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**DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE**

**National Telecommunications and Information Administration**

**First Responder Network Authority**

**[Docket Number: 160929903-6903-02]**

**RIN 0660–XC025**

**Notice of Availability of a Final Programmatic Environmental Impact Statement for the South Region of the Nationwide Public Safety Broadband Network**

**AGENCY:** First Responder Network Authority, National Telecommunications and Information Administration, U.S. Department of Commerce.

**ACTION:** Notice of availability of a final programmatic environmental impact statement.

**SUMMARY:** The First Responder Network Authority (“FirstNet”) announces the availability of the Final Programmatic Environmental Impact Statement for the South Region (“Final PEIS”). The Final PEIS evaluates the potential environmental impacts of the proposed nationwide public safety broadband network in the South Region (Alabama, Arkansas, Florida, Georgia, Kentucky, Louisiana, Mississippi, New Mexico, North Carolina, Oklahoma, South Carolina, Tennessee, and Texas).

**ADDRESSES:** The Final PEIS is available for download from [www.regulations.gov](http://www.regulations.gov)  
FIRSTNET-2017-0006.

**FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT:** For more information on the Final PEIS, contact Amanda Goebel Pereira, NEPA Coordinator, First Responder Network Authority, National Telecommunications and Information Administration, U.S. Department of Commerce, (571) 665-6072, 12201 Sunrise Valley Drive, M/S 243, Reston, VA 20192.

**SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION:** The Middle Class Tax Relief and Job Creation Act of 2012 (Pub. L. 112–96, Title VI, 126 Stat. 256 (codified at 47 U.S.C. 1401 *et seq.*)) (the “Act”) created and authorized FirstNet to take all actions necessary to ensure the building, deployment, and operation of an interoperable, nationwide public safety broadband network (“NPSBN”) based on a single, national network architecture. The Act meets a longstanding and critical national infrastructure need, to create a single, nationwide network that will, for the first time, allow police officers, fire fighters, emergency medical service professionals, and other public safety entities to effectively communicate with each other across agencies and jurisdictions. The NPSBN is intended to enhance the ability of the public safety community to perform more reliably, effectively, and safely; increase situational awareness during an emergency; and improve the ability of the public safety community to effectively engage in those critical activities.

The National Environmental Policy Act of 1969 (42 U.S.C. 4321–4347) (“NEPA”) requires federal agencies to undertake an assessment of environmental effects of their proposed actions

prior to making a final decision and implementing the action. NEPA requirements apply to any federal project, decision, or action that may have a significant impact on the quality of the human environment. NEPA also establishes the Council on Environmental Quality (“CEQ”), which issued regulations implementing the procedural provisions of NEPA (see 40 CFR parts 1500–1508). Among other considerations, CEQ regulations at 40 CFR 1508.28 recommend the use of *tiering* from a “broader environmental impact statement (such as a national program or policy statements) with subsequent narrower statements or environmental analysis (such as regional or basin wide statements or ultimately site-specific statements) incorporating by reference the general discussions and concentrating solely on the issues specific to the statement subsequently prepared.”

Due to the geographic scope of FirstNet (all 50 states, the District of Columbia, and five territories) and the diversity of ecosystems potentially traversed by the project, FirstNet elected to prepare five regional PEISs. The five PEISs are divided into the East, Central, West, South, and Non-Contiguous Regions. The South Region consists of Alabama, Arkansas, Florida, Georgia, Kentucky, Louisiana, Mississippi, New Mexico, North Carolina, Oklahoma, South Carolina, Tennessee, and Texas. The Final PEIS analyzes potential impacts of the deployment and operation of the NPSBN on the natural and human environment in the South Region, in accordance with FirstNet’s responsibilities under NEPA.

Now that this PEIS has been completed and once a Record of Decision (ROD) has been signed, the proposed FirstNet projects can begin to submit the site-specific environmental documentation to determine if the proposed project has been adequately evaluated in the PEIS or whether it

instead warrants a Categorical Exclusion, an Environmental Assessment, or an Environmental Impact Statement.

Dated: September 26, 2017.

**Amanda Goebel Pereira**

*NEPA Coordinator*

*First Responder Network Authority.*

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