

## FINDING OF NO SIGNIFICANT IMPACT

The National Environmental Policy Act of 1969 (NEPA) requires Federal agencies to consider the potential environmental impacts prior to undertaking a course of action. Within the National Science Foundation (NSF), NEPA is implemented through regulations promulgated by the Council on Environmental Quality (40 Code of Federal Regulations [CFR] Parts 1500-1508). In adherence with NEPA, the NSF has prepared an Environmental Assessment (EA) to consider the environmental effects of the proposed construction and operation of a National Center for Atmospheric Research (NCAR) – Wyoming Supercomputer Center (NWSC) to be located in Cheyenne, Wyoming.

**Purpose and Need:** One of NCAR's primary areas of activity is the development and operation of complex numerical models of the climate and weather systems. These models serve as a community resource and are widely used throughout the U.S. and abroad. For example, the NCAR climate model provided more than half of the simulations used in the most recent report of the International Panel on Climate Change (IPCC). These large community models require powerful supercomputing resources and generate very large amounts of data that must be carefully archived. The NCAR high-performance computing facilities are currently located at the Mesa Laboratory, in Boulder; however, this site has only limited power available and is unable to support further upgrades to the system. It is therefore proposed that the principal NCAR facilities be relocated to a new site, where a partnership has been established between UCAR, the University of Wyoming, the State of Wyoming, Cheyenne Laramie County Corporation for Economic Development (LEADS), the Wyoming Business Council, and Cheyenne Light, Fuel & Power to build the NCAR-Wyoming Supercomputing Center (NWSC) in Cheyenne.

**Description of Action:** A proposed NWSC would be built on a 24-acre site located on the northwest corner of the intersection of Prosperity Drive and Logistics Drive in the North Range Business Park (NRBR) in Cheyenne, Laramie County, Wyoming. The NWSC would house high-performance computers, mass storage (data archival) systems, and required mechanical and electrical infrastructure. It would also include office space, meeting rooms and a visitor/public area. Plans call for the building to showcase sustainable technologies and energy efficient design and operation with Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED) certification being a requirement. A number of alternative site locations were evaluated in the EA and dismissed from further consideration. The Proposed Action Alternative and the No Action Alternative were fully evaluated in this EA:

- **Proposed Action Alternative** consists of the proposed construction of the planned NWSC at the North Range Business Range in Cheyenne, Wyoming, as described above.
- **The No Action Alternative** involves the premise that the NWSC is not constructed.

**NEPA Process:** An analysis of the potential environmental impacts associated with each alternative is addressed in the *National Center for Atmospheric Research Wyoming Supercomputer Center Final Environmental Assessment, April 2010*. The findings of this EA are incorporated into this final decision document.

Public comments were received up to 30 days following the EA's announcement. Comments received to the EA are included as Appendix B in the Final EA. Relevant concerns have been incorporated into the Final EA and the Finding of No Significant Impact (FONSI).

**Discussion of Anticipated Environmental Effects:** Impacts associated with the implementation of the Proposed Action Alternative and the No Action Alternative would range from beneficial impacts to minor adverse impacts to the natural and human environment, as summarized in Table 1.

In addition, the cumulative effects analysis determined that no significant adverse cumulative impacts would occur to the resource/issues (Table 1) as a result of past, present, and foreseeable future projects in conjunction with the Proposed Action.

**Table 1. Summary of Potential Environmental Effects for the Proposed Action and No Action Alternative**

Resource/Issue	Alternatives	
	Alternative 1	No Action
Land Use	Minor	None
Soils	Minor	None
Vegetation and Forestry	Minor	None
Invasive Species	Minor	None
Wildlife and Fisheries	Minor	None
Threatened and Endangered Species/Species of Concern	Minor	None
Surface Water	Minor	None
Groundwater	Minor	None
Air Quality	Minor	None
Noise	Minor	None
Hazardous Materials and Waste	Minor	None
Fire Management	Minor	None
Public Access and Recreation	Minor	None
Socioeconomics	Beneficial	None
Human Health and Safety	Minor	None
Cultural Resources	Minor	None
Visual Quality/Aesthetics	Minor	None
Traffic and transportation	Minor	None
Infrastructure	Minor	None

**Conclusions:** Based on the review of the information contained in the EA, the NSF has determined that the implementation of the Proposed Action with accompanying management plans, policies, and regulatory requirements would not significantly affect the quality of the environment within the meaning of NEPA Section 102(2)(C). The preparation of an Environmental Impact Statement for the Proposed Action is, therefore, not required.

**Public Review and Comment Period:** The Draft EA was made available for a 30-day public comment period beginning 24 February 2010 and continuing through 26 March 2010. Notices of the availability of the Draft EA were placed in the Wyoming Tribune Eagle (24 February 2010) and the Caspar Star Tribune (24 February 2010). Copies of the Draft EA were provided to the Laramie County Library and the Wyoming State Library in Cheyenne, and the offices of Cheyenne LEADS for public review. The Draft EA was also posted on the NSF website.

Agency coordination was conducted with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Wyoming Game and Fish Department, the Natural Heritage Program, and the State Historic Preservation Office. Agency coordination letters are included in Appendix A of the Final EA. Comments to the Draft EA were

received from the Wyoming State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO), Wyoming State Game & Fish Department (WG&F), Cheyenne Board of Public Utilities (BPU), and Cheyenne Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO). The SHPO concurred that the proposed project described in the Draft EA would have no adverse effect upon historic properties. The WG&F stated that the project site was in crucial winter range for the pronghorn antelope, but that it concurred with the overall finding of no adverse impact. The BPU provided a clarifying note regarding the US Army Corps of Engineers ongoing work to treat and remove TCE at the Borie wellfield. The Cheyenne MPO recommended the inclusion of a reference to a Wyoming Department of Transportation intersection study. A summary of comments received on the Draft EA, responses to the comments, and annotated copies of commenting correspondence are included in Appendix B of the Final EA.

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**Approved by:**

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Sarah Ruth', written over a horizontal line.

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