

January 29, 2025

MEMORANDUM FOR THE RECORD

From: Joe Barger
NEPA Coordinator

Subject: Categorical Exclusion
Record of Environmental Consideration

Project Title: Sustainable Aquaculture Workforce Innovation Center

Location: University of Maine
168 College Ave.
Orono, ME 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 construction of the Sustainable Aquaculture Workforce Innovation Center 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 Sustainable Aquaculture Workforce Innovation Center at the University of Maine has been found to be categorically excluded from any further environmental review under NEPA.

Description of the Action

The Sustainable Aquaculture Workforce Innovation Center (SAWIC) project includes the construction of a pre-engineered metal building on a cast-in-place concrete foundation. The SAWIC building will have two distinct sections with a total of 14,200 square feet of floor space. One section is a high bay approximately 65 feet wide and 80 feet long, and the second section is approximately 45 feet wide and 80 feet long and will be built with a low roof.

The building will house an aquaculture teaching and research facility, and will be built out with wet laboratories, tank farms, classrooms, office space, mechanical rooms and storage areas.

The purpose of the new SAWIC building is to provide a state-of-the-art facility for workforce training and research in cold-water aquaculture. The center is designed to support sustainable economic development, food security, climate resilience and innovation in the aquaculture industry. It will also foster collaboration with Maine aquaculture entities and rural and indigenous communities such as the Penobscot Nation.

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

The proposed site for the new SAWIC Building is located in the central portion of the University of Maine (UMaine) Campus in a highly developed area. The SAWIC building will be built on the site of the previous Aquaculture Research Center Building which has been demolished. The site is located east of Perkins Hall (an older single-story building) with access to Sebago Road. The Site is bound by the Belgrade parking lot to the north and east and a tree line to the south. The site is currently an open grassed lot.

- Endangered Species and Critical Habitats

Endangered and threatened species are known to exist in the area of the UMaine Campus; however, no critical habitats are anticipated on the project site. The site has been previously disturbed by the construction and demolition of a former building.

- Wetlands, Flooding Potential and Resilience

The project site is located outside of FEMA 100- and 500-year flood hazard areas. The nearest flood zone is 3,050 feet west of the project site and at an elevation of 120 feet, so the project site is 40 ft above the flood zone elevation. No future flood hazards, projected due to climate change, are anticipated.

A full delineation of wetlands on the UMaine Campus was completed in 2010. There are no wetlands that will be impacted by this project.

- Coastal Zones

The UMaine Campus is located in a coastal zone and is permitted under the Site Location and Development (SLOD) Law. A SLOD application will be submitted for this project. Review of the SLOD application constitutes the State's consistency review for federally

licensed, permitted or funded activities in the Coastal Zone in accordance with the Maine Coastal Program and the Federal Coastal Zone Management Act. This project will meet any findings of the SLOD review.

- **Stormwater**

This project will require a Maine Department of Environmental Protection Construction General Permit and a Stormwater Permit for construction and post-construction stormwater management procedures. Best Management Practices will be implemented to control runoff during construction and to provide quality and quantity treatment of runoff post construction. The project will meet State of Maine stormwater management rules.

- **Building Staffing/Utilities**

Staffing and student populations are not expected to increase significantly due to the operation of the new SAWIC Building. Full staffing is estimated at 4 individuals, with many staff remaining from the previous Aquaculture Research Center Building. On any given day, the building will have up to 10 rotating student workers.

Local roadways have capacity for a temporary increase in traffic during construction and for the ongoing traffic expected for staff and students.

The following utilities have confirmed that there is capacity and availability to service the proposed SAWIC Building:

- Water – Orono-Veazie Water District
- Wastewater – Orono Water Pollution Control Facility
- Electricity – Versant Power
- Natural Gas – Bangor Natural Gas

To reduce potable water use, an existing water well will be used to fill freshwater fish tanks.

- **Air Quality/Greenhouse Gas Emissions**

Greenhouse gas emissions are expected to increase due to the energy requirements of the SAWIC Building; however, the increase is not expected to be significant. The increases would be offset by the reduction in greenhouse gas emissions resulting from the closure of the previous Aquaculture Research Center Building.

The proposed facility is replacing an older facility that was less energy efficient. Specific measures to be taken to enhance energy conservation and reduce greenhouse gas emissions include:

- LED light fixtures throughout,

- Electrical systems built in accordance with the International Energy Conservation Code, the Maine Uniform Building and Energy Code and the ASHRAE Energy Standard for Buildings,
- A high-performance building envelope, and
- Energy efficient mechanical and ventilation systems.

- **Hazardous Materials**

No hazardous materials are currently planned to be used or hazardous wastes generated at the SAWIC Building. If needs change, chemical hygiene procedures and hazardous waste disposal will meet existing UMaine requirements.

- **Historic/Cultural Significance**

No impacts are expected to historic properties. The Maine Historic Preservation Officer has concurred with this via NIST letter on 1/8/25 (attached).

- **Environmental Justice**

Due to the location of this project, no disproportional adverse human health or environmental impacts to overburdened or 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-2, New construction upon or improvement of land where all of the following conditions are met:

- (a) The site is in a developed area and/or a previously disturbed site,
- (b) The structure and proposed use are compatible with applicable Federal, Tribal, State, and local planning and zoning standards and consistent with Federally approved State coastal management programs,
- (c) The proposed use will not substantially increase the number of motor vehicles at the facility or in the area,
- (d) The site and scale of construction or improvement are consistent with those of existing, adjacent, or nearby buildings, and
- (e) The construction or improvement will not result in uses that exceed existing support infrastructure capacities (roads, sewer, water, parking, *etc.*). This CE does not apply 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. DOC is not a major land managing agency in the Federal government. Department activities involving new construction or improvements of land typically involve single buildings and supporting infrastructure in a single locality. Any potential for environmental impacts would be of a small scale and confined to more localized impacts.

The proposed project meets the criteria of CATEX A-2 as follows:

- (a) The proposed site has been disturbed by previous on-site construction and demolition of buildings.
- (b) Located on the campus of the University of Maine, the project is compatible with applicable Federal, Tribal, State, and local planning and zoning standards.
- (c) Increases in the number of motor vehicles at the facility or in the area are not expected to be significant.
- (d) The proposed new building will not result in uses that exceed existing infrastructure capacities. The project does not require review by the NCPC.

The proposed activity: Sustainable Aquaculture Workforce Innovation Center 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

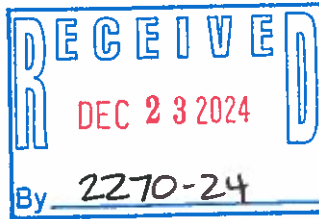
1/29/25

Date

Robert C. Vaughn
NIST Chief Facilities Management Officer

Date

Attachment A
State Historic Preservation Officer Correspondence



20 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: Sustainable Aquaculture Workforce Innovation Center
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 construction of the Sustainable Aquaculture Workforce Innovation Center (the Center) constitutes an Undertaking as defined by 36 CFR 800.16(y). The structure is expected to be a high-bay pre-engineered metal building (PEMB) that is approximately 80ft wide and a 65ft long with a cast-in-place concrete foundation (see attached site plan). A mechanical mezzanine is planned within the high-bay portion of the building, with a long edge along the exterior wall. A smaller portion of the building, approximately 45 ft x 80 ft for classroom and office areas, is planned to be formed with a low roof; this portion of the structure may be framed with smaller PEBM bents or as conventional wood frame. The total square footage is 14,200 sq ft with room for expansion to 20,000 sq ft. The proposed site is adjacent to a parking lot and an older single story utility type building. The proposed site is just east of Perkins Hall with access from Sebago Rd. The site is bounded by the Belgrade parking lot to the north and east, a tree line to the south, and Perkins Hall to the west (see attached photo page).

Because the proposed new building is situated in a part of the campus that is outside the viewshed of the NRHP historic district (see attached campus map), NIST has, therefore, determined that the Undertaking does not have the potential to cause effects on historic properties as defined within by 36 CFR 800.3 (a)(1). NIST has determined that the Undertaking does not have the potential to cause effects to historic properties and 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

Phillip W. Neuberg, FAIA
Federal Historic Preservation Officer

Concurrence:

Kirk F. Mohney
Kirk Mohney, SHPO

1/8/2025
Date

- Attachments: 1) SAWIC Site Plan and Photos
2) SAWIC Site Location Historic District
3) University of Maine, Orono Historic District Campus Map