

Decision Notice
& Finding of No Significant Impact
Reconstruction of Angeles National Forest Supervisor's Office
USDA Forest Service
Angeles National Forest
Los Angeles County, California
T1N; R11W; Section 28

Decision and Reasons for the Decision

Background

The Angeles National Forest Supervisor's Office ("SO") provides overall management and specialist services to the three Districts comprising the Forest. In addition to housing a staff of approximately 100, it is a hub for a myriad of activities involving public and private stakeholders. Until 1986, the SO occupied several floors of the Hilton Hotel on Los Robles Avenue in Pasadena, California. In 1986, it moved to its current location at 701 North Santa Anita Avenue in Arcadia, California. The current site consists of 10 acres of relatively flat land abutting the Foothill (I-210) Freeway to the north and Santa Anita Avenue to the East. The site came into federal ownership in the 1930s for the purpose of providing much needed maintenance and storage yard and structures to serve the Forest. When the SO moved to the current site in 1986, a temporary building was assembled out of 22 pre-constructed modular units (totaling 18,360 square feet) to accommodate the staff from the Hilton Hotel. Since the component modular units were not designed to be subdivided, most office stations have poor ventilation and natural lighting, resulting in inefficient energy use. Although a foundation system was added to the building in the 1990s, this temporary building has served over 23 years to date – well exceeding the 10 to 15 year design life of its component modular units.

During the 23 years in which the SO has been at the current site, the population and density of the Greater Los Angeles Metropolitan Area has increased substantially. As a result, the open space provided by the ANF has increased in importance, and the related activities at the SO have expanded in scope and volume. These activities include frequent meetings with public and private entities, indoor and outdoor fire training for Federal, County, and City fire departments, public open houses related to specific projects or issues, and public events such as recruitment and outreach. The existing building can no longer satisfactorily accommodate all these activities. In addition, the electrical, mechanical, plumbing and HVAC components are outdated and inefficient. The temporary building at the SO needs to be replaced with a new, energy efficient building capable of accommodating the increased activities at the SO. The SO building replacement will also eliminate a 2,428 square foot building built in 1941 used by the Southern California Contracting Unit, a 957 square foot conference building built in 1938, and a 1568 square foot law enforcement building built in 1960. Staff from these buildings will be co-located in the proposed building.

Decision

Based upon my review of all alternatives, I have decided to implement Alternative 2 which replaces the Angeles National Forest SO building with a new building on the same site at 701 North Santa Anita Avenue, Arcadia, California.

When compared to the other alternatives this alternative will (i) replace the existing, outdated space into an efficient space for office staff and public interaction; (ii) improve energy efficiency and reduce the carbon footprint of the Supervisor's Office through better insulation, natural lighting and ventilation, with replaced electrical, mechanical, plumbing, and HVAC components; and (iii) eliminate deferred maintenance costs associated with the buildings to be replaced.

The new replacement building will be able to accommodate the increased activities at the SO. These activities include frequent meetings with public and private entities, indoor and outdoor fire training for Federal, County, and City fire departments, public open houses related to specific projects or issues, and public events such as recruitment and outreach.

This decision is consistent with the Angeles National Forest Supervisor's Office Location Analysis, dated July 26, 2002, which decided that the best location for the Angeles SO is in the current location in Arcadia.

My decision is based on a review of the record that shows a thorough review of relevant scientific information, a consideration of responsible opposing views, and the acknowledgment of incomplete or unavailable information, scientific uncertainty, and risk

Other Alternatives Considered

In addition to the selected alternative, I considered one other alternative. A comparison of these alternatives can be found in the EA on page 11.

Alternative 1

No Action

Under the No Action alternative, current management plans would continue to guide management of the project area, and the SO will indefinitely remain in its temporary modular building at 701 N. Santa Anita Avenue, Arcadia, California.

Public Involvement

As described in the background, the need for this action arose in 1986 when the SO was relocated from Pasadena to its current location in Arcadia. A proposal to replace the SO buildings was listed in the Schedule of Proposed Actions on July 24, 2009. The proposal was provided to the public and other agencies for comment during scoping July 24 to August 28, 2009. In addition, as part of the public involvement process, the agency A copy of the scoping letter was distributed or left at the front door of the approximately 50 residences on the street along the southwest property line of the property. In addition, as part of the public involvement process, the agency mailed out a scoping letter seeking input on this project, to 952 recipients on the Forest scoping mailing list. The Cities of Arcadia and Sierra Madre as well as the local offices of congressional members were contacted by telephone on July 27 and 28, 2009. The scoping letter was posted on the Angeles National Forest webpage on July 27, 2009. A newspaper advertisement was placed in the Los Angeles Times on July 27, 2009, announcing the project and showing how to get additional information about it. On July 29, 2009 a short note and link to the scoping letter was provided on the Angeles National Forest Twitter account, which had 479 subscribers at the time. The scoping letter was sent electronically (by email) to all

Angeles National Forest employees on July 28, 2009. Five comments were received.

Using the comments (see *Issues* section), the interdisciplinary team identified several issues regarding the effects of the proposed action. Main issues of concern included:

1. Impact to public service
2. Impact to Forest Service employees
3. Impact on accessibility
4. Impact on “Greening” of the Forest Service
5. Impact to cultural/heritage resources

(see EA pages 6 and 7). These concerns were addressed by the Forest Service in the alternatives described above.

Finding of No Significant Impact

After considering the environmental effects described in the EA, I have determined that these actions will not have a significant effect on the quality of the human environment considering the context and intensity of impacts (40 CFR 1508.27). Thus, an environmental impact statement will not be prepared. I base my finding on the following:

1. My finding of no significant environmental effects is not biased by the beneficial effects of the action.
2. There will be no significant effects on public health and safety, because the new building will provide an efficient, safe, and user-friendly space for its staff, and will meet the accessibility requirements of the 1973 Rehabilitation Act (with 1978 amendment) (see EA pages 12 and 13).
3. There will be no significant effects on unique characteristics of the area, because (i) according to the biological evaluation/ biological assessment, “the proposed project will not affect any threatened or endangered species or its critical habitat ... [and] the proposed project will not affect any Forest Service Sensitive species;” and (ii) no historic properties are located on site (see EA pages 6 and 14).
4. The effects on the quality of the human environment are not likely to be highly controversial. Because there is no known scientific controversy over the impacts of the project (see EA page 4).
5. We have considerable experience with the types of activities to be implemented. The effects analysis shows the effects are not uncertain, and do not involve unique or unknown risk (see EA page 4).
6. The action is not likely to establish a precedent for future actions with significant effects, because the project consists of replacing a commercial building within a commercial area in the City of Arcadia (see EA page 3).
7. The cumulative impacts are not significant (see EA pages 11 to 14).

8. The action will have no significant adverse effect on districts, sites, highways, structures, or objects listed in or eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places, because, in consultation with the California Office of Historic Preservation (USFS840305B-I, 1984; USFS900917E, 1990), it has been determined, by consensus, that no historic properties are located in the APE for the current undertaking. To-date, subsurface investigations within the compound have not yielded materials considered eligible for the National Register of Historic Places. (see EA pages 14). The action will also not cause loss or destruction of significant scientific, cultural, or historical resources, because (see EA page 14).
9. The action will not adversely affect any endangered or threatened species or its habitat that has been determined to be critical under the Endangered Species act of 1973 because, according to the Biological Evaluation/ Biological Assessment, “the proposed project will not affect any threatened or endangered species or its critical habitat ... [and] the proposed project will not affect any Forest Service Sensitive species.” (see EA page 6).
10. The action will not violate Federal, State, and local laws or requirements for the protection of the environment. Applicable laws and regulations were considered in the EA (see EA pages 5 to 7). The action is consistent with the Angeles National Forest Land and Resource Management Plan (See EA page 2).

Findings Required by Other Laws and Regulations

This decision to implement Alternative 2 which replaces the Angeles National Forest SO building with a new building on the same site at 701 North Santa Anita Avenue, Arcadia, California, is consistent with the intent of the forest plan's long term goals and objectives listed in Part 2, page 117. The project was designed in conformance with land and resource management plan standards and incorporates appropriate land and resource management plan guidelines for Facility Maintenance Backlog (Land and Resource Management Plan, Part 2, page 117).

Administrative Review or Appeal Opportunities

This decision is subject to administrative review (appeal) pursuant to 36 CFR Part 215. Individuals or organizations who submitted substantive comments during the comment period specified at 215.6 may appeal this decision. No substantive comments expressing concerns or only supportive comments were received during the comment period for a proposed action analyzed and documented in an EA (36 CFR 215.6). Therefore, the decision is not subject to appeal pursuant to 36 CFR 215.12(e), projects or activities for which notice of the proposed action and opportunity to comment is published (36 CFR 215.5).

Implementation Date

Implementation of the decision may occur immediately after signing this Decision Notice.

Contact

For additional information concerning this decision or the Forest Service appeal process, contact George Farra, Assistant Forest Engineer, Angeles National Forest, 701 N. Santa Anita Ave, Arcadia, CA 91006, (626)574-5301, gfarra@fs.fed.us.

JODY NOIRON
Forest Supervisor
Angeles National Forest

Date

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