

## **Final Notice and Public Explanation of a Proposed Activity in a Federal Flood Risk Management Standard Designated Floodplain and Wetland**

To: All interested Agencies, Groups and Individuals

This is to give notice that Sarasota County Resilient SRQ under 24 CFR Part 58 has conducted an evaluation as required by Executive Order, as amended by Executive Order 13690, and Executive Order 11990, in accordance with HUD regulations at 24 CFR 55.20 in Subpart C Procedures for Making Determinations on Floodplain Management and Wetlands Protection. The activity is funded under Infrastructure & Public Facilities Program HUD grant B-23-UN-12-0004. The proposed project location is along North Port Boulevard, crossing the Cocoplum Waterway, between Sam Shapos Way and Espanola Avenue in the City of North Port, Sarasota County, Florida and is located in the Federal Flood Risk Management Standard (FFRMS) floodplain and wetland. The extent of the FFRMS floodplain was determined using the freeboard value approach. The Zone AE 100-year floodplain (base flood elevation 10.3 feet) was determined using Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) Flood Map Panel 12115C0386C dated March 27, 2024 and riverine wetlands were identified using the US Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) National Wetlands Inventory Mapper. The proposed project is to repair and rehabilitate the bridge to restore its structural integrity after Hurricane Ian caused both hydrodynamic and bridge scour, undermining piers and structural components. The damage was initially addressed as an emergency repair to prevent bridge failure. The scope of work includes repairing concrete spalling and cracks at the post tension anchor, bridge pilaster, piles, and bent cap, repaving the bridge deck, removing and replacing expansion joints, and installing new guardrail cushion blocks, as needed. The existing bridge to be rehabilitated is approximately 375 feet long and covers an area of about 5,000 square feet (0.11 acres). The footprint of the bridge, including structural piles and existing riprap along the banks will not be altered.

Sarasota County Resilient SRQ has considered the following alternatives and mitigation measures to minimize adverse impacts and to restore and preserve natural and beneficial functions and intrinsic values of the existing floodplain/wetland:

### Alternative 1: (Proposed Project) North Port Boulevard and Cocoplum Waterway Bridge Rehabilitation:

The existing bridge would be rehabilitated to pre-Hurricane Ian standards. The erosion damage caused by the storm would be repaired, and the footings that were undermined by turbulent flood waters would be reset. This damage was addressed previously only as an emergency repair. Full rehabilitation is required to ensure the structure's structural integrity of the bridge, and to mitigate any future storm impacts. The action would occur within the FFRMS floodplain and mapped USFWS wetlands but would have a minimal impact on these resources due to the work being limited to the previous areas within the current bridge footprint.

### Alternative 2: Demolition of Existing Bridge:

Under Alternative 2, the damaged bridge would be demolished. The action would occur within the FFRMS floodplain and mapped USFWS wetland. Although this option would not require new construction or ground disturbance, it is not seen as a viable option due to the elimination of an essential roadway for the residents of North Port to evacuate in the event of a disaster, and resident access to places of employment and public facilities such as the North Port Fire Rescue Station 82, and the North Port Art Center, Children's Clothing Closet.

### Alternative 3: Demolish and Rebuild Bridge in a different location:

Under Alternative 3, the bridge would be demolished and rebuilt in a new location either east or west of the current site. This alternative would not eliminate the need for the bridge to cross the FFRMS floodplain and USFWS wetlands; it would simply shift the bridge to a new location along the Cocoplum Waterway. This alternative is not seen as feasible due to the cost that would be accrued by the City associated with land acquisition for a new location, demolishing the damaged bridge, and rebuilding an entirely new structure. There is already a bridge that crosses Cocoplum Waterway approximately 1.1- miles east of the current bridge site and another structure that crosses the waterway approximately 2,610 feet to the west. Moving the bridge would also decrease access to the City of North Port public facilities such as the North Port Fire Rescue Station 82, the North Port Art Center, Children's Clothing Closet and parks that lie directly north of the bridge for citizens living south of Cocoplum Waterway.

### No Action Alternative [24 CFR 58.40(e)]:

Under the No Action Alternative, the bridge would remain in its current damaged state, with erosion and footers undermined by the turbulent water created by Hurricane Ian. Damage would continue to accumulate to the point that the bridge would become unusable to the community it serves. One of the goals of Resilient SRQ is to assist Sarasota County with unmet recovery needs. The no action alternative would not achieve this purpose due to the bridge's damaged status and the demographics it serves.

Sarasota County Resilient SRQ has reevaluated alternatives to building in the floodplain and wetlands and has determined that it has no practicable alternative to floodplain and wetland development. Environmental files documenting compliance with Executive Order 11988, as amended by Executive Order 13690, and Executive Order 11990, are available for public inspection, review and copying upon request at the times and location delineated in the last paragraph of this notice for receipt of comments.

There are three primary purposes for this notice. First, people who may be affected by activities in floodplain and wetlands and those who have an interest in the protection of the natural environment should be given an opportunity to express their concerns and provide information about these areas. Second, an adequate public notice program can be an important public educational tool. The dissemination of information and request for public comment about floodplain and wetlands can facilitate and enhance Federal efforts to reduce the risks and impacts associated with the occupancy and modification of these special areas. Third, as a matter of fairness, when the Federal government determines it will participate in actions taking place in floodplain and wetlands, it must inform those who may be put at greater or continued risk.

Written comments must be received by Resilient SRQ at the following address on or before November 29, 2024: Resilient SRQ, 301 N. Cattlemen Rd. Suite 200 Sarasota, FL 34232 Attention Steve Hyatt, MBA, CPM, Program Management Division Manager, or by phone by calling 311 or 941-861-5309 or TTY: 7-1-1 or 1-800-955-8771 during the hours of 9:00 AM to 5:00 PM. Comments may also be submitted via email at [shyatt@scgov.net](mailto:shyatt@scgov.net).

Date: November 22, 2024