

January 29, 2025

MEMORANDUM FOR THE RECORD

From: Joe Barger
NEPA Coordinator

Subject: Categorical Exclusion
Record of Environmental Consideration

Project Title: Analytical Laboratory Modernization and Expansion

Location: University of Maine
Deering Hall
Grove Street Ext.
Orono, Maine 04469

The National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) and associated implementing regulations (40 CFR Parts 1500-1508) require that all major actions by federal agencies be reviewed with respect to the environmental consequences on the human environment. The National Institute of Standards and Technology (NIST) is providing a congressionally directed funding grant for the Analytical Laboratory Modernization and Expansion project at the University of Maine. Consequently, NEPA and the associated implementing regulations apply to this project.

This memorandum provides a Record of Environmental Consideration and summarizes the determination that the Analytical Laboratory Modernization and Expansion at the University of Maine has been found to be categorically excluded from any further environmental review under NEPA.

Description of the Action

This project includes the modernization and expansion of the University of Maine (UMaine) Analytical Laboratory and Soil Testing Service (Maine Analytical Laboratory). The Maine Analytical Laboratory is housed in Deering Hall on the UMaine Campus. Deering Hall's total

size is 50,001 square feet. This project will renovate approximately 5,200 square feet of laboratory space, office space and general storage and support space. All work will be completed within the building envelope (on the fourth floor and basement).

The Maine Analytical Laboratory is the most comprehensive lab of its type in New England, providing many critical soil, plant, compost, and manure testing services that are not available in labs in neighboring states. This modernization and expansion project will:

- Bolster Maine's ability to drive research and leadership on per- and polyfluoroalkyl substances (PFAS),
- Enable researchers to carry out work that addresses current and future issues such as food insecurity, climate change, and building local economies to be resilient and adaptable in the face of global change,
- Support conservation efforts and workforce training needed by state agencies and federal partners including U.S. Department of Agriculture Rural Development Service and the Natural Resources Conservation Service, and
- Improve support for the \$681M agricultural industry in Maine

This project will be accomplished in accordance with all applicable state and federal environmental and safety regulations. All applicable regulatory permitting will be obtained.

Specific Considerations of this Action and any Extraordinary Circumstances

- Existing Site

This project will be limited to interior work only within Deering Hall. Deering Hall is a standard academic, teaching and research building on the UMaine Campus and is the current location of the Maine Analytical Laboratory.

- Endangered Species and Critical Habitats

This project will solely impact the interior of Deering Hall. No endangered species or critical habitats will be impacted.

- Wetlands, Flooding Potential and Resilience

The site is located outside of any 100- and 500-year flood hazard areas (FEMA). The renovations planned are valued at less than half the cost of a full building replacement.

- **Stormwater**

This project will solely impact the interior of Deering Hall. No impacts to stormwater are expected.

- **Building Staffing/Utilities**

Staffing and student populations are not expected to increase significantly due to the planned renovations. Utility use (i.e., electricity, natural gas, water, sewer) is not expected to change significantly due to the renovations planned.

Local roadways have capacity for a temporary increase in traffic during construction.

- **Air Quality/Greenhouse Gas Emissions**

Greenhouse Gas emissions are not expected to change significantly due to the renovations planned.

- **Hazardous Materials**

Hazardous materials use and hazardous waste generation are expected to be similar to current operations at Deering Hall. Hazardous wastes are managed in accordance with the UMaine Chemical Waste Management Policy, and State and Federal regulations.

Asbestos and lead based paint have been identified in the construction areas of this project. Any of these materials which may be disturbed during construction will be properly handled and disposed in compliance with State and Federal regulations.

- **Historic/Cultural Significance**

This project will only impact the interior of Deering Hall. No adverse impacts to historic properties are expected. The Maine Historic Preservation Officer concurred with this finding in NIST's letter on 1/8/25 (attached).

- **Environmental Justice**

Due to the nature of the project, no disproportional adverse human health or environmental impacts to overburdened and underserved communities, including minority, Tribal, or low-income populations are expected.

Effects of the Action

No significant adverse impacts on the environment are expected from this action.

Categorical Exclusion

The activities associated with this project fall within the criteria of the following Department of Commerce Categorical Exclusion (CATEX):

A-1 Minor renovations and additions to buildings, roads, airfields, grounds, equipment, and other facilities that do not result in a change in the functional use of the real property (e.g. realigning interior spaces of an existing building, adding a small storage shed to an existing building, retrofitting for energy conservation, or installing a small antenna on an already existing antenna tower that does not cause the total height to exceed 200 feet and where the FCC would not require an environmental assessment or environmental impact statement for the installation). This CE does not apply in instances where the project must be submitted to the National Capital Planning Commission (NCPC) for review and NCPC determines that it does not have an applicable Categorical Exclusion.

This project is considered a minor renovation of a building that does not change the functional use of the real property. The project does not require review by the NCPC.

The proposed activity: Analytical Laboratory Modernization and Expansion at the University of Maine is categorically excluded from the need for further environmental review under NEPA. Any changes to the above project will require additional NEPA review.

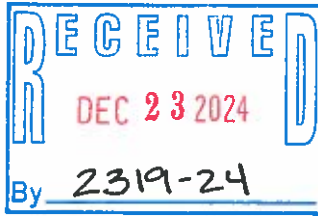
Joe Barger
NIST NEPA Coordinator

1/30/25

Date

Robert C. Vaughn
NIST Chief Facilities Management Officer

Date



23 December 2024

Mr. Kirk F. Mohney,
State Historic Preservation Officer
Maine Historic Preservation Commission
55 Capitol Street
65 State House Station
Augusta, Maine, 04333-0065

Re: Analytical Laboratory Modernization & Expansion
at the University of Maine, Orono, ME

Dear Mr. Mohney:


The National Institute of Standards and Technology (NIST), an agency of the U.S. Department of Commerce in accordance with the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966 (as Amended) and its implementing regulations 36 CFR 800 is notifying you that it is administering a grant for the design and construction of the above noted project in accordance with the terms of the Consolidated Appropriations Act of 2024 [Public Law 118-142]. Thus, the Analytical Laboratory Modernization and Expansion constitutes an Undertaking as defined by 36 CFR 800.16(y). The modernization and expansion of the Analytical Lab is currently planned to occur within Deering Hall, where the Lab is currently housed and is limited to interior work only. Deering Hall's total size is 50,001 square feet. Deering Hall is located on the main campus of the University of Maine, in Orono (see attached site plan). Of the total 6839 square feet to be utilized for the Analytical Lab, 5206 square feet will undergo interior renovation. (see attached floor plan and photo).

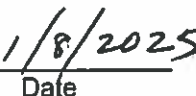
Deering Hall was constructed in 1948 but is just outside the boundary of the University of Maine Historic District and is not a contributing resource (see attached campus map). Due to the proposed work taking place only on the building's interior, NIST has determined that the Undertaking has no potential to adversely affect historic properties as defined within by 36 CFR 800.3 (a)(1). NIST seeks your concurrence on this finding. To do so, kindly sign below and return a copy of this note for my records.

In advance, thank you.

Phillip W. Neuberg, FAIA
Federal Historic Preservation Officer

Concurrence:


Kirk Mohney, SHPO


Date

- Attachments: 1) Deering Hall - Analytical Laboratory - Interior Photos
 2) Deering Hall - Analytical Laboratory Site Plan
 3) Deering Hall - Floor Plans
 4) University of Maine Historic District Campus Map
 5) Deering Hall - Analytical Laboratory Site / Historic District Proximity