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Early Notice and Public Review of a Proposed Activity in a Federal Flood Risk Management Standard Designated Floodplain May 23, 2024

To: All interested Agencies U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, Federal Emergency Management Agency Office of the Governor, Region II Environmental Protection Agency, National Oceanographic and Atmospheric Administration, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Department of Planning and Natural Resources, Territorial Emergency Management Agency, Department of Public Works, Economic Development Authority, Virgin Islands Port Authority, Groups, and Individuals

This is to give notice that the Virgin Island Housing Finance Authority (VIHFA) under their authority as Responsible Entity pursuant to 24 CFR Part 58.4 has determined that the following proposed action of the acquisition of the Liquid Propane Gas (LPG) infrastructure at the Richmond Power Plant in St. Christiansted, St. Croix under the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development Community Development Block Grant-Mitigation (CDBG-MIT) grant, Grant Number P-17-VI-78-HIM1 is located in the Federal Flood Risk Management Standard (FFRMS) floodplain and VIHFA will be identifying and evaluating practicable alternatives to the acquisition of the LPG infrastructure within the FFRMS floodplain and the potential impacts on the FFRMS floodplain as required by Executive Order 11988, as amended by Executive Order 13690, in accordance with HUD regulations at 24 CFR 55.20 in Subpart C Procedures for Making Determinations on Floodplain Management and Protection of Wetlands. The proposed project is located with the Virgin Islands Water and Power Authority's (VIWAPA) Richmond Power Plant. The Richmond Power Plant is located on Parcel Nos. 6 and 8 Penitentiary Land and Parcel 6A Reclaimed Land, in Christiansted, St. Croix (17°45.106'N Latitude and 64°42.912'W Longitude) (Figure 1). The power plant produces all the public power and water for the island of St. Croix. The plant includes reverse osmosis water production plants, 5 fuel oil storage tanks, 2 waste oil tank, 4 gas turbines, a powerhouse, transformer storage, chemical storage, a spill cleanup warehouse, a temporary storage yard, office buildings, storage warehouses, a fuel pier with a combined discharge outfall, and a submerge seawater intake. The Liquid Propane Gas (LPG) infrastructure is located to the west of the main power plant. The LPG infrastructure is currently owned by Vitol LLC. CDBG-DR MIT funds are proposed for the acquisition of the LPG infrastructure including the fuel loading arms, LPG pipelines from the fuel dock to the LPG storage tanks, LPG pipelines from the storage tanks to the vaporizer, the fire suppression system, and the control system. The location of the Power Plant and the LPG infrastructure proposed to be acquired is functionally dependent on access to the navigable water. The LPG infrastructure is in place and in operation.

The acquisition of the infrastructure is critical to USVI's energy supply. The piers, infrastructure, and equipment (e.g., LPG system pumps, pipes, and fire suppression system) to be acquired, need to be in close proximity to the water to serve their purpose (i.e., offload and transport of LPG from cargo ships to storage tanks).

The Richmond Power facility is located on the north shore of St. Croix in Christiansted Harbor. The shoreline and offshore waters are within FEMA 100-year flood zones. The extent of the FFRMS floodplain is 3.5 acres as determined by the Freeboard Value Approach (FVA). The facility is a Critical Action as defined by 24 CFR 55.2(b)(3)(i) (the acquisition of facilities which store highly volatile materials for a power generating plant). The FFRMS floodplain as determined by the FVA was determined to be 20 ft. An ABFE map that was used to define the base flood elevation for the freeboard value approach can be found here:

<http://fema.maps.arcgis.com/home/webmap/viewer.html?webmap=a92ce1763cb5416dafa01b84757a5af9>

(Figure 2). The 3.5 acres of FFRMS floodplain includes areas of the existing fuel pier which extends into and contains areas of VE1% EL: 17ft along both sides of the pier, and around the end of the pier. The VE flood zone also extends along the shoreline to both the east and west of the pier that are within VE 1% EL:17ft where it has been determined that there is a 1% chance of coastal flooding with velocity (wave action) to elevation 17ft. The middle of the pier and just shoreward of the VE zone is an area of AE 1% EL: 13ft where the 1% coastal flooding has been determined to be 13ft. Shoreward of the AE 1% EL:13ft zone is a narrow band of AE 1% E:12ft where the 1% coastal flooding has been determined to be 12ft (Figure 3). Moving inland, the site is within FEMA flood Zone X where 100-year coastal flooding is not expected. However, in order to address increasing hazards utilizing the FVA for critical actions, the FFRMS floodplain extends to 20ft of elevation. The fuel loading arms, part of the LPG pipelines from the fuel dock to the LPG storage tanks, and the fire suppression system, are within the VE and AE FEMA flood zones and part of the LPG pipelines from the fuel dock to the LPG storage tanks, the LPG storage bunkers and tanks, and part of the LPG pipelines from the storage tanks to the vaporizer are within the FFRMS floodplain (Figure 4).

The LPG infrastructure to be acquired is on 0.15 acres of the 3.5-acre FFRMs floodplain. The assets that will be acquired include the marine loading arm, piping (supply lines) from the dock to the tanks, vaporizing skids and power generating turbines as well as firefighting equipment. The occupied 0.15-acre floodplain is a highly altered coastline adjacent to an industrial plant and as such does not provide habitat for flora or fauna. The shoreline is highly altered and does not have any historic or cultural use and is not used for any recreational purposes, however it does provide coastal access. The site does allow for erosion control and has a water quality function as sheet flow passes across the graveled and grassed shoreline. The existing LPG infrastructure does not have a negative impact on the floodplain as the piping and loading arm and related mechanical equipment is all elevated above ground level and does not impede stormwater or runoff.

There are three primary purposes for this notice. First, people who may be affected by activities in the floodplain 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. Commenters are encouraged to offer alternative sites outside of the floodplain, alternative methods to serve the same project purpose, and methods to minimize and mitigate project impacts on the [floodplain/wetland]. Second, an adequate public notice program can be an important public educational tool. The dissemination of information and request for public comment about floodplain 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, it must inform those who may be put at greater or continued risk.

Written comments must be received by VIHFA at the following address on or before on June 7, 2024, VIHFA Virgin Islands Housing Finance Authority, 3202 Demarara Plaza, Suite 200, St. Thomas, VI 00802-6447 and (340) 777-4432, Attention: Ms. Dayna Clendinen, Chief Disaster Recovery Officer, during the hours of 9:00 AM to 5:00 PM. Comments may also be submitted via email at [dclendinen@vihfa.gov].

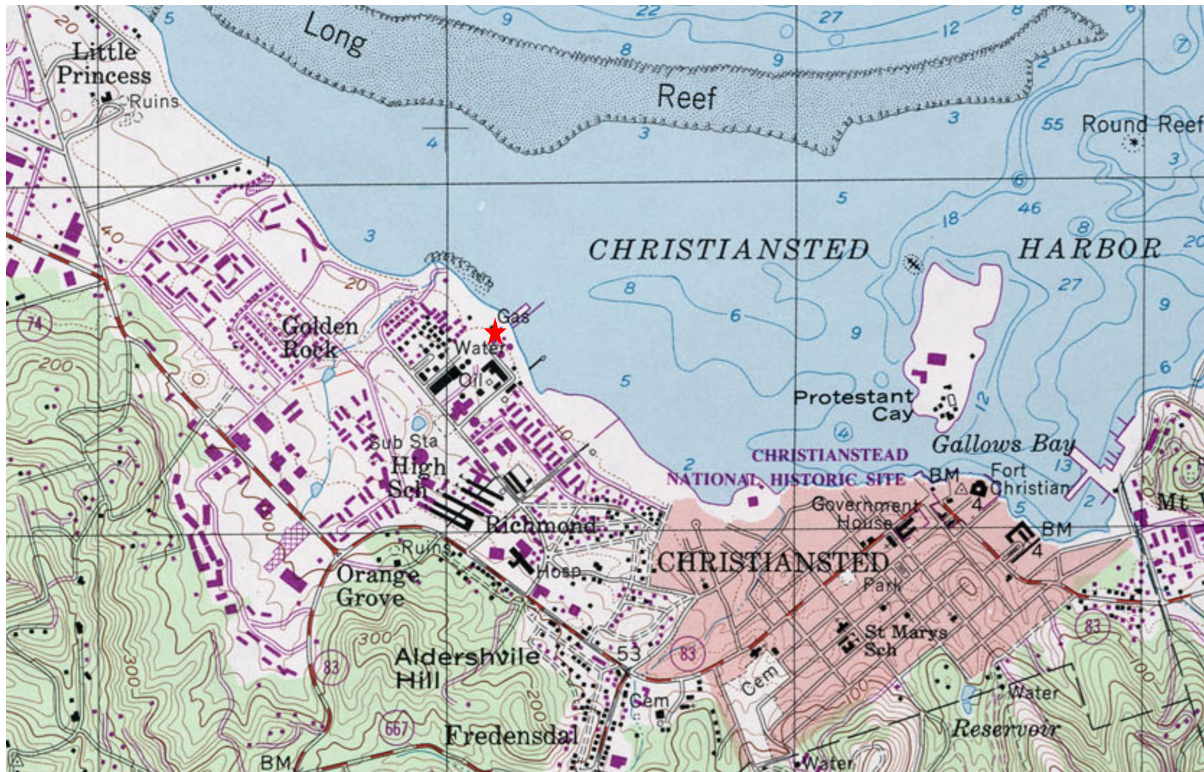
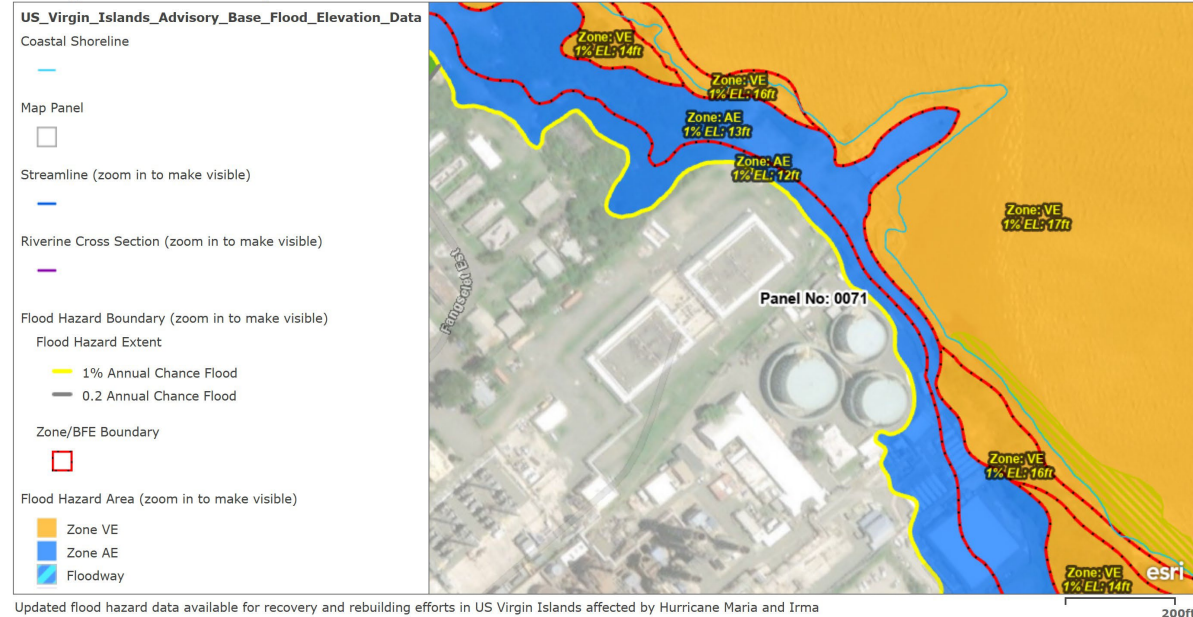


Figure 1. Christiansted Quadrangle Map, U.S. Virgin Islands 7.5 Minutes Series : Project Location shown as red star.

US Virgin Islands - Advisory Flood Hazard Resources Map



Updated flood hazard data available for recovery and rebuilding efforts in US Virgin Islands affected by Hurricane Maria and Irma

Figure 2. Advisory Base Flood Elevation map used to determine the base flood elevation for the freeboard value approach.

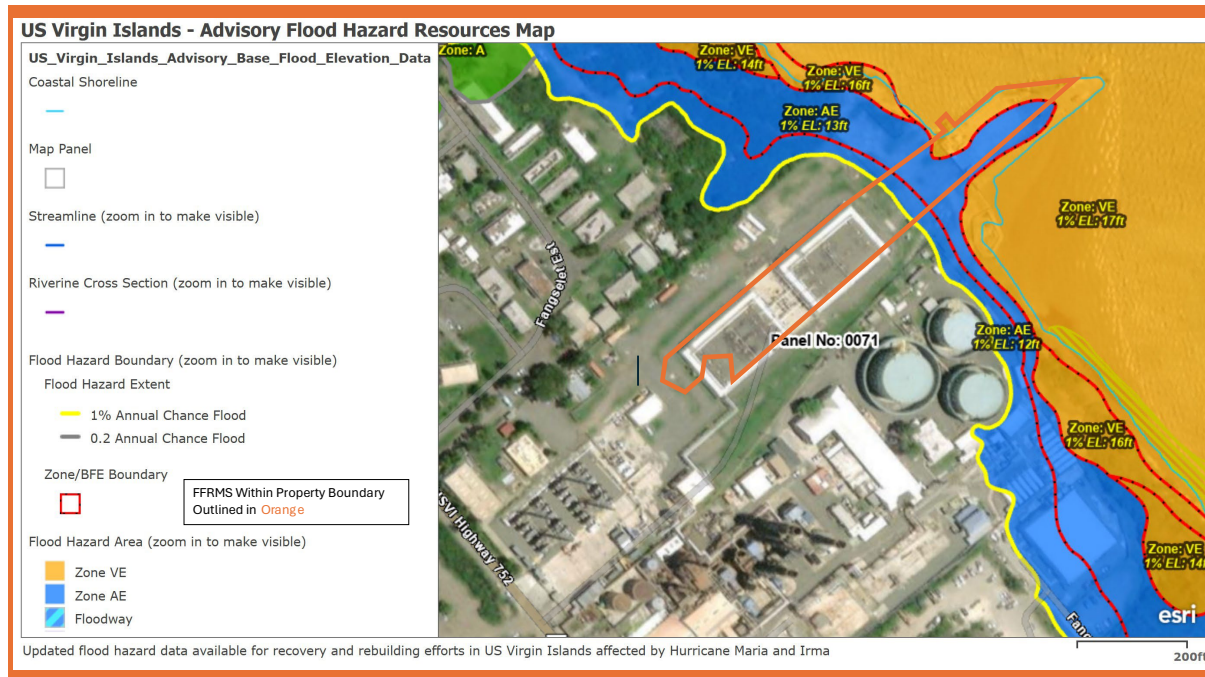


Figure 3. FEMA Flood Zone VE, Flood Zone AE, and Flood Zone X and FFRMS Floodplain within the VIWAPA Property containing the LPG Infrastructure.

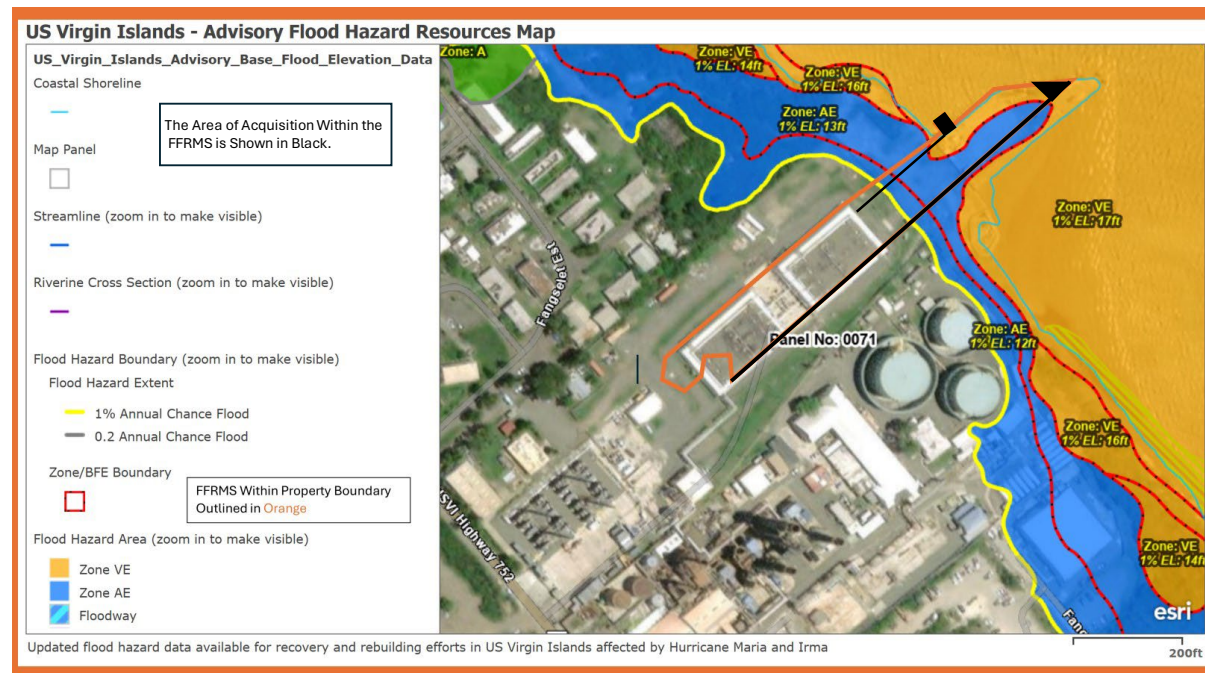


Figure 4. The area of acquisition within the FFRMS is shown in black.