS will publish a Notice of Availability (NOA) for the final EA and FONSI. The NOA will be published in the Houma Courier Newspaper once this FONSI has been executed. The final EA and FONSI will be available upon request.

Potential Impacts

The EA considered the potential environmental impacts of the Proposed Action including cumulative impacts. The analysis completed in the EA found that no significant impacts on environmental resources would result from the implementation of the Proposed Action. The Proposed Action will be implemented in compliance with the following best management practices and mitigation measures for the corresponding resource area(s):

Impacts Summary	
Resource Area	Best Management Practices (BMPs) and Mitigation Measures
Geology, Soils, & Seismicity	<p>Impacts:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A temporary increase in the potential for erosion of exposed soils is expected to occur during construction. • Contaminants that could potentially affect surface soils include diesel, oils, grease from heavy equipment, and temporary storage tanks. <p>Mitigation Measures:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Should disturbance resulting from construction activities exceed one acre, a SWPPP will be prepared in accordance with the requirements of the Louisiana Pollutant Discharge Elimination System (LPDES) Storm Water General Permit for Small Construction Activities (Permit No. LAR200000). • Depending on the aggregate aboveground storage capacity of the project site and the project’s location relative to navigable waters of the United States, a SPCC for the job site may be required. The SPCC plan would establish inspection and spill response procedures to ensure that the potential for release of these products and/or effects of releases on surface soils is minimized to the best extent possible. • In the event that the contaminants listed above are released into the surface soils of the project area, affected soil will be removed and disposed of according to local, state, and federal regulations.
Air Quality	<p>Impacts: A temporary increase in airborne particulate matter (PM) would result from construction activities in the project area. Ground disturbing activities and vehicular traffic on unpaved roadways or roadways laden with dry sediment would result in the release of PM.</p> <p>Mitigation Measure: Unpaved roads would be sprayed with water by the contractor(s) to ensure that airborne particulates are kept to a minimum.</p>
Water Quality	<p>Impacts:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A temporary increase in the primary pollutant expected to potentially impact storm water runoff from the construction activity is suspended sediments from soil erosion

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Contaminants that could potentially affect surface and ground water include diesel, oils, and grease from heavy equipment and temporary storage tanks.</i> • <i>Illicit sanitary discharges from constructions sites.</i> <p>Mitigation Measure:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Should disturbance resulting from construction activities exceed one acre, a SWPPP will be prepared in accordance with the requirements of the Louisiana Pollutant Discharge Elimination System (LPDES) Storm Water General Permit for Small Construction Activities (Permit No. LAR200000).</i> • <i>Best Management Practices (BMPs) would be implemented (maintaining existing vegetative buffers) to reduce and/or eliminate surface water pollution from construction site runoff.</i> • <i>Portable sanitary units will temporarily be placed on site and waste will be removed from the property by licensed septage disposal contractors.</i>
<p>Biological Resources</p>	<p>Impacts:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>The Project Area is located in a primarily rural and agricultural area of Terrebonne Parish, and all proposed work activities would take place within a portion of the USDA owned Ardoyne Farm Sugarcane Research Unit. The Project Area is not well suited to support threatened, endangered, or rare species and/or critical habitats due to its lack of vegetative cover in comparison to the surrounding agricultural fields and increased human activity and farming operations.</i> • <i>Correspondence from the LDWF Habitat Section of the Coastal & Nongame Resources Division indicated that no impacts to rare, threatened, or endangered species or critical habitats are anticipated for the proposed project. No state wildlife refuges, wildlife management areas, or scenic streams are known to occur at the Project Area within Louisiana’s boundaries.</i> • <i>Species indigenous to the Project Area include common species which have adapted to areas with significant human activity such as pigeons, rodents, squirrels, rabbits, raccoons, alligators, and feral animals.</i> <p>Mitigation Measure:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>All construction activities will be confined to the Project Area designated for such activities.</i> • <i>Preventative measures discussed in earlier sections will be implemented throughout the duration of the construction activities to ensure that the quality of surface water and aquatic species habitat are not compromised.</i>
<p>Hazardous Materials</p>	<p>Impacts:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Storage and use of hazardous materials not anticipated during the Proposed Action. Nonhazardous materials in the form of diesel fuel and engine oils could potentially be temporarily stored on construction sites.</i> • <i>Non-Hazardous industrial materials could be released into surface soils, groundwater, and/or surface waters.</i> <p>Mitigation Measure:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Depending on the aggregate aboveground storage capacity of the project site and the project’s location relative to navigable waters of the United States, a SPCC for the job site may be required. The SPCC plan will establish inspection and spill</i>

	<p><i>response procedures to ensure that the potential for release of these products and/or effects of releases on surface soils is minimized to the best extent possible.</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Solid waste and/or contaminated soils will be removed and disposed of according to local, state, and federal regulations.</i>
Noise	<p>Impacts: <i>Short term increases to noise levels are expected during operation of construction equipment and increased vehicular traffic.</i></p> <p>Mitigation Measure: <i>Contractors will conduct construction activities in compliance with Terrebonne Parish Ordinance 8747 pertaining to noise and nuisance abatement.</i></p>
Traffic	<p>Impacts: <i>Temporary increases in local vehicular traffic volume would occur throughout the duration of the proposed construction activities due to construction materials, equipment, and crews accessing the project area.</i></p> <p>Mitigation Measure: <i>All work is to be conducted within the fenced in USDA parcel and no equipment or personnel will be staged alongside or on the public roadway adjacent to the project area.</i></p>
Public Services and Utilities	<p>Impacts:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Temporary minor impacts to solid waste would occur during the construction period as construction related solid waste would be generated and collected on site.</i> • <i>Long-term negligible impacts to electricity and wastewater would occur due to the increased electrical and wastewater treatment needs that come with facility expansion.</i> <p>Mitigation Measure:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Solid waste dumpsters would be temporarily stored on site and all contents would be disposed of in accordance with all local, state, and federal laws and regulations. The dumpsters would be removed upon completion of the proposed project.</i> • <i>There is existing infrastructure at the Project Site to support the increase in electrical usage and wastewater treatment.</i>
Public Health and Safety	<p>Impacts:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Temporary safety hazards would exist in the form of heavy equipment operation, open excavations and trenches, overhead crane operation, etc. associated with construction activities.</i> • <i>Potential for harmful exposure of contractors to chemicals/petroleum products.</i> <p>Mitigation Measure:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Contractors will conduct construction operations under strict adherence to applicable OSHA standards which would include by not be limited to use of all appropriate Personal Protection Equipment.</i> • <i>MSDS of all chemicals and or petroleum-based products will be readily available on site in the event that workers are exposed to harmful levels of these materials.</i>

Finding of No Significant Impact

After careful review of the EA, I have concluded that implementation of the Proposed Action will not generate significant controversy or have a significant impact on the quality of the human or natural environment. Therefore, as evidenced by my signature below, I determine that the Proposed Action will have no significant impact and the action will be implemented. This analysis fulfills the requirements of NEPA and the CEQ regulations. An Environmental Impact Statement will not be prepared, and the USDA ARS is issuing this FONSI.

Signed:

Archie Tucker
Area Director
Agricultural Research Service
U.S. Department of Agriculture

Date