

Department of Homeland Security-Federal Emergency Management Agency

PUBLIC NOTICE

Notice of the Availability of the Programmatic Environmental Assessment for
NYS Early Warning Weather Detection System
Statewide, New York

The U.S. Department of Homeland Security-Federal Emergency Management Agency (DHS-FEMA) proposes to provide federal funding to the Research Foundation of the State University of New York (SUNY-RF), as Subgrantee, to mitigate the impact of future weather events in NYS and increase the state's resiliency by improving weather detection capabilities. Funding would be provided through FEMA's Hazard Mitigation Grant Program, in accordance with Section 404 of the Robert T. Stafford Disaster Relief and Emergency Assistance Act of 1974 (42 U.S.C. 5172), as amended. The New York State Division of Homeland Security and Emergency Services (NYS DHSES) is the Grantee.

A Programmatic Environmental Assessment (PEA) has been prepared to assess the potential impacts of the proposed action on the human and natural environment. The PEA describes the purpose and need, project alternatives, the affected environment, potential environmental consequences and proposed mitigation measures. The alternatives considered are: (1) No Action and (2) Construct NYS Early Warning Weather Detection System (Proposed Action). The PEA evaluates alternatives against applicable environmental laws, regulations and Executive Orders, including but not limited to the Clean Water Act, the National Historic Preservation Act and Executive Orders 11988 (Floodplain Management) and 11990 (Protection of Wetlands). The PEA analysis is programmatic in nature and does not address individual site-specific impacts, which would be evaluated by FEMA for individual projects prior to approval.

SUNY-RF proposes a Mesonet system, which is a network measuring mesoscale meteorological phenomena, would consist of an estimated 125 surface weather stations to detect weather across the state of New York. Seventeen of these stations are proposed with additional instrumentation to remotely gather above-ground meteorological data using profiling technology. SUNY-RF proposed approximate site locations throughout the state based on the weather detection goals of the system. SUNY-RF prefers to locate sites on publicly owned land to reduce private land acquisition and environmental impacts. SUNY-RF's site selection would be refined by practical considerations of things such as land ownership, road access, avoidance of floodplains, wetlands, species habitat, archaeological resources, and ensuring that counties and their populations are appropriately served. Publicly owned land includes the 64 SUNY campuses, affiliated community colleges, public schools, and municipal lands, as well as lands under the ownership or administrative jurisdiction of other agencies such as the NYS Canal Corporation and the Departments of Transportation, Office of Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation, and Environmental Conservation.

If the project is expected to create impacts not described in the PEA; create impacts greater in magnitude, extent, or duration than those described in the PEA; or require mitigation measures that are not described in the PEA to keep impacts below significant levels; then a Supplemental Environmental Assessment (SEA) would be prepared to address the specific action.

The PEA will be made available for review online at the following website: <https://http://nysmesonet.org/news>.

The PEA will also be made available for review at the State University of New York at Albany, State University of New York at Stony Brook, State University of New York at Binghamton, and State University of New York at Buffalo.

The comment period for the PEA will end 15 days from the date of the posting of the PEA on the SUNY-RF website and distribution to the SUNY offices which ever date is later. Written comments on the PEA can be mailed to FEMA 4085, 118-35 Queens Boulevard, Forest Hills, NY 11375 or emailed to comment4085fema@fema.dhs.gov. If no substantive comments are received, the EA will become final and a Finding of No Significant Impact (FONSI) will be signed.