

DRAFT ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT
for the Construction of
a New Public Safety Communications Tower

Briscoe County, Texas

April 2015



FEMA

Department of Homeland Security (DHS)/
Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA)-
Grants Program Directorate
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LIST OF ACRONYMS

The following is a partial list of acronyms used throughout this document.

CFR	Code of Federal Regulations - The codification of the general and permanent rules and regulations promulgated by executive departments and agencies of the federal government of the United States.
DHS	US Department of Homeland Security – the federal agency charged with the primary responsibilities of protecting the United States and its territories (including protectorates) from and responding to terrorist attacks, man-made accidents, and natural disasters. The federal agency through whom the SHSP funding necessary to implement the proposed new communications tower project was provided.
EPA	Environmental Protection Agency - An agency of the US federal government created for the purpose of protecting human health and the environment by writing and enforcing regulations based on laws passed by Congress.
FAA	Federal Aviation Administration - The national aviation authority of the US; an agency within the US Department of Transportation with the authority to regulate and oversee all aspects of American civil aviation.
FCC	Federal Communications Commission - An independent agency of the US government, created by Congress to regulate interstate communications by radio, television, wire, satellite, and cable in all 50 states, the District of Columbia and U.S territories.
PANCOM	Panhandle Communications System – The communications system serving the public safety communications needs of the first responders in the Texas Panhandle
PRPC	Panhandle Regional Planning Commission – The Council of Governments serving the 26-county area of the Texas Panhandle. The PRPC has been charged by its governing body with ensuring the maintenance and operations of the PANCOM system.
SAA	State Administrative Agency – The division within the Texas Department of Public Safety that is charged with the administration of the SHSP program in Texas
SHSP	State Homeland Security Program – The SHSP is a component the US Dept. of Homeland Security’s Homeland Security Grant Program which supports core capabilities across the five mission areas of Prevention, Protection, Mitigation, Response, and Recovery.
THC	Texas Historical Commission – The THC is the designated State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO) for the State of Texas. The mission of the THC is “ <i>to protect and preserve the state’s historic and prehistoric resources for the use, education, enjoyment, and economic benefit of present and future generations.</i> ”
TPWD	Texas Parks & Wildlife Department – The mission of the TPWD is “To manage and conserve the natural and cultural resources of Texas and to provide hunting, fishing and outdoor recreation opportunities for the use and enjoyment of present and future generations.”

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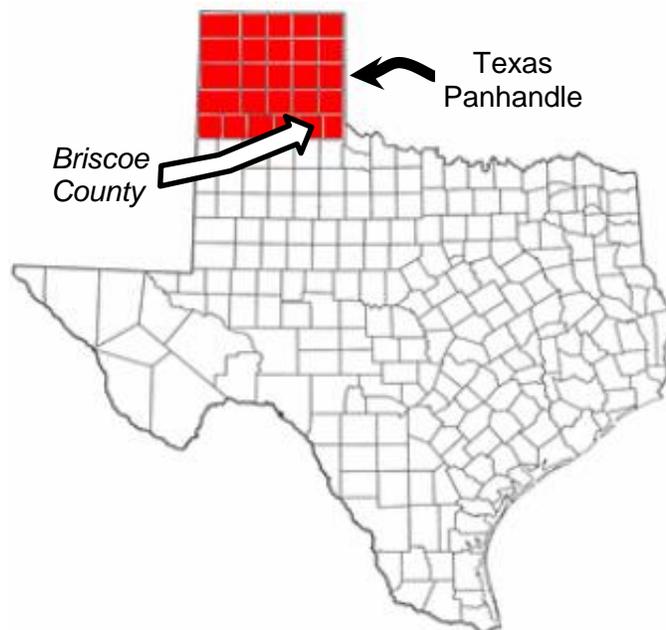
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1.0 Introduction

The PRPC was created under Chapter 391 of the Texas Local Government Code to serve the 26 counties and 63 municipalities of the Texas Panhandle. Established in 1969, the Planning Commission assists local governments in planning, developing, and implementing programs designed to improve the general health, safety, and welfare of the citizens in the Texas Panhandle. With a population of 427,927, the Panhandle region covers an area of nearly 26,000 square miles; an area larger in size than 10 states of the union.

Rank by Land Area in Square Miles		
Rank	State	Land Area
41	West Virginia	24,229.76
42	Maryland	12,406.68
43	Hawaii	10,930.98
44	Massachusetts	10,554.57
45	Vermont	9,614.26
46	New Hampshire	9,349.94
47	New Jersey	8,721.30
48	Connecticut	5,543.33
49	Delaware	2,489.27
50	Rhode Island	1,545.05



The PRPC is governed by a 26-member Board of Directors representing jurisdictions across the Panhandle. The PRPC Board has appointed 15 different advisory committees, whose members appropriately represent the region geographically, to oversee the PRPC’s primary program service areas. One such advisory committee, the Panhandle Regional Emergency Management Advisory Committee (PREMAC), has been charged by the PRPC Board with the oversight of the Panhandle’s Regional Preparedness Program. The primary goal of the program is to better prepare the region’s first responders to mitigate, prevent and/or respond to and recover from large-scale, man-caused or natural disasters.

Since 2007, PRPC staff, at the direction of the PREMAC and with the authorization of the PRPC Board of Directors, has completely rebuilt the public safety communications system serving the Panhandle region. Funded for the most part under the State Homeland Security Program (SHSP), the system currently consists of a P-25 compliant network of 52, VHF Narrowband tower sites interconnected with microwave dishes to provide for redundancy and region-wide communications resiliency. The system serves the entire 26-county area of the Panhandle and has been given the moniker of “PANCOM”. PRPC staff has since been charged with keeping the PANCOM system well-maintained and in constant good working order by the PRPC Board of Directors.

In FY14, the PREMAC and the PRPC Board of Directors approved the submission of a grant application by the PRPC to the SAA to support the construction of a new public safety communication tower to enhance radio receptivity in the Briscoe-Hall County area; located in the far southwest corner of the Panhandle (see map above).

The proposed project was subsequently funded under Federal Grant Award Number EMW-2014-SS-00029 and through SAA Award Number 14-SR 99017-05.

The Valley ISD, located in Briscoe County mid-way between the Cities of Quitaque and Turkey (located in Hall County), is providing the PRPC with a long-term, no-cost lease on land located on the ISD campus to support the implementation of this project. This particular location sits on relatively high ground close to State Hwy 86; the main roadway that runs through the Briscoe-Hall County area. This site will provide for better radio communications between the Counties' population centers and help to improve radio reception in the Caprock Canyons State Park. The federal funds would only be used to cover the costs of installing the new communications tower and associated equipment. This project is being undertaken to help improve public safety for the residents/first responders in this part of the Panhandle as well as, for the motorists that travel State Hwy 86.

In accordance with the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) of 1969, the Council on Environmental Quality regulations implementing NEPA (40 Code of Federal Regulations [CFR] Parts 1500 through 1508), and DHS' Office of Grants and Training (G&T) policy for NEPA compliance (MD 5100.1), the G&T must fully understand and consider the environmental consequences of actions proposed for federal funding. This Environmental Assessment was prepared in order to provide that understanding.

2.0 Purpose and Need

The PRPC has been tasked with the operations/maintenance of PANCOM; the public safety radio system serving the entire 26-county Panhandle region. The system's backbone is comprised of 52 radio tower sites interconnected with microwave dishes. Approximately \$8 million in SHSP funding was used to construct the system. However, due to funding limitations, in numerous instances during the initial system build-out, the PRPC had to utilize less-than-optimally placed existing tower sites to ensure that at least a basic level of first responder radio communications could be achieved region-wide.

With this project, the PRPC now intends to relocate off an existing site in Hall County to a new location approximately 5.5 miles to the west. The PRPC is currently leasing space on the existing tower and other long-standing tenants were occupying the tower's higher reaches before the PRPC arrived. Consequently, the PANCOM antenna has been relegated to a mid-range height on the tower (approx. 170'). In the case of this new tower, the PRPC's equipment will be located at the 300' pinnacle. In addition, the Valley ISD location is 40' higher in elevation than the existing site. All told, the PRPC will gain 170' in elevation by relocating off the existing site to the proposed site at the Valley ISD.

The benefit of moving to the proposed location will be to improve signal strength and radio reception across the southern parts of Briscoe and Hall Counties. This new site sits nearby State Highway 86; a heavily traveled roadway that runs east and west through the two-county area. By improving public safety communication in this part of the region, we'll also be contributing to an enhanced level of campus safety at the Valley ISD.

The need being addressed with this project is the need to improve first responder radio coverage in the Briscoe-Hall County area. The purpose of this project is to alleviate that need by constructing a new radio tower at a higher elevation than the site now being used and by raising the PANCOM antenna to a greater height than the space allocation granted on the leased location. This tower will also support the Turkey VFD paging system and the redundant capabilities of the region's 9-1-1 system.

This project consists of the construction of a 300-foot guyed tower in Briscoe County at N34-22-07.8, W100-59-08.4. The tower will meet FCC's rule 47 U.S.C. 303(q) and FAA Advisory Circulars 47 CFR 17.21 – 17.58 for lighting and marking requirements. A chain link fenced area around the tower base will measure 50' X 50' X 6' and fencing will surround each of the three guy anchors. A 12' X 20' equipment shelter and foundation and a 2' X 3' generator pad will be located within the fenced area. Being in close proximity to a road that runs through the Valley ISD, no additional access drives will needed to provide site access.

3.0 Alternatives

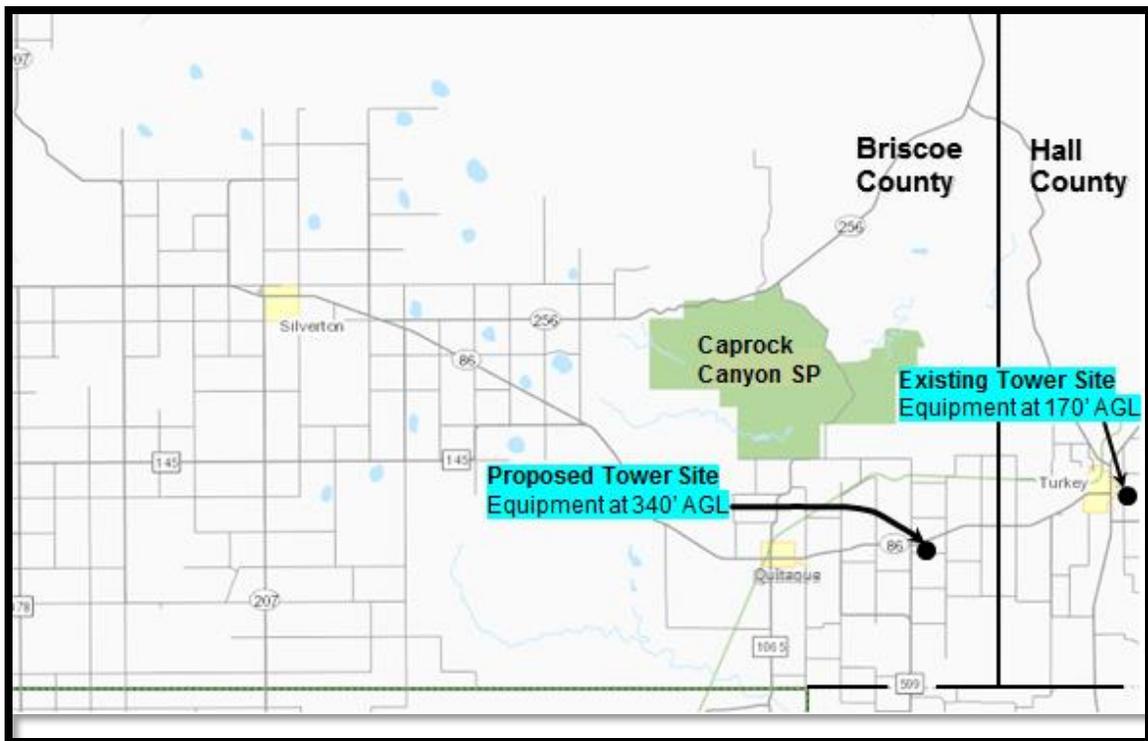
The following alternatives were considered to address the need for improved/reliable radio coverage in the Briscoe-Hall County area.

3.1 No Action Alternative

This option was considered unacceptable as there is a defined need to improve public safety radio communications coverage in Briscoe and Hall Counties. Taking no action would allow this problem to persist; leaving residents (including Valley ISD students) and first responders across in the Briscoe-Hall County area, to the whims of the current coverage pattern.

3.2 Proposed Action

The proposed action is to relocate off an existing site in Hall County and construct a new communications tower in a more desirable location in Briscoe County.



The proposed site is approximately 5.5 miles to the west of the existing site and sits 40' higher in elevation. Because it will be owned by the PRPC, the PANCOM antenna can also be raised to the top of the tower. The net gain in antenna elevation will be 170'.

The combination of higher elevation and physically raising the antenna height will vastly improve radio coverage in the area served by this tower.

3.3 Other Action Alternatives

There are no other tower alternatives in this part of Briscoe County; leased or otherwise. The two options available are 1) to build a new tower in a better location; or 2) remain on the existing site knowing there are vulnerabilities in the current coverage patterns that could potential place the safety and welfare of area residents and first responders at risk.

3.3 Alternatives Considered and Dismissed

The option of remaining on the existing site was dismissed because staying on that tower will do nothing to resolve the area’s coverage issues. Moving to another leased site was also dismissed because there are no other available towers in this part of the region. The site was selected in part because it should help to improve radio reception in the Caprock Canyon State Park.

4.0 Affected Environment and Potential Impacts

This section provides a detailed description of the proposed tower site and discusses the potential impacts that might result from the construction of a new communications tower at this location.

4.1 Physical Resources

4.1.1 Geology, Soils, and Seismicity



The thumbnail to the left depicts the soil distribution across the tract in Briscoe County where the PRPC intends to erect the proposed new tower. The site can generally be described as being on the back side of the Valley ISD campus near the Hall County line. A wide-area view of the site is shown as an attachment in the Appendices section.

Map Unit Legend			
Briscoe County, Texas (TX045)			
Map Unit Symbol	Map Unit Name	Acres in AOI	Percent of AOI
BeB	Berda loam, moist, 1 to 3 percent slopes	4.0	66.8%
OtA	Olton clay loam, 0 to 1 percent slopes	2.0	33.2%
Totals for Area of Interest		6.1	100.0%

The table to the left identifies the soil constituents in the area of interest for the Briscoe County tower site. The information was provided by the USDA’s Natural Resources Conservation Service. This project involves the installation of a new 300’ tower with a 3’ X 3’ X 3’ anchor drilled to a depth of 12’ to hold the tower in place. In addition, 3 guy wires will be used to brace the tower to withstand the maximum wind speeds projected for the area. These guy lines will be held in place with 3’ X 5’ X 3’ anchors drilled to a depth of 12’.

A 12' X 20' equipment shelter and foundation and a 2' X 3' generator pad will be built at the base of the tower. The tower/shed/generator will be enclosed with chain link fencing measuring 50' X 50' X 6'. Each of the three guy anchors will also be fenced.

The Farmland Protection Policy Act (FPPA) (P.L. 97-98, Sec. 1539-1549; 7 U.S.C. 4201, et seq.), states that federal agencies must "minimize the extent to which federal programs contribute to the unnecessary conversion of farmland to nonagricultural uses," was considered in this EA. Prime farmland is characterized as land with the best physical and chemical characteristics for the production of food, feed, forage, fiber and oilseed crops (USDA, 1989). Prime farmland is either used for food or fiber crops or is available for those crops; it is not urban, built-up land, or water areas.

The proposed project site lies behind the football field/running track of the Valley ISD in an area that has been seeded with cover material; primarily to keep blowing dust in check. This area has been used off/on to conduct activities as part of the ISD's FFA program and it will continue to be used for that purpose in the future. Otherwise, this area has never been tilled for production. This project will not contribute to the unnecessary conversion of farmland to a nonagricultural use.

There is no seismic activity in the area. According to the US Geological Service's Geologic Hazards Science Center, the probability of magnitude 5.0 or greater earthquake occurring in or within 50 km of the proposed project area during the next 25 years is 0% to < .01%.

The USDA website indicates the soil in the area is suitable for this type of construction. The area is fairly level and shows no indication of cross-lot runoff, wales or drainage flows. There are no active rills or gullies on or nearby the proposed project site.

This project should have no adverse effects or impacts on soils in or around the proposed tower site. Additional visualizations of the project site and area soils are found in Attachment 1 of the Appendices.

No Action Alternative - Under the No Action alternative, no impacts to seismicity, geology, or soils would occur.

Proposed Action - Under the Proposed Action, no impacts to seismicity or geology are anticipated. The conditions in the area would be conducive to supporting the types of construction activities involved with the project.

4.1.2 Air Quality

The Clean Air Act requires the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) to set National Ambient Air Quality Standards for pollutants considered harmful to public health and the environment. The Act established two types of national air quality standards: primary standards set limits to protect public health, including the health of "sensitive" populations such as asthmatics, children, and the elderly and secondary standards set limits to protect public welfare, including protection against decreased visibility, damage to animals, crops, vegetation and buildings. The current criteria pollutants are: Carbon Monoxide (CO), Nitrogen Dioxide (NO₂), Ozone (O₃), Lead (Pb), Particulate Matter (PM₁₀), and Sulfur Dioxide (SO₂).

There may be some slight disturbance of the soils during the tower installation that might temporarily create some blowing dust. However, measures would be taken to limit emission of fugitive dust during the tower installation phase; including, as necessary, the watering down of construction areas. The PRPC also anticipates erecting the tower during the summer months when school is not in session. It's anticipated that this project will have no long-term adverse effect or impact on the area's air quality.

No Action Alternative – Under the No Action alternative, there would be no impacts to air quality because no construction would occur.

Proposed Action - Under the Proposed Action, there could potentially be short-term minor impacts to air quality during the construction phase due to heavy equipment use. Measures would be taken to limit any impacts. No long-term impacts to air quality are anticipated.

4.1.3 Climate Change

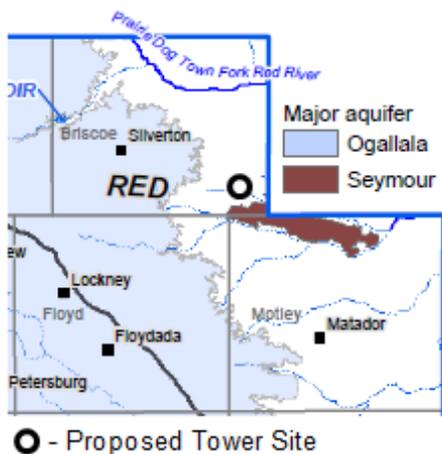
This project will create slight to imperceptible levels of greenhouse gases. The tower equipment will be powered primarily by electricity. The back-up generator will be fueled with propane and used only during power interruptions. There may be some short-term emissions during the construction phase (from equipment and vehicle use). However, once construction is complete, operational emissions will be limited to the use of electricity (which powers the site's radios, lights and environmental-controls of the site's equipment shed). The back-up generator will only be used for brief periods during power outages until electrical power can be restored. It's anticipated that this project will have no adverse effects or impacts on climate change.

No Action Alternative - Under the No Action alternative, no impacts on climate change would occur.

Proposed Action - Under the Proposed Action, no impacts on climate change are anticipated. There may be a brief period of emissions during the project's construction phase (from the use of construction equipment). The likelihood of further emissions will greatly diminish once the new tower site becomes operational.

4.2 Water Resources

4.2.1 Water Quality



Located at elevation 2,420 NGVD; the project site lies in an area of Briscoe County that is between the Ogallala Aquifer and the Seymour Aquifer. There may be traces of the Dockum Aquifer in the area but groundwater; where it can be found, is extremely deep. There are no springs or active water sources in or around the proposed project site. The closest waterway, the Kent Creek, runs to the south of the project site. This is a seasonal stream that only carries water during periods of heavy rainfall. This project will not produce any run-off and will have no adverse effects or impacts on water quality or water resources in the area.

No Action Alternative - Under the No Action alternative, no impacts to surface or ground water resources would occur.

Proposed Action - Under the Proposed Action, potential impacts to surface or ground water resources would be non-existent or minimal. A National Pollution Discharge Elimination System permit will not be needed for this project.

4.2.2 Wetlands

The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE) regulates the discharge of dredged or filled material into waters of the U.S., including wetlands, pursuant to Section 404 of the Clean Water Act. Additionally, Executive Order 11990 (Protection of Wetlands) requires federal agencies to avoid, to the extent possible, adverse impact of wetlands. There is a US Fish & Wildlife Service-designated wetland approximately .27 mile to the northwest of the proposed project site.

The USACE classification for this site describes its water retention capacity as follows: *“Temporary Flooded: Surface water is present for brief periods during growing season, but the water table usually lies well below the soil surface for most of the growing season. Plants that grow both in uplands and wetlands may be characteristic of this water regime.”* This project will not create any discharges or have any adverse effects or impacts on a wetland; neither will this wetland have any adverse impacts on the project.

No Action Alternative - Under the No Action alternative, no impacts to wetlands would occur.

Proposed Action - Under the Proposed Action, no impacts to wetlands are anticipated; the proposed project site is located down-elevation from the nearest wetland.

4.2.3 Floodplains

Executive Order (EO) 11988 (Floodplain Management) requires federal agencies to take action to minimize occupancy and modification of the floodplain. Specifically, EO 11988 prohibits federal agencies from funding construction in the 100-year floodplain unless there are no practicable alternatives. Flood Insurance Rate Maps (FIRMs) are used to identify the regulatory 100-year Floodplain for the National Flood Insurance Program. The FEMA Flood Map Service Center was consulted during this assessment; however no FIRMS have been developed for the area of Briscoe County in which the proposed project site lies. A topographic map of the area was also reviewed. There is no FEMA floodplain designation for the area and the topographic map indicates that the area's elevation and terrain is not consistent with a floodplain. Moreover, there are no known reports or evidence of past flooding in the area. The NOAA Storm Events Database was searched back to 1990 and no flash flood/flooding events have been recorded for this part of Briscoe County by the agency. This project will not impede or impair a designated or known floodplain area.

Proposed Action Alternative - Under the Proposed Action, no impacts to a floodplain would occur.

Proposed Action - Under the Proposed Action, no impacts to a floodplain would occur; there are no designated floodplains or known flood hazard areas in or nearby the proposed project area.

4.3 Coastal Resources

The proposed project site is located over 500 miles away from a coastal area of the US. This project does not involve the placement, erection or removal of materials nor create an increase in the use intensity in a coastal zone area. This project will have no impact or adverse impact on a coastal zone.

Proposed Action Alternative - Under the Proposed Action, no impacts would occur to coastal resources.

Proposed Action - Under the Proposed Action, no impacts no impacts would occur to coastal resources; the project site is located over 500 miles away from the closest coastal zone.

4.4 Biological Resources

4.4.1 Threatened and Endangered Species and Critical Habitat

In accordance with Section 7 of the Endangered Species Act (ESA) of 1973, the project area was evaluated for the potential occurrences of federally listed threatened and endangered species. The ESA requires any federal agency that funds, authorizes, or carries out an action to ensure that their action is not likely to jeopardize the continued existence of any endangered or threatened species (including plant species) or result in the destruction or adverse modification of designated critical habitats (FEMA 1996).

The proposed project site is located on the backside of the Valley ISD campus in a field that has been disturbed numerous times throughout the ISD's existence. The Valley ISD is located between the City of Quitaque (in Briscoe County) and the City of Turkey (in Hall County) along State Highway 86.

The project area is in a vegetative zone typified as being Mesquite Brush. Mesquite Brush is primarily found in the Rolling Plains. Common plant associates include narrow-leaf yucca, grassland pricklypear, juniper, red grama (*Bouteloua eriopoda*), Texas grama (*Bouteloua rigidiseta*), sideoats grama (*Bouteloua curtipendula*), hairy grama, purple three-awn, Roemer three-awn, buffalograss, red lovegrass (*Eragrostis oxylepis*), gummy lovegrass (*Eragrostis curtipedicellata*), sand dropseed (*Sporobolus cryptandrus*), tobosa (*Hilaria mutica*), western ragweed (*Ambrosia psilostachya*), James rushpea (*Caesalpinia jamesii*), scurfpea, and wild buckwheat (McMahan et al. 1984).

The Texas Parks and Wildlife Department (TPWD) uses the Natural Diversity Database (TXNDD) to manage and disseminate scientific information on rare species, native plant communities, and animal aggregations for defensible, effective conservation action. Its purpose is to facilitate the design and implementation of ecologically sound development projects.

In the case of plant species, the TXNDD provides basic distributional information about a few hundred of the most globally-rare plant taxa that occur naturally in Texas. The TXNDD currently tracks 450 species of plants; most are not listed as being threatened or endangered by the State or Federal government. In fact, the vast majority of the plant species listed have no legal status whatsoever. There are three such species listed for the Briscoe County area. They are:

Common Name	Scientific Name	Federal Status	State Status
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1. **Correll's wild-buckwheat** *Eriogonum correllii*
Occurs: on clay mounds, caprock and rocky ledges on caliche substrates.
2. **Havard's machaeranthera** *Xanthisma viscidum*
Occurs: on calcareous or sandy soils in Chihuahuan Desert shrublands or in mesquite grasslands.
3. **Mexican mud-plantain** *Heteranthera mexicana*
Occurs: in wet clayey soils of resacas and ephemeral wetlands in South Texas and along margins of playas in the Panhandle; flowering June-December, only after sufficient rainfall.

None of the conditions that would support the growth of these plants occurs in or around the Valley ISD site. There are no known locations of rare, threatened or endangered plant species occurring in or around the proposed project area.

Additionally, the TPWD designates Ecologically Significant Stream Segments (ESSS) for waters that display unique ecological value based on biological function, hydrologic function, riparian conservation areas, water quality, aquatic life, aesthetics, or habitat for threatened or endangered species. The project area is not located in or nearby a TPWD-designated ESSS.

The ESA also provides for the conservation of “critical habitat”, the areas of land, water, and air space that an endangered species needs for survival. These areas include sites with food and water, breeding areas, cover or shelter sites, and sufficient habitat to provide for normal population growth and behavior. One of the primary threats to endangered and threatened species is the destruction or modification of essential habitat areas by uncontrolled land and water development. No designated critical habitat for any endangered/threatened species occurs in or nearby the proposed project area.

Attachment G in the Appendices lists those fish and wildlife species with a geographic range that includes Briscoe County and that are considered by FWS and/or TPWD to be endangered, threatened, or rare. Sources reviewed to develop the list include the US Fish & Wildlife Service, TPWD, and the TXNDD.

It should be noted that inclusion on the list does not imply that a species is known to occur in the study area, but only acknowledges the potential for occurrence. Only those species listed as endangered or threatened by FWS are afforded federal protection.

While a number of avian species are known to migrate through the Briscoe County, there is no evidence that the proposed project site is being used for roosting, nesting or brooding by bird species. Further, there is no indication that the parcel of land in which the proposed project site lies is inhabited by any of the animal, amphibian or reptile species listed on the TPWD Annotated County List of Rare Species for Briscoe County. Given its location, the surrounding land uses and type of vegetative cover, the area is considered to have limited value for harboring or supporting threatened or endangered wildlife species. There are no sensitive bird habitats located in or around the proposed project site and the tower would not be located in a flyway.

No Action Alternative - Under the No Action alternative, no impacts to threatened or endangered species would occur.

Proposed Action - Under the Proposed Action, no impacts to threatened or endangered species are anticipated.

4.4.2 Wildlife and Fish

A “biotic province” is defined as a “geographic region characterized by the presence of one or more ecological associations that differ at least quantitatively from those of adjoining provinces and marked by a tendency to act as a center of ecological dispersion.” The proposed project area lies within a biotic province classified as the Kansan Biotic Province (mapped by Blair [1950]). This classification is used to characterize the soil, climate, physiography, flora and fauna of the area.

The following table provides a list of fauna associated with the Kansan Biotic Province that may occasionally frequent the area of Briscoe County in which the proposed project site lies. This is comprehensive list of all the fauna known to inhabit or spend time in Briscoe County but does not represent a definitive list of species known to inhabit the proposed project site. This list was extracted from an Routing Study and Environmental Assessment conducted by Xcel Energy, Inc. in 2011 to support the construction of a 345-kV transmission line that would run through several counties in the High Plains area of Texas, including Briscoe County. This Xcel Environmental Assessment is found at: (<http://www.powerfortheplains.com/projects/tuco/collateral/Environmental-Assessment-3.pdf>).

Common Name	Scientific Name	Common Name	Scientific Name
AMPHIBIANS			
Barred tiger salamander	<i>Ambystoma tigrinum mavortium</i>	Blanchard's cricket frog	<i>Acris crepitans blanchardii</i>
Plains spadefoot toad	<i>Spea bombifrons</i>	Spotted chorus frog	<i>Pseudacris clarki</i>
Green toad	<i>Bufo debilis</i>	Plains leopard frog	<i>Rana blairi</i>
Red spotted toad	<i>Bufo punctatus</i>	Couch's spadefoot toad	<i>Scaphiopus couchii</i>
Texas toad	<i>Bufo speciosus</i>	New Mexico spadefoot toad	<i>Spea multiplicata</i>
Woodhouse's toad	<i>Bufo woodhousii</i>	Great plains narrowmouth toad	<i>Gastrophryne olivacea</i>
REPTILES			
Texas earless lizard	<i>Cophosaurus texanus texanus</i>	Texas homed lizard	<i>Phrynosoma comutum</i>
Eastern earless lizard	<i>Holbrookia maculate perspicua</i>	Roundtail homed lizard	<i>Phrynosoma modestum</i>
Eastern collared lizard	<i>Crolaphytus collaris collaris</i>	Texas spiny lizard	<i>Sceloporus olivaceus</i>
Southern prairie lizard	<i>Sceloporus undulates consobrinus</i>	Desert side-blotched lizard	<i>Uta stansburiana stejnegeri</i>

Common Name	Scientific Name	Common Name	Scientific Name
Great plains skink	<i>Eumeces obsoletus</i>	Short-lined skink	<i>Eumeces tetragrammus brevilineatus</i>
Ground skink	<i>Scincella lateralis</i>	Western hognose snake	<i>Gyalopion canum</i>
Texas spotted whiptail	<i>Cnemidophorus gularis gularis</i>	Western marbled whiptail	<i>Cnemidophorus tigris marmoratus</i>
Plains blind snake	<i>Leptotyphlops dulcis dulcis</i>	Kansas glossy snake	<i>Arizona elegans elegans</i>
Flathead snake	<i>Tantilla gracilis</i>	Blotched water snake	<i>Nerodia erythrogasler transversa</i>
Plains black-headed snake	<i>Tantilla nigriceps nigriceps</i>	Checkered garter snake	<i>Thamnophis marcianus marcianus</i>
Western ribbon snake	<i>Thamnophis proximus proximus</i>	Western diamondback rattlesnake	<i>Crotalus atrox</i>
Prairie-lined racerunner	<i>Cnemidophorus sexlineatus viridis</i>	Prairie rattlesnake	<i>Crotalus viridis</i>
Diamondback water snake	<i>Nerodia rhombifer rhombifer</i>	Guadalupe spiny soft-shelled turtle	<i>Trionyx spiniferus guadalupensis</i>
Gopher snake	<i>Pituophis catenifer</i>	Western ribbon snake	<i>Thamnophis proximus</i>
Regal ring-necked snake	<i>Diadophis punctatus punctatus</i>	Dusky hog-nosed snake	<i>Heterodon nasicus gloydi</i>
Texas night snake	<i>Hypsiglena torquatajani</i>	Desert king snake	<i>Lampropeltis getula splendida</i>
Western coachwhip	<i>Masticophis flagellum testaceus</i>	Great plains rat snake	<i>Elaphe guttata emoryi</i>
Rough green snake	<i>Opheodrys aestivus</i>	Bull snake	<i>Pituophis catenifer sayi</i>
Texas long-nosed snake	<i>Phinocheilus lecontei tessellatus</i>	Ground snake	<i>Sonora semiannulata semiannulata</i>
Yellow mud turtle	<i>Kinosternon falvescens falvescens</i>	Ornate box turtle	<i>Terrapene ornata ornata</i>
Common snapping turtle	<i>Chelydra serpentina serpentina</i>	Texas river cooter	<i>Pseudemys texana</i>
Pallid spiny soft-shelled turtle	<i>Trionyx spiniferus pallidus</i>		
BIRDS			
Scaled quail	<i>Callipepla squamata</i>	Sandhill crane	<i>Grus canadensis</i>
Northern bobwhite	<i>Colinus virginianus</i>	Belted kingfisher	<i>Ceryle alcyon</i>
American kestrel	<i>Falco sparverius</i>	Ash-throated flycatcher	<i>Myiarchus cinerascens</i>
Killdeer	<i>Charadrius vociferous</i>	Northern rough-winged swallow	<i>Stelgidopteryx serripennis</i>

Common Name	Scientific Name	Common Name	Scientific Name
Greater roadrunner	<i>Geococcyx californianus</i>	Chipping sparrow	<i>Spizella passerina</i>
Rock wren	<i>Salpinctes obsoletus</i>	Lark sparrow	<i>Chondestes grammacus</i>
Western meadowlark	<i>Sturnella neglecta</i>	Savannah sparrow	<i>Passerculus sandwichensis</i>
Snowy egret	<i>Egretta thula</i>	Bullock's oriole	<i>Icterus bullockii</i>
Turkey vulture	<i>Cathartes aura</i>	Dark-eyed junco	<i>Junco hyemalis</i>
Swainson's hawk	<i>Buteo swainsoni</i>	Black-chinned hummingbird	<i>Archilochus alexandri</i>
Wild turkey	<i>Meleagris gallopavo</i>	Great blue heron	<i>Ardea herodias</i>
Red-tailed hawk	<i>Buteojamaicensis</i>	Mourning dove	<i>Zenaida macroura</i>
Barn owl	<i>Tyto alba</i>	Rufous-crowned sparrow	<i>Aimophila ruficeps</i>
Golden fronted woodpecker	<i>Melanerpes aurifrons</i>	Ladder-backed woodpecker	<i>Picoides scalaris</i>
Gadwall	<i>Anas strepera</i>	Northern pintail	<i>Anas acuta</i>
Green heron	<i>Butorides virescens</i>	Lesser yellowlegs	<i>Tringa flavipes</i>
Common nighthawk	<i>Chordeilus minor</i>	Chimney swift	<i>Chaetura pelagica</i>
Western kingbird	<i>Tyrannus verticalis</i>	American pipit	<i>Anthus rubescens</i>
Blue-headed vireo	<i>Vireo solitarius</i>	Northern harrier	<i>Circus cyaneus</i>
MAMMALS			
Black-tailed prairie dog	<i>Cynomys ludovicianus</i>	Eastern fox squirrel	<i>Sciurus niger</i>
Mexican ground squirrel	<i>Spermophilus mexicanus</i>	Spotted ground squirrel	<i>Spermophilus spilosoma</i>
Merriam's pocket mouse	<i>Perognathus merriami</i>	Yellow-faced pocket gopher	<i>Cratogeomys castanops</i>
Ord's kangaroo rat	<i>Dipodomys ordii</i>	Hispid pocket mouse	<i>Chaetodipus hispidus</i>
Fulvous harvest mouse	<i>Reithrodontomys fulvescens</i>	Plains harvest mouse	<i>Reithrodontomys montanus</i>
Texas mouse	<i>Peromyscus attwateri</i>	White-footed mouse	<i>Peromyscus leucopus</i>
Deer mouse	<i>Peromyscus maniculatus</i>	White-ankled mouse	<i>Peromyscus pectoralis</i>
Northern pygmy mouse	<i>Baiomys taylori</i>	Northern grasshopper mouse	<i>Onychomys leucogaster</i>
Feral pig	<i>Sus scrofa</i>	Plains pocket gopher	<i>Geomys bursarius</i>
Hispid cotton rat	<i>Sigmodon hispidus</i>	Eastern white-throated woodrat	<i>Neotoma leucodon</i>
Southern plains woodrat	<i>Neotoma micropus</i>	Texas kangaroo rat	<i>Dipodomys elator</i>
Coyote	<i>Canis latrans</i>	White-tailed deer	<i>Odocoileus virginianus</i>

Common Name	Scientific Name	Common Name	Scientific Name
Virginia opossum	<i>Didelphis virginiana</i>	North American porcupine	<i>Erethizon dorsatum</i>
Desert cottontail	<i>Sylvilagus audobonii</i>	Eastern cottontail	<i>Sylvilagus floridanus</i>
Black-tailed jackrabbit	<i>Lepus californicus</i>	Red fox	<i>Vulpes vulpes</i>
Raccoon	<i>Procyon lotor</i>	Common gray fox	<i>Urocyon cinereoargenteus</i>
Ringtail	<i>Bassariscus astutus</i>	Western spotted skunk	<i>Spilogale gracilis</i>
American badger	<i>Taxidea laxus</i>	Striped skunk	<i>Mephitis mephitis</i>
Hog-nosed skunk	<i>Conepatus leuconotus</i>	Bobcat	<i>Lynx rufus</i>
Mountain lion	<i>Puma concolor</i>	Western pipistrelle	<i>Pipistrellus hesperus</i>
Cave myotis	<i>Myotis velifer</i>	Eastern red bat	<i>Lasiurus borealis</i>
Hoary bat	<i>Lasiurus cinereus</i>	Silver-haired bat	<i>Lasionycteris noctivaf lens</i>
Townsend's big-eared bat	<i>Corynorhinus townsendii</i>	Brazilian free-tailed bat	<i>Tadarida brasiliensis</i>
Pallid bat	<i>Antrozous pallidus</i>		

Enough school-related human activity routinely occurs on the proposed project site to inhibit animal populations from becoming too settled in the area. There is a windbreak on the north side of the site and it may periodically shelter birds, reptiles and small mammals. However, there is no evidence that any particular specie or species regularly reside on the project site. The construction of this new tower will have no or minimal effect on the common species of wildlife that inhabit this part of Briscoe County.

There are no running streams, creeks or ponds in or in proximity to the proposed project site. Therefore, there were no fish or aquatic species available in the area to consider as part of this assessment.

No Action Alternative - Under the No Action alternative, no impacts to wildlife and fish would occur.

Proposed Action - Under the Proposed Action, no impacts to wildlife and fish are anticipated. To mitigate the potential for collision-related bird mortality, the tower would be equipped with flashing strobe lights in accordance with FAA regulations and bird deflector devices to alert on-coming birds to the guy wire hazards.

4.5 Cultural Resources

4.5.1 Historic Properties

In addition to review under NEPA, consideration of impacts to cultural resources is mandated under Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act (NHPA), as amended, and implemented by 36 CFR Part 800. Requirements include identification of significant historic properties that may be impacted by the Proposed Action. Historic properties are defined as archaeological sites, standing structures, or other historic resources listed in or eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places (NRHP).

As defined in 36 CFR Part 800.16(d), the Area of Potential Effect (APE), “is the geographic area or areas within which an undertaking may directly or indirectly cause changes in the character or use of historic properties, if such properties exist.”

The THC’s Texas Historic Sites Atlas and the US National Park Service’s National Register of Historic Places were both consulted to determine the presence of any cultural resources in or around the proposed project area. There are no records or other evidence to indicate the potential presence of historic or cultural resources in or near the proposed project site. This project will not damage, disturb, impair or adversely affect any historic or cultural resources.

No Action Alternative - Under the No Action alternative, no impacts to cultural resources would occur.

Proposed Action - Under the Proposed Action, no impacts to cultural resources are anticipated. If historic or archaeological materials are discovered during construction, all ground disturbing activities shall cease and the SHPO will be notified immediately.

4.5.2 American Indian/Native Hawaiian/Native Alaskan Cultural/Religious Sites

There is no evidence or accounts of any Native American cultural/religious sites being in or nearby the proposed project site. Section 106 of the NHPA requires consultation with Federally-recognized Indian tribes who may have potential cultural interests in the project area, and acknowledges that tribes may have interests in geographic locations other than their seat of government. A description of the project was sent to the three tribes/nations that have indicated an interest in potential developments in Briscoe County including the Apache Tribe of Oklahoma, the Comanche Nation and the Kiowa Indian Tribe of Oklahoma. The implementation of this project will not adversely affect or impact Native American cultural or religious sites in the area. To the best of anyone’s knowledge, no such sites exist in or nearby the proposed project site.

No Action Alternative - Under the No Action Alternative, no impacts to Indian religious or archaeological sites would occur.

Proposed Action - Under the Proposed Action, no impacts to Indian religious or archaeological sites are anticipated.

4.6 Socioeconomic Resources

4.6.1 Environmental Justice

Executive Order 12898 (Federal Actions to Address Environmental Justice in Minority Populations and Low-Income Populations) mandates that federal agencies identify and address, as appropriate, disproportionately high and adverse human health or environmental effects of their programs, policies, and activities on minority and low-income populations. The proposed project site is located on a rural ISD campus; no-cost access to which has been provided to the PRPC by the ISD School Board. This project is designed to improve first responder communications in the southern parts of Briscoe and Hall Counties to enhance public safety for all area residents; regardless of ethnicity or income level. This project will help to ameliorate the intermittent radio reception that can occur in this part of the Panhandle and will provide a benefit to all residents within the service areas of the responder agencies that operate in the area.

No Action Alternative – Under the No Action Alternative, there would be no beneficial impact on minority or low-income populations. However, all residents could potentially be adversely impacted by the vulnerabilities in the current coverage pattern if no action is taken.

Proposed Action – Under the Proposed Action, no disproportionately high and adverse impacts on minority or low-income populations are anticipated. The improved radio coverage would benefit all residents in the area by strengthening the ability of local first responders to communicate on a timely and accurate basis.

4.6.2 Hazardous Material

The PRPC has been granted a no-cost, long term lease on the project site; no FEMA funds will be used for property acquisition. FEMA funds will be used to install the tower, a communications shed, a generator and site fencing. The site was investigated for the presence of any pre-existing hazardous materials. There is no indication that any hazardous materials have ever been stored on or buried within the vicinity of the site. There are no TRI's listed for this site on the EPA's TRI Explorer. From visual inspection and search of available records; the proposed project site appears to be free of any antecedent hazardous materials. The PRPC does intend to install a 250-gallon above-ground propane tank on the site to provide fuel for the tower's back-up generator. The tank will be built, installed and maintained in accordance with DOT standards, 29 CFR Part 1910.110 and other applicable regulations and standards.

No Action Alternative – Under the No Action Alternative, there would be no hazardous material impacts.

Proposed Action – Under the Proposed Action, up to 250 gallons of propane would be stored on site and above-ground to provide fuel to the tower's back-up generator.

Any risks associated with the on-site storage of this material will be mitigated through the use of a properly designed tank, meeting ASME standards; installed in accordance with 29 CFR and regularly inspected by PRPC staff to ensure the efficacy of the equipment.

4.6.3 Noise

Noise is generally defined as unwanted sound. Sound is most commonly measured in decibels (dB) on the A-weighted scale, which is the scale most similar to the range of sounds that the human ear can hear. The Day-Night Average Sound Level (DNL) is an average measure of sound. The DNL descriptor is accepted by federal agencies as a standard for estimating sound impacts and establishing guidelines for compatible land uses. EPA guidelines, and those of many other federal agencies, state that outdoor sound levels in excess of 55 dB DNL are "normally unacceptable" for noise-sensitive land uses such as residences, schools, or hospitals.

The Noise Control Act of 1972 (42 U.S.C. 4901) further states "*that, while primary responsibility for control of noise rests with State and local governments, Federal action is essential to deal with major noise sources in commerce control of which require national uniformity of treatment.*" The purpose of the Act is "*to establish a means for effective coordination of Federal research and activities in noise control, to authorize the establishment of Federal noise emission standards for products distributed in commerce, and to provide information to the public respecting the noise emission and noise reduction characteristics of such products.*"

This project will have nominal impact on sound levels in the area. Construction activities will be scheduled so that they occur during summer months when school is not in session. This will help to mitigate the impacts of the construction noise. The tower would be erected behind the ISD football field/running track; a distance of several hundred yards. Even up close, the low-level hum of the tower's equipment will be nearly inaudible and should not disturb activities either inside or outside the school. There are no other residences nearby. This project will have little to no adverse effects or impacts on noise levels in or around the proposed project site.

No Action Alternative - Under the No Action alternative, no impacts to noise would occur.

Proposed Action - Under the Proposed Action, temporary short-term increases in noise levels are anticipated during construction. Except for the equipment shelter's exterior HVAC equipment cooling unit and occasional backup power generator activation the tower itself won't create noise. There do not appear to be any noise sensitive land uses within reach of the proposed site.

4.6.4 Traffic

Access to the proposed site will be off of an unnamed roadway that runs behind the football field/running track of the Valley ISD. It's anticipated that the erection of the new tower will occur while Valley ISD is not in session. Therefore, the coming/going of construction vehicles should have no impact on ISD traffic.

The potential for disruptions will all but disappear once construction is complete. The only traffic to the site will then be when PRPC staff conducts scheduled maintenance visits to the site or when repairs/adjustments have to be made to the tower equipment and/or when the back-up generator's propane tank has to be refilled. This project will have little to no adverse effects or impacts on traffic patterns in or around the Valley ISD campus.

No Action Alternative - Under the No Action alternative, no impacts to traffic would occur.

Proposed Action - Under the Proposed Action, temporary short-term interruptions in normal traffic patterns may occur during the project's construction phase. However, once construction is completed, it's anticipated that the potential for traffic interference will all but dissipate. The only traffic in/out of the site thereafter will come as a result of scheduled maintenance visits and/or occasional repair or propane tank re-fueling visits.

4.6.5 Public Service and Utilities

One of the primary advantages of installing the new communications tower on the proposed site is the proximity of utilities; power lines run along the east and south boundaries of the proposed project site. The ready access to power will not only help to control the costs of running electricity to the tower's equipment shed; it will also help to minimize the amount of environmental disturbance on the site. The electrical demands of the tower equipment will not overburden the electrical supply. The average monthly utilities on other communications towers maintained by the PRPC average approximately \$90 a month (based on a year-round average).

This radio tower will also support the paging system used by the Turkey VFD; which requires access to a phone line.

Ready access to phone service is another advantage of using this site. A telephone line runs along the north side of the Valley ISD's property line, along State Hwy 86; connecting to a phone inside the press box at the Valley ISD football stadium.

A check was made of the ISD's water and sewer lines and the proposed construction area is clear of water and sewer lines. The ISD currently has a major construction project underway so the water/sewer/gas lines feeding the campus facilities have just recently been verified and plotted. There are no other known public utilities in the area. An investigation was made to determine the presence of underground petroleum or gas lines in the area using maps provided by the Pipeline Group[®]. There was no indication of buried lines under or nearby the proposed project site. However, the tower installation company will be required to contact the Pipeline Group[®] prior to the start of construction (using the Texas One-call or Texas811 services) to verify there are no lines in the area before any excavation work is done. This project will have negligible impact on the area's public service and utilities.

No Action Alternative - Under the No Action alternative, no impacts on public service or utilities would occur.

Proposed Action - Under the Proposed Action, the new communications tower will draw electricity from the local power supply; though the consumption of power will be fairly nominal. A new phone line will have to be run to the tower from the pole that now serves the press box phone. As currently planned, the power and phone lines will both be buried; from the pole(s) to the tower. No other utilities or services will be affected because there are no other public services or utilities in the area. Though none appear to exist at this time, before any construction work begins, the contractor will confirm once again that there are no buried petro-chemical lines under or nearby the proposed project site.

4.6.6 Public Health and Safety

The new communications tower will be equipped with repeaters and antennas to support land mobile radio use (for first responders) and a microwave dish to provide redundant roll-over capabilities for the Panhandle region's 9-1-1 system. This equipment may emit some levels of Radio Frequency (RF) and microwave radiation. The FCC describes RF and microwave radiation as follows.

Electromagnetic radiation consists of waves of electric and magnetic energy moving together (i.e., radiating) through space at the speed of light. Taken together, all forms of electromagnetic energy are referred to as the electromagnetic "spectrum." Radio waves and microwaves emitted by transmitting antennas are one form of electromagnetic energy. They are collectively referred to as "radiofrequency" or "RF" energy or radiation. Note that the term "radiation" does not mean "radioactive." Often, the terms "electromagnetic field" or "radiofrequency field" may be used to indicate the presence of electromagnetic or RF energy.

The RF waves emanating from an antenna are generated by the movement of electrical charges in the antenna. Electromagnetic waves can be characterized by a wavelength and a frequency. The wavelength is the distance covered by one complete cycle of the electromagnetic wave, while the frequency is the number of electromagnetic waves passing a given point in one second.

The frequency of an RF signal is usually expressed in terms of a unit called the "hertz" (abbreviated "Hz"). One Hz equals one cycle per second. One megahertz ("MHz") equals one million cycles per second.

The FCC goes onto to describe the potential health effects of this energy release.

At relatively low levels of exposure to RF radiation, i.e., levels lower than those that would produce significant heating; the evidence for production of harmful biological effects is ambiguous and unproven. Such effects, if they exist, have been referred to as "non-thermal" effects. A number of reports have appeared in the scientific literature describing the observation of a range of biological effects resulting from exposure to low-levels of RF energy. However, in most cases, further experimental research has been unable to reproduce these effects. Furthermore, since much of the research is not done on whole bodies (in vivo), there has been no determination that such effects constitute a human health hazard. It is generally agreed that further research is needed to determine the generality of such effects and their possible relevance, if any, to human health. In the meantime, standards-setting organizations and government agencies continue to monitor the latest experimental findings to confirm their validity and determine whether changes in safety limits are needed to protect human health.

Studies have shown that environmental levels of RF energy routinely encountered by the general public are typically far below levels necessary to produce significant heating and increased body temperature. However, there may be situations, particularly in workplace environments near high-powered RF sources, where the recommended limits for safe exposure of human beings to RF energy could be exceeded. In such cases, restrictive measures or mitigation actions may be necessary to ensure the safe use of RF energy.

The FCC's RF emissions guidelines are published in 47 CFR §1.1307(b) and the RF exposure standards appear in 47 CFR §§1.1310 and 2.1093. The PRPC confirms that the tower and all associated antennas will not cause human exposure to levels of RF emissions in excess of the FCC-adopted guidelines [47 CFR §1.1307(b)] and that the tower and all its associated antennas will comply with the RF exposure standards as provided within 47 CFR §§1.1310 and 2.1093.

This project is anticipated to have a significant and beneficial impact on public safety. The whole intent of erecting a tower at this particular location is to strengthen public safety radio reception across the southern parts of Briscoe and Hall Counties. This project will have negligible impact on the area's public health but will have a beneficial impact on the area's public safety.

No Action Alternative - Under the No Action alternative, no impacts on public health or public safety would occur.

Proposed Action - Under the Proposed Action, certain levels of RF will be emitted by the new communications tower but their impact on human health will be none to negligible. In order to mitigate any potential impact, PRPC will ensure that the tower antenna, microwave dish and all associated equipment fully comply with the FCC's RF emissions and exposure guidelines and standards. This project will provide a benefit to public safety by enhancing the ability of the area's first responders to communicate clearly and effectively when responding to public safety emergencies in Briscoe County.

4.7 Summary Table

This section is used to summarize the findings of this environmental assessment.

Affected Environment	Potential Impacts	Mitigation Measures
Soils		
No Action	No Impact	Not Applicable
Proposed Briscoe County Tower Site	No adverse impacts anticipated. Construction activities may cause some disturbance, but effects to soils would be minor and temporary.	As necessary, NDPES best management practices will be used during construction to prevent erosion.
Seismicity		
No Action	No Impact	Not Applicable
Proposed Briscoe County Tower Site	No adverse impacts; there is no seismic activity in the area.	Since no adverse effects are anticipated, there are no impacts to be mitigated.
Farmland Protection		
No Action	No Impact	Not Applicable
Proposed Briscoe County Tower Site	No adverse impacts anticipated; no farmland is being taken out of production.	Since no adverse effects are anticipated, there are no impacts to be mitigated. However, the tower will be sited to minimize conflicts with the ISD's FFA program activities.
Air Quality		
No Action	No Impact	Not Applicable
Proposed Briscoe County Tower Site	No long-term adverse impacts are anticipated. Air quality may temporarily be affected during construction.	Best management practices will be utilized during construction to minimize blowing dust. The construction work will be scheduled so that it occurs during the summer months when school is not in session.
Climate Change		
No Action	No Impact	Not Applicable
Proposed Briscoe County Tower Site	Nominal to no adverse impacts anticipated. The only fossil fuels to be used on site will be the propane in the back-up generator.	Ensure the exhaust on the site's back-up generator is equipped and maintained with a clean air filter.

Affected Environment	Potential Impacts	Mitigation Measures
Water Resources		
No Action	No Impact	Not Applicable
Proposed Briscoe County Tower Site	No adverse impacts are anticipated; there is no surface water in the area and there will be no effect on groundwater resources.	Since no adverse effects are anticipated, there are no impacts to be mitigated.
Water Quality		
No Action	No Impact	Not Applicable
Proposed Briscoe County Tower Site	No adverse impacts are anticipated. This project will not generate pollutants or releases that would impair or affect water quality.	Since no adverse effects are anticipated, there are no impacts to be mitigated.
Wetlands		
No Action	No Impact	Not Applicable
Proposed Briscoe County Tower Site	No adverse impacts are anticipated; the proposed project site is located .27 miles away and down-grade from the closest wetland area.	Since no adverse effects are anticipated, there are no impacts to be mitigated.
Floodplains		
No Action	No Impact	Not Applicable
Proposed Briscoe County Tower Site	No adverse impacts are anticipated; the proposed project site is not located in or nearby a floodplain.	The PRPC will coordinate with the County's FPA to ensure no impacts will occur.
Coastal Resources		
No Action	No Impact	Not Applicable
Proposed Briscoe County Tower Site	No adverse impacts are anticipated; the proposed project site is located well outside a Coastal Zone.	Since no adverse effects are anticipated, there are no impacts to be mitigated.
Threatened and Endangered Species		
No Action	No Impact	Not Applicable
Proposed Briscoe County Tower Site	No adverse impacts are anticipated; even though certain listed species are thought to inhabit the County. However, none are known to inhabit or frequent this particular site.	The use of white / red strobe lights and visual markers on guy wires will help to mitigate avian mortality.

Affected Environment	Potential Impacts	Mitigation Measures
Critical Habitat		
No Action	No Impact	Not Applicable
Proposed Briscoe County Tower Site	No adverse impacts are anticipated; the project area is not considered to be critical or sensitive habitat. However, 5-8 trees will have to be removed from the windbreak on the north side of the site to provide a clear path for one of the tower's guywires.	Measures will be taken to minimize ground cover disturbances. A number of the trees that have to be removed from the windbreak are already dead. Care will be taken to ensure the least number of trees necessary are removed.
Wildlife and Fish		
No Action	No Impact	Not Applicable
Proposed Briscoe County Tower Site	No adverse impacts are anticipated; there are common species of fauna in the area but the project activities are not expected to cause lasting impacts on local populations. There are no active streams or water bodies on or nearby the proposed project site. No run-off will occur that might affect aquatic species.	The use of white / red strobe lights and visual markers on guy wires will help to mitigate avian mortality. Measures will be taken to minimize ground cover disturbances.
Cultural Resources		
No Action	No Impact	Not Applicable
Proposed Briscoe County Tower Site	There are no documented cultural resources on or around the proposed project site. No adverse impacts are anticipated	If human remains or artifacts are discovered during construction, all ground disturbing activities shall cease and the County JP/FEMA/THC will be notified.
Historic Properties		
No Action	No Impact	Not Applicable
Proposed Briscoe County Tower Site	The proposed project site is not a historic property. No adverse impacts are anticipated	If historic or archaeological materials are discovered during construction, all ground disturbing activities shall cease and FEMA/ THC will be notified.

Affected Environment	Potential Impacts	Mitigation Measures
American Indian Religious Sites		
No Action	No Impact	Not Applicable
Proposed Briscoe County Tower Site	There are no documented Native American religious sites on or around the proposed project site. No adverse impacts are anticipated	If evidence of an American Indian religious site is discovered during construction, all ground disturbing activities shall cease and FEMA/THC/ interested tribal groups will be notified.
Environmental Justice		
No Action	No Impact	Not Applicable
Proposed Briscoe County Tower Site	The proposed project site is located on an ISD campus with the full support and consent of the ISD Board. No adverse impacts are anticipated.	This project will provide universal benefits to all residents in Briscoe County. No groups will be disproportionately impacted by the project.
Hazardous Materials		
No Action	No Impact	Not Applicable
Proposed Briscoe County Tower Site	Nominal to no adverse impacts are anticipated.	Propane will be stored and maintained in a tank complying with the ASME standards
Noise		
No Action	No Impact	Not Applicable
Proposed Briscoe County Tower Site	No long-term adverse impacts anticipated.	Project construction is anticipated to take no longer than 1 week.
Traffic		
No Action	No Impact	Not Applicable
Proposed Briscoe County Tower Site	No long-term adverse impacts anticipated.	Construction will be scheduled to occur when school is not in session.
Public Service and Utilities		
No Action	No Impact	Not Applicable
Proposed Briscoe County Tower Site	No long-term adverse impacts anticipated.	This project is designed to improve public safety communications in Briscoe County.
Public Health and Safety		
No Action	No Impact	Not Applicable

Affected Environment	Potential Impacts	Mitigation Measures
Proposed Briscoe County Tower Site	No to Negligible Impact	Project will comply with the applicable provisions of 47 CFR §1.1307(b), §§1.1310 and §§ 2.1093.

5.0 Cumulative Impacts

Cumulative impacts are those effects on the environment that result from the incremental effect of an action when added to past, present, and reasonably foreseeable future actions, regardless of what agency (federal or nonfederal) or person undertakes such other actions. Cumulative effects can result from individually minor but collectively significant actions taking place over a period of time.

In 2013, voters in the Valley ISD approved a \$2.6M bond issue to construct and renovate ISD buildings. The ISD is currently building a new gymnasium on its campus just to the north of its football field/running track. The contractor has/is taking all the appropriate measures to ensure that work has no adverse impact on the local environment (e.g., use of run-off controls; dust mitigation). This element of construction will wrap up the ISD bond-funded work; no other projects are planned in the vicinity of the proposed project site. Therefore, no cumulative impacts are anticipated.

6.0 Agency Coordination, Public Involvement and Permits

The Briscoe County Sheriff’s Office and the Hall County Sheriff’s Office were consulted with regard to the placement of this new communications tower and how it would help to resolve some of the first responder communications issues in their County. The PRPC Board of Directors, along with the PRPC’s senior management, have discussed this project in open meetings. The PRPC’s monthly Board of Director meeting agendas are posted in accordance with the State of Texas’ Open Meeting Acts requirements. To meet the State requirement for communications coordination, the PRPC has also notified the Statewide Interoperability Coordinator of its intent to develop this new communications tower. The agencies listed below were also contacted for comment on the proposed project.

- Texas Historical Commission
- US Fish and Wildlife Service
- Federal Aviation Administration
- Comanche Nation
- Apache Tribe of Oklahoma
- Kiowa Indian Tribe of Oklahoma

The Draft Environmental Assessment has been posted on the front-page of the PRPC’s website (www.theprpc.org) to provide the public with easy access to review the document. Hard copies of the draft were made available to the public in the main foyer of the PRPC’s offices located at 415 West Eighth Avenue, Amarillo, Texas. In addition, copies of the draft were mailed to the Valley ISD, Quitque City Hall, Turkey City Hall and the Briscoe County Courthouse in order to provide further public access to the document.

In accordance with applicable local, state, and federal requirements, the PRPC is responsible for obtaining any necessary permits or approvals prior to commencing construction at the proposed project site or operating the tower, including any that are required by the FCC and FAA.

7.0 Mitigation

To the extent possible, the PRPC will use all feasible means available to minimize and/or mitigate the adverse effects and impacts of this project on the environment and the residents of Briscoe County.

The more specific measures are listed on the table shown in Section 4.7 of this assessment. In the same breath, the PRPC will work to optimize the benefits of this project to enhance the public safety improvements for the good of the County's residents and first responders.

8.0 Conclusion

No impacts to geology, soils, seismicity, water resources, water quality, floodplains, wetlands, socioeconomic resources, environmental justice or cultural resources are anticipated under the Proposed Action. There may potentially be short-term and minor impacts to soils, air quality and noise during the project's construction phase. Mitigation actions have been identified to reduce their effect on the proposed project site and surrounding area. This new communications tower could possibly have an adverse effect on migratory birds. However, the tower will be equipped with features to decrease the potential for bird mortality and the project site is located outside of sensitive habitats and flyways that might otherwise increase that potential.

The new communications tower will help to improve first responder radio receptivity in the Briscoe-Hall County area; firefighters, EMS and law enforcement would be able to communicate with each other more reliably. This tower will be available to support the Band Class 14 LTE network being implemented by FirstNet/Texas to provide public safety at-large with 21st-century communication tools to further enhance their ability to protect the public.

9.0 References

USDA NRCS Web Soil Survey:

<http://websoilsurvey.nrcs.usda.gov/app/>

TPWD Rare, Threatened and Endangered Species of Texas:

<http://tpwd.texas.gov/gis/rtest/>

Texas Natural Diversity Database (TXNDD):

https://tpwd.texas.gov/huntwild/wild/wildlife_diversity/txndd/

Panhandle Wildlife Habitat Management:

http://tpwd.texas.gov/landwater/land/habitats/high_plains/habitat_management/

Xcel Routing Study and Environmental Assessment (2011)

<http://www.powerfortheplains.com/projects/tuco/collateral/Environmental-Assessment-3.pdf>

Llano Estacado Regional Water Plan (Mar-2015)

http://www.llanoplan.org/Draft%20Chapters%20of%202016%20IPP/DRAFT_Chapter%201_Planning%20Area%20Description_3-13-2015.pdf

National Wetlands Inventory:
<http://www.fws.gov/wetlands/>

National Register of Historic Places:
<http://www.nps.gov/nr/research/>

THC Texas Historic Sites Atlas:
<http://atlas.thc.state.tx.us/>

FEMA Map Service Center:
<http://msc.fema.gov/portal>

EPA TRIs in Briscoe County:
http://iaspub.epa.gov/triexplorer/tri_getcounties.getcounties?report=tri_release.chemical&sciptname=chemical&state=48&c_year=2013&c_industry=ALL&c_chemical=ALL&c_chemlist=&c_coreyear=&c_indlist=&c_usrState=&c_fips=00000&c_tabrpt=1&c_zip=&c_chk0=true&c_chk1=false&c_chk2=false&c_chk3=true&c_chk4=false&c_chk5=false&c_chk6=&c_chk7=&c_chk8=&c_chk9=&c_chk10=

EPA EnviroMapper:
<http://www.epa.gov/emefdata/em4ef.home>

FCC Radio Frequency Safety:
<http://transition.fcc.gov/oet/rfsafety/rf-fags.html#Q1>

Cornell University Law School; Legal Information Institute:
<https://www.law.cornell.edu/cfr/text/47/1.1307>

Noise Control Act of 1972:
http://www.epa.gov/air/noise/noise_control_act_of_1972.pdf

THC Tribal Consultation Guidelines:
<http://www.thc.state.tx.us/project-review/tribal-consultation-guidelines>

FAA Airport information for Briscoe County, TX
http://www.faa.gov/airports/airport_safety/airportdata_5010/

10.0 List of Preparers

This Environmental Assessment was prepared by the staff of the PRPC's Regional Services Department; aided by staff of the PRPC's Local Government Services Department. Both departments have an extensive background and experience in the preparation of such assessments; having performed numerous environmental assessments for projects funded under the US Department of Housing and Urban Development's Community Development Block Grant Program, the US Economic Development Administration's Economic Development Assistance grants and the TPWD's Outdoor Recreation Grants Program and Trails Grant to name a few.

The lead for this Environmental Assessment was:

John Kiehl
Regional Services Director
Panhandle Regional Planning Commission
(806) 372-3381
jkiehl@theprpc.org

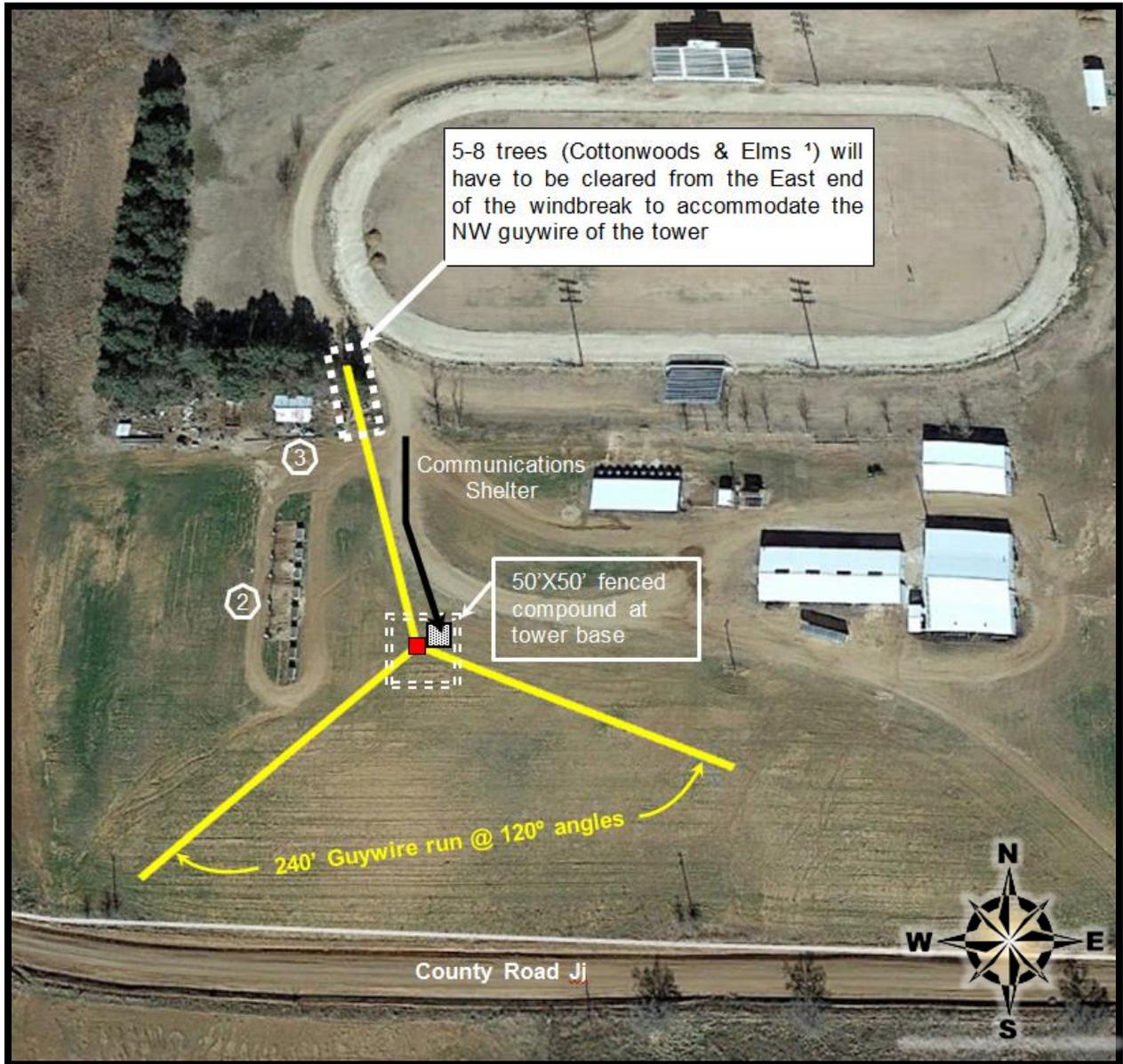
11.0 Appendices

- Attachment A: Proposed Project Site Location Map (High Level)
- Attachment B: Proposed Project Site Location Map (Low Level)
- Attachment C: Project Site Plan
- Attachment D: Site Photos
- Attachment E: Distribution of Soil Types & Soil Limitations
- Attachment F: Earthquake Probability
- Attachment G: Area Wetlands Map
- Attachment H: Area Floodplain Map & Area Elevation Map
- Attachment I: Vegetative Zone Map
- Attachment J: Critical and Sensitive Habitat Map
- Attachment K: Briscoe County Rare, Endangered and Threatened Species List
- Attachment L: Historic Properties Map
- Attachment M: Proposed Project Site NEPA Land Use Checklist
- Attachment N: Notification Letters to Interested Tribal Groups
- Attachment O: Notification Letter to the Texas Historical Commission
- Attachment P: Federal Aviation Administration Notification

Proposed Project Site: Low Level Location Map



Proposed Project Site: Project Site Plan



¹ - Most of the trees that will have to be cleared from this end of the windbreak are already dead. Trees will be removed under the direction of the ISD Superintendent. The limbs / boles will be chipped for mulch.

² This satellite view is dated; the FFA pens shown here have been relocated and now sit directly to the south of the windbreak

³ The pole barn shown here will be relocated by the PRPC to another area of the campus as directed by the ISD Superintendent

Proposed Project Site: Site Photos



View looking to the southwest of the mark set for the tower location.



View of the school facilities in proximity to the east side of the proposed tower location. The Briscoe and Hall County Sheriffs (shown in the photo) participated in this site visit, along with the Valley ISD Superintendent.

Environmental Assessment
Briscoe County Tower Site



View to the northwest of the mark set for the tower location. The arrow points to the end of the windbreak that will have to be trimmed to allow clearance for the tower's northwest guywire. It's estimated that 5-8 trees be removed from this area to allow a free path for the line. The entire field was recently planted by the ISD with oat grass to keep the soil in place and blowing dust in check.

PROPOSED PROJECT SITE: Located on the backside of the Valley ISD on State Hwy 86; Briscoe County, Texas
(N34-22-07.8 / W100-59-08.4)

PROPOSED PROJECT SITE: Distribution of Soil Types



PROPOSED PROJECT SITE: Soil Limitations

This section summarizes the potential soil limitations based on the types of construction activities involved with the proposed project.

Tables – Pier-beam Building Foundations (TX) – Summary By Map Unit						
Summary by Map Unit – Briscoe County, Texas (TX045)						
Map Unit Symbol	Map unit name	Rating	Component name (%)	Rating reasons (numeric values)	Acres in AOI	% of AOI
DaB	Berda loam, moist, 1 to 3 percent slopes	Somewhat limited	Berda, moist (90%)	High shrink-swell (0.00)	4.2	70.0%
DIA	Olton clay loam, 0 to 1 percent slopes	Somewhat limited	Olton (100%)	High shrink-swell (0.03)	1.8	30.0%
Totals for Area of Interest					6.0	100.00%
Table – Pier-beam Building Foundations (TX) – Summary by Rating Value						
Summary by Rating Value						
Rating		Acres in AOI		Percent of AOI		
Somewhat limited		6.0		100%		
Totals for Area of Interest		6.0		100%		
Description – Pier-beam Building Foundations (TX)						
<p>Pier-beam foundations consist of reinforced-concrete pad footings or continuous, reinforced-concrete spread footings and beams that support a commercial structure or dwelling above grade. These foundations are less susceptible to damage caused by shifting of the soil than other foundations. If extreme shifting of the soil occurs, the foundation can be easily adjusted.</p> <p>The ratings for pier-beam building foundations are based on the soil properties that affect excavation and construction costs. The properties that affect the load supporting capacity include depth to a water table, ponding, flooding, subsidence, and liner extensibility (shrink-swell potential). The properties that affect the ease and amount of excavation include depth to a water table, ponding, flooding, slope, depth to bedrock or a cemented pan, hardness of bedrock or a cemented pan, and the amount and size of rock fragments in the soil.</p> <p>Read more at: http://websoilsurvey.nrcs.usda.gov/app/WebSoilSurvey.aspx</p>						

Tables – Corrosion of Concrete - Summary By Map Unit				
Summary by Map Unit – Briscoe County, Texas (TX111)				
Map Unit Symbol	Map unit name	Rating	Acres in AOI	% of AOI
BeB	Berda loam, moist, 1 to 3 percent slopes	Low	4.2	70.0%
OtA	Olton clay loam, 0 to 1 percent slopes	Low	1.8	30.0%
Totals for Area of Interest			6.0	100.00%
Description – Corrosion of Concrete				
<p>“Risk of corrosion” pertains to potential soil-induced electrochemical or chemical actions that corrodes or weakens concrete. The rate of corrosion of concrete is based mainly on the sulfate and sodium content, texture, moisture content, and acidity of the soil. Special site examination and design may be needed if the combination of factors results in a severe hazard of corrosion. The concrete in installations that intersect soil boundaries or soil layers is more susceptible to corrosion than the concrete in installations that are entirely within one kind of soil or within one soil layer.</p> <p>The risk of corrosion is expressed as “low”, “moderate”, or “high”.</p>				

Berda loam, moist, 1 to 3 percent slopes

Properties and qualities

Slope: 1 to 3 percent

Depth to restrictive feature: More than 80 inches

Natural drainage class: Well drained

Runoff class: Low

Capacity of the most limiting layer to transmit water (Ksat):

Moderately high to high (0.57 to 1.98 in/hr)

Depth to water table: More than 80 inches

Frequency of flooding: None

Frequency of ponding: None

Calcium carbonate, maximum in profile: 25 percent

Salinity, maximum in profile: Nonsaline to very slightly saline (0.0 to 2.0 mmhos/cm)

Sodium adsorption ratio, maximum in profile: 6.0

Available water storage in profile: Moderate (about 7.5 inches)

Olton clay loam, 0 to 1 percent slopes

Properties and qualities

Slope: 0 to 1 percent

Depth to restrictive feature: More than 80 inches

Natural drainage class: Well drained

Capacity of the most limiting layer to transmit water (Ksat):

Moderately high (0.20 to 0.57 in/hr)

Depth to water table: More than 80 inches

Frequency of flooding: None

Frequency of ponding: None

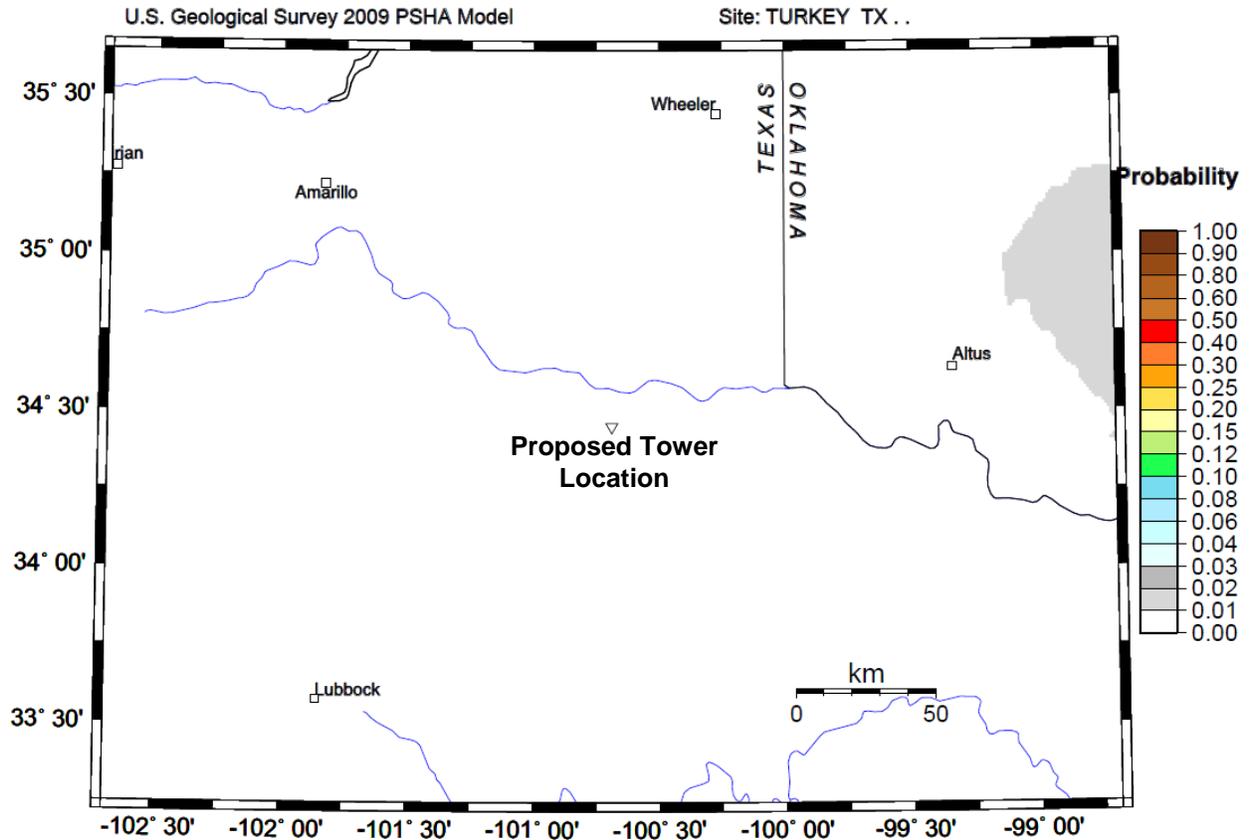
Calcium carbonate, maximum in profile: 60 percent

Salinity, maximum in profile: Nonsaline to very slightly saline (0.0 to 2.0 mmhos/cm)

Available water storage in profile: High (about 10.2 inches)

PROPOSED PROJECT SITE: Earthquake Probability

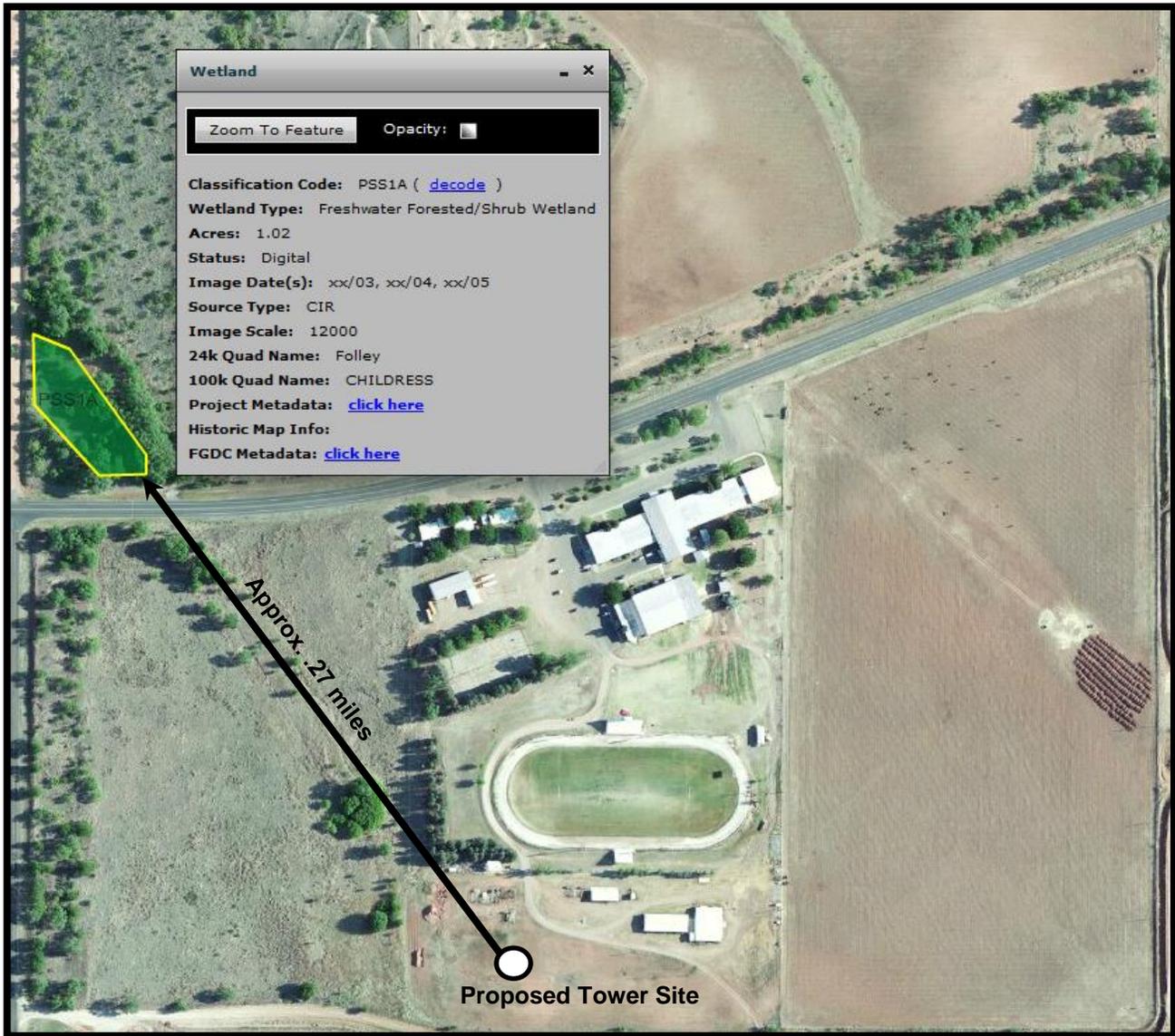
Probability of earthquake with M > 5.0 within 25 years & 50 km



GMT [2015 Apr 29 00:59:12] Earthquake probabilities from USGS OFR 08-1128 PSHA. 50 km maximum horizontal distance. Site of interest: triangle. Epicenters mb>5 black circles; rivers blue.

An earthquake that measures 5-6 on the Richter Scale will result in the following: Everyone runs outdoors. Much damage to poorly designed buildings, some chimneys broken, noticed by people driving cars.

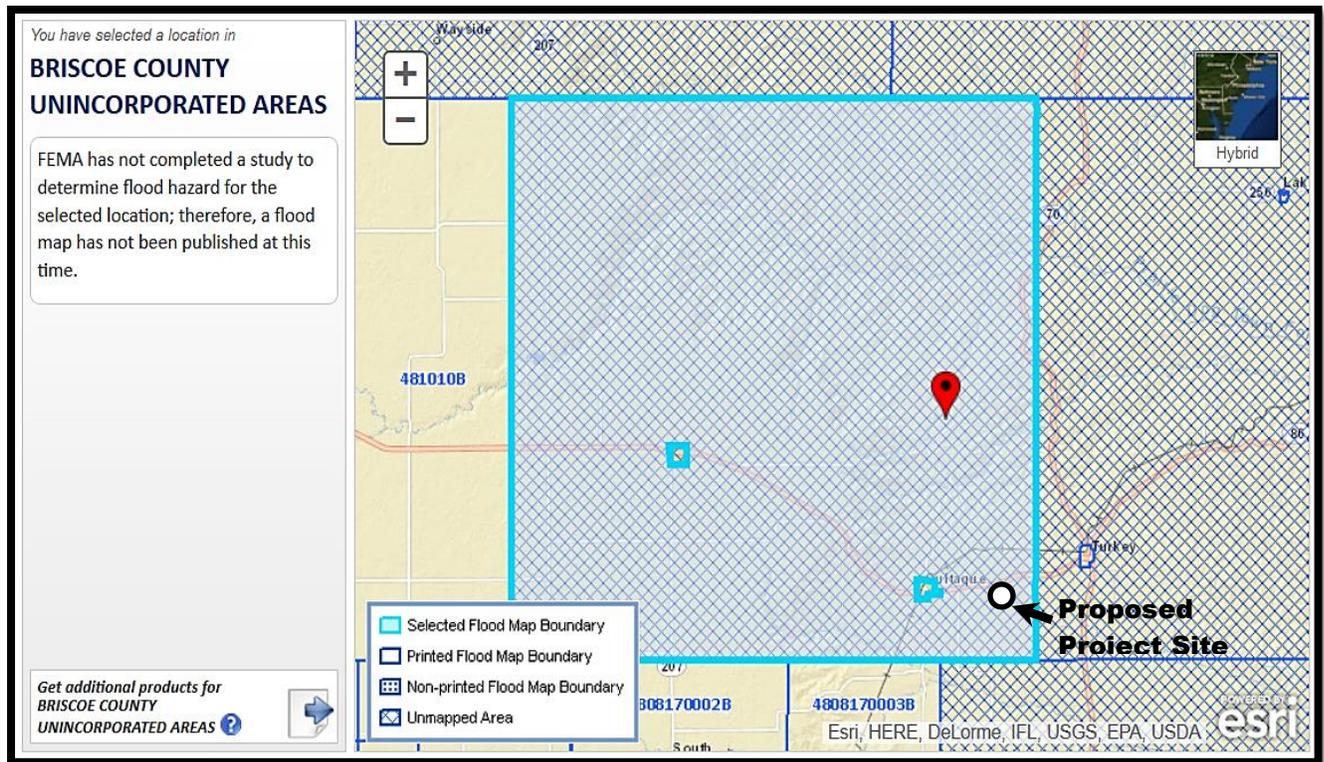
PROPOSED PROJECT SITE: Proximity to Nearest Wetland



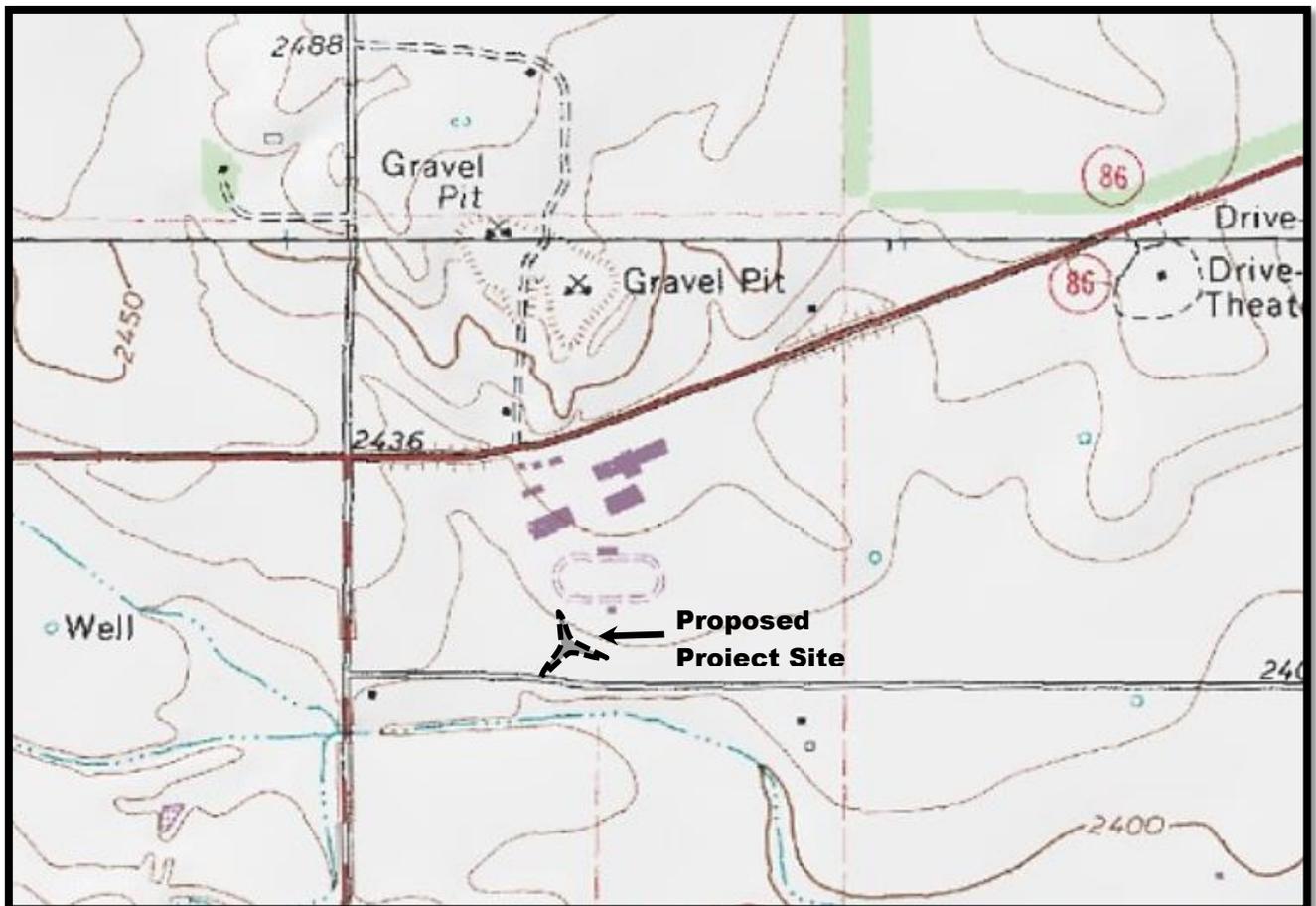
Description for code PSS1A

- P** System **PALUSTRINE**: The Palustrine System includes all nontidal wetlands dominated by trees, shrubs, emergents, mosses or lichens, and all such wetlands that occur in tidal areas where salinity due to ocean derived salts is below 0.5 ppt. Wetlands lacking such vegetation are also included if they exhibit all of the following characteristics: 1. are less than 8 hectares (20 acres); 2. do not have an active wave-formed or bedrock shoreline feature; 3. have at low water a depth less than 2 meters (6.6 feet) in the deepest part of the basin; 4. have a salinity due to ocean-derived salts of less than 0.5 ppt.
- SS** Subsystem: Class **SCRUB-SHRUB**: Includes areas dominated by woody vegetation less than 6 m (20 feet) tall. The species include true shrubs, young trees (saplings), and trees or shrubs that are small or stunted because of environmental conditions.
- 1** Subclass **Broad-Leaved Deciduous**: Woody angiosperms (trees or shrubs) with relatively wide, flat leaves that are shed during the cold or dry season; e.g., black ash (*Fraxinus nigra*).
- A** **WATER REGIME** **Temporary Flooded**: Surface water is present for brief periods during growing season, but the water table usually lies well below the soil surface for most of the growing season. Plants that grow both in uplands and wetlands may be characteristic of this water regime.

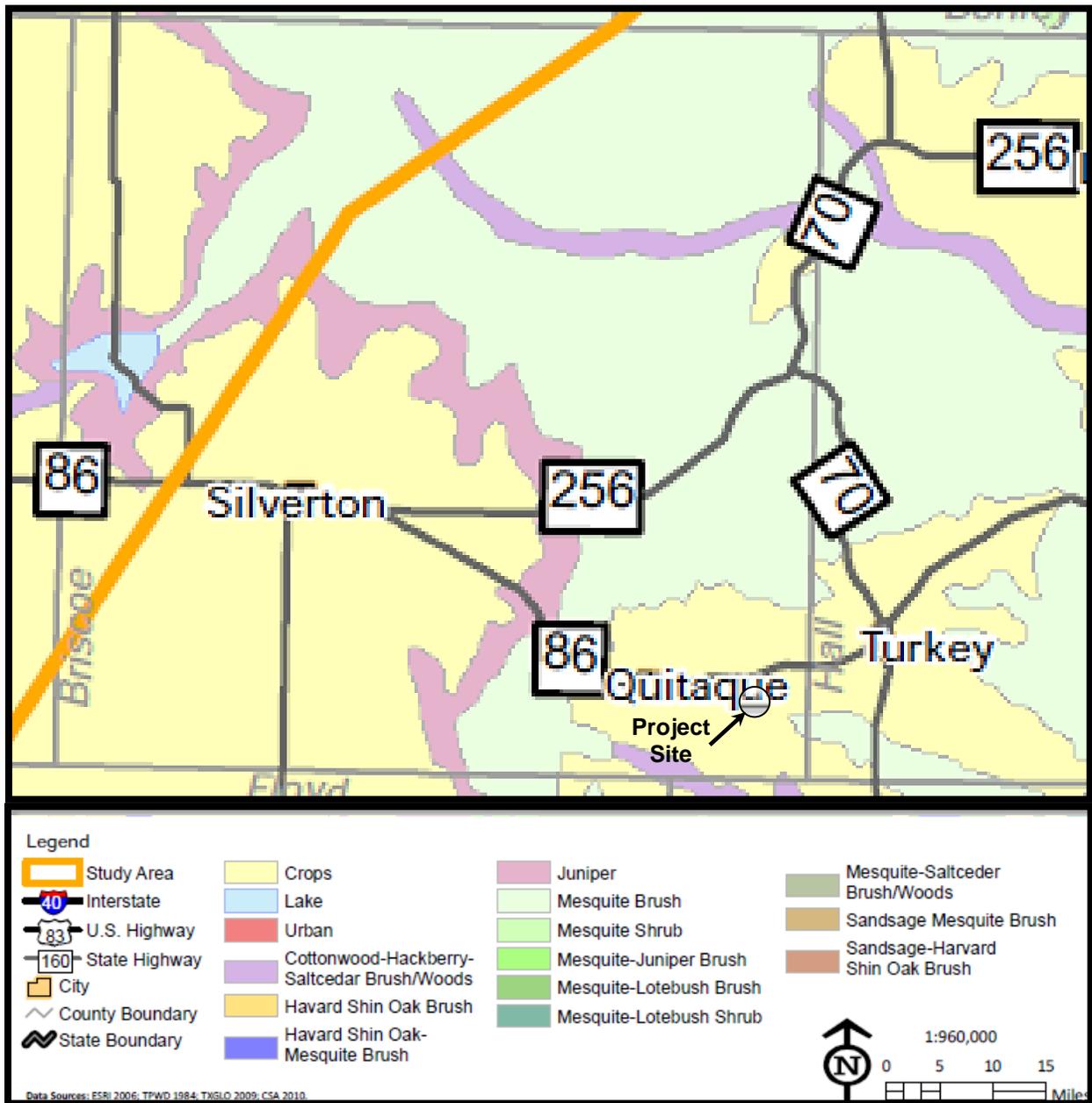
PROPOSED PROJECT SITE: Floodplain Map (Area Unmapped)



PROPOSED PROJECT SITE: Elevation Map (at 2420 NGVD)



PROPOSED PROJECT SITE: Vegetative Zone

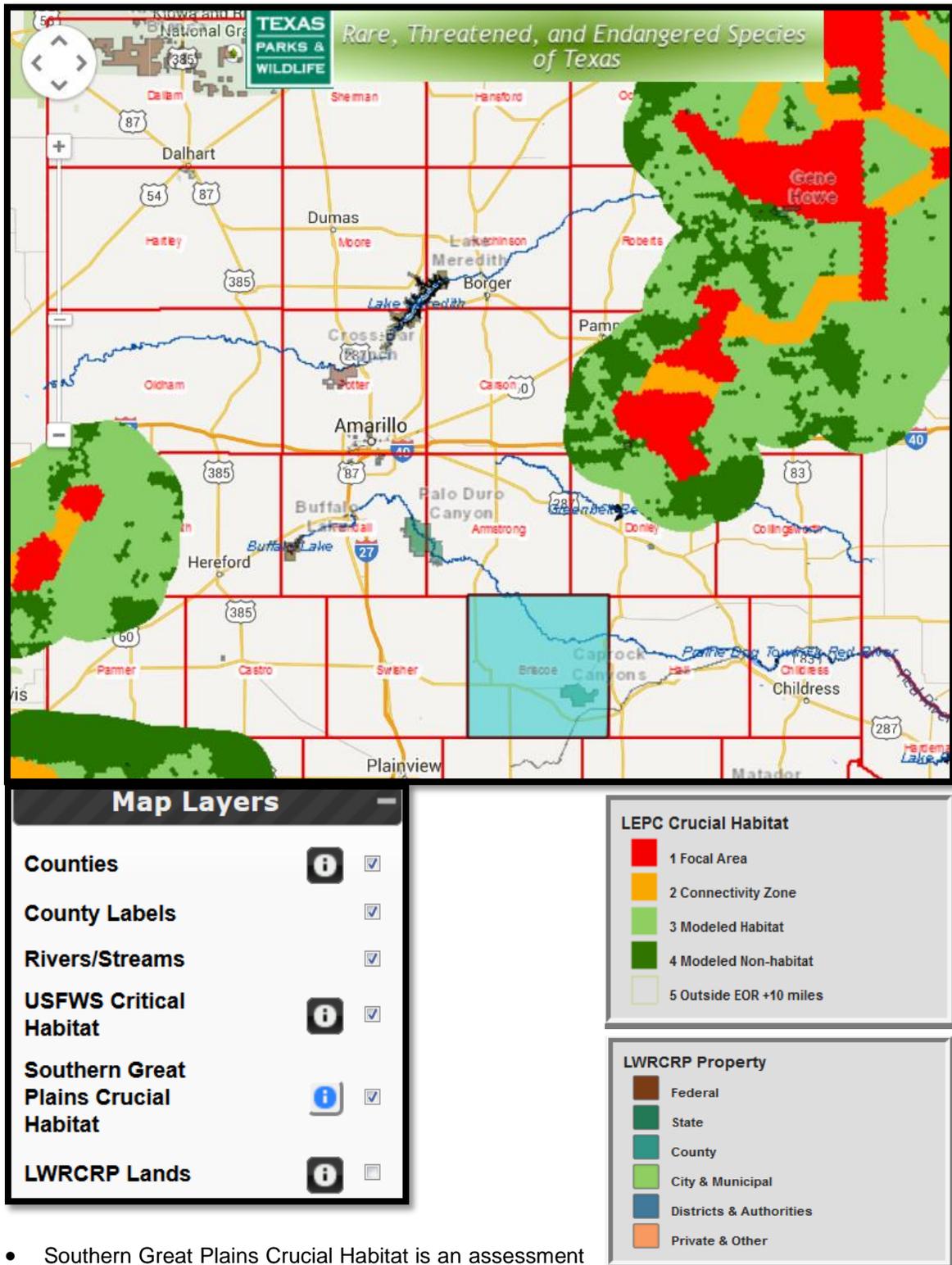


Source: <http://www.powerfortheplains.com/projects/tuco/collateral/Environmental-Assessment-3.pdf>

Vegetation zones are areas with similar groups of plants. In this instance, the proposed project site is in a zone typified as being Mesquite Brush.

PROPOSED PROJECT SITE: Critical and Sensitive Habitats

The proposed project site is outside of any state/federal-designated critical habitat.



- Southern Great Plains Crucial Habitat is an assessment tool used to designate/prioritize areas for the Lesser prairie-chicken (LEPC).
- Land & Water Resources Conservation & Recreation Plan (LWRCRP) designated areas.
- The US Fish & Wildlife Service (USFWS) lists no critical habitat in Briscoe County.

BRISCOE COUNTY

Texas Parks & Wildlife Dept.
Annotated County Lists of Rare Species

Last Revision:
04/28/2014 4:07:00 PM

BIRDS

Common Name	Scientific Name	Federal Status	State Status
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American Peregrine Falcon	<i>Falco peregrinus anatum</i>	DL	T
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year-round resident and local breeder in west Texas, nests in tall cliff eyries; also, migrant across state from more northern breeding areas in US and Canada, winters along coast and farther south; occupies wide range of habitats during migration, including urban, concentrations along coast and barrier islands; low-altitude migrant, stopovers at leading landscape edges such as lake shores, coastlines, and barrier islands.

Arctic Peregrine Falcon	<i>Falco peregrinus tundrius</i>	DL	
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migrant throughout state from subspecies' far northern breeding range, winters along coast and farther south; occupies wide range of habitats during migration, including urban, concentrations along coast and barrier islands; low-altitude migrant, stopovers at leading landscape edges such as lake shores, coastlines, and barrier islands.

Baird's Sparrow	<i>Ammodramus bairdii</i>		
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shortgrass prairie with scattered low bushes and matted vegetation; mostly migratory in western half of State, though winters in Mexico and just across Rio Grande into Texas from Brewster through Hudspeth counties

Bald Eagle	<i>Haliaeetus leucocephalus</i>	DL	T
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found primarily near rivers and large lakes; nests in tall trees or on cliffs near water; communally roosts, especially in winter; hunts live prey, scavenges, and pirates food from other birds

Ferruginous Hawk	<i>Buteo regalis</i>		
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open country, primarily prairies, plains, and badlands; nests in tall trees along streams or on steep slopes, cliff ledges, river-cut banks, hillsides, power line towers; year-round resident in northwestern high plains, wintering elsewhere throughout western 2/3 of Texas

Interior Least Tern	<i>Sterna antillarum athalassos</i>	LE	E
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subspecies is listed only when inland (more than 50 miles from a coastline); nests along sand and gravel bars within braided streams, rivers; also know to nest on man-made structures (inland beaches, wastewater treatment plants, gravel mines, etc); eats small fish and crustaceans, when breeding forages within a few hundred feet of colony

Lesser Prairie-Chicken	<i>Tympanuchus pallidicinctus</i>	T	
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arid grasslands, generally interspersed with shrubs such as sand sagebrush, sand plum, skunkbush sumac, and shinnery oak shrubs, but dominated by sand dropseed, sideoats grama, sand bluestem, and little bluestem grasses; nests in a scrape lined with grasses

Mountain Plover	<i>Charadrius montanus</i>		
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breeding: nests on high plains or shortgrass prairie, on ground in shallow depression; nonbreeding: shortgrass plains and bare, dirt (plowed) fields; primarily insectivorous

PROPOSED PROJECT SITE: Briscoe County Rare, Endangered and Threatened Species List

Common Name	Scientific Name	Federal Status	State Status
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Peregrine Falcon *Falco peregrinus* DL T

both subspecies migrate across the state from more northern breeding areas in US and Canada to winter along coast and farther south; subspecies (F. p. anatum) is also a resident breeder in west Texas; the two subspecies' listing statuses differ, F.p. tundrius is no longer listed in Texas; but because the subspecies are not easily distinguishable at a distance, reference is generally made only to the species level; see subspecies for habitat.

Snowy Plover *Charadrius alexandrinus*

formerly an uncommon breeder in the Panhandle; potential migrant; winter along coast

Western Burrowing Owl *Athene cunicularia hypugaea*

open grasslands, especially prairie, plains, and savanna, sometimes in open areas such as vacant lots near human habitation or airports; nests and roosts in abandoned burrows

Western Snowy Plover *Charadrius alexandrinus nivosus*

uncommon breeder in the Panhandle; potential migrant; winter along coast

Whooping Crane *Grus americana* LE E

potential migrant via plains throughout most of state to coast; winters in coastal marshes of Aransas, Calhoun, and Refugio counties

MAMMALS

Common Name	Scientific Name	Federal Status	State Status
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Black-footed ferret *Mustela nigripes* LE

extirpated; inhabited prairie dog towns in the general area

Black-tailed prairie dog *Cynomys ludovicianus*

dry, flat, short grasslands with low, relatively sparse vegetation, including areas overgrazed by cattle; live in large family groups

Cave myotis bat *Myotis velifer*

colonial and cave-dwelling; also roosts in rock crevices, old buildings, carports, under bridges, and even in abandoned Cliff Swallow (*Hirundo pyrrhonota*) nests; roosts in clusters of up to thousands of individuals; hibernates in limestone caves of Edwards Plateau and gypsum cave of Panhandle during winter; opportunistic insectivore

Gray wolf *Canis lupus* LE E

extirpated; formerly known throughout the western two-thirds of the state in forests, brushlands, or grasslands

Pale Townsend's big-eared bat *Corynorhinus townsendii pallescens*

roosts in caves, abandoned mine tunnels, and occasionally old buildings; hibernates in groups during winter; in summer months, males and females separate into solitary roosts and maternity colonies, respectively; single offspring born May-June; opportunistic insectivore

PROPOSED PROJECT SITE: Briscoe County Rare, Endangered and Threatened Species List

Common Name	Scientific Name	Federal Status	State Status
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Palo Duro mouse *Peromyscus truei comanche* T

rocky, juniper-mesquite-covered slopes of steep-walled canyons of the eastern edge of the Llano Estacado; juniper woodlands in canyon country of the panhandle; primarily nocturnal

Plains spotted skunk *Spilogale putorius interrupta*

catholic; open fields, prairies, croplands, fence rows, farmyards, forest edges, and woodlands; prefers wooded, brushy areas and tallgrass prairie

Swift fox *Vulpes velox*

restricted to current and historic shortgrass prairie; western and northern portions of Panhandle

REPTILES

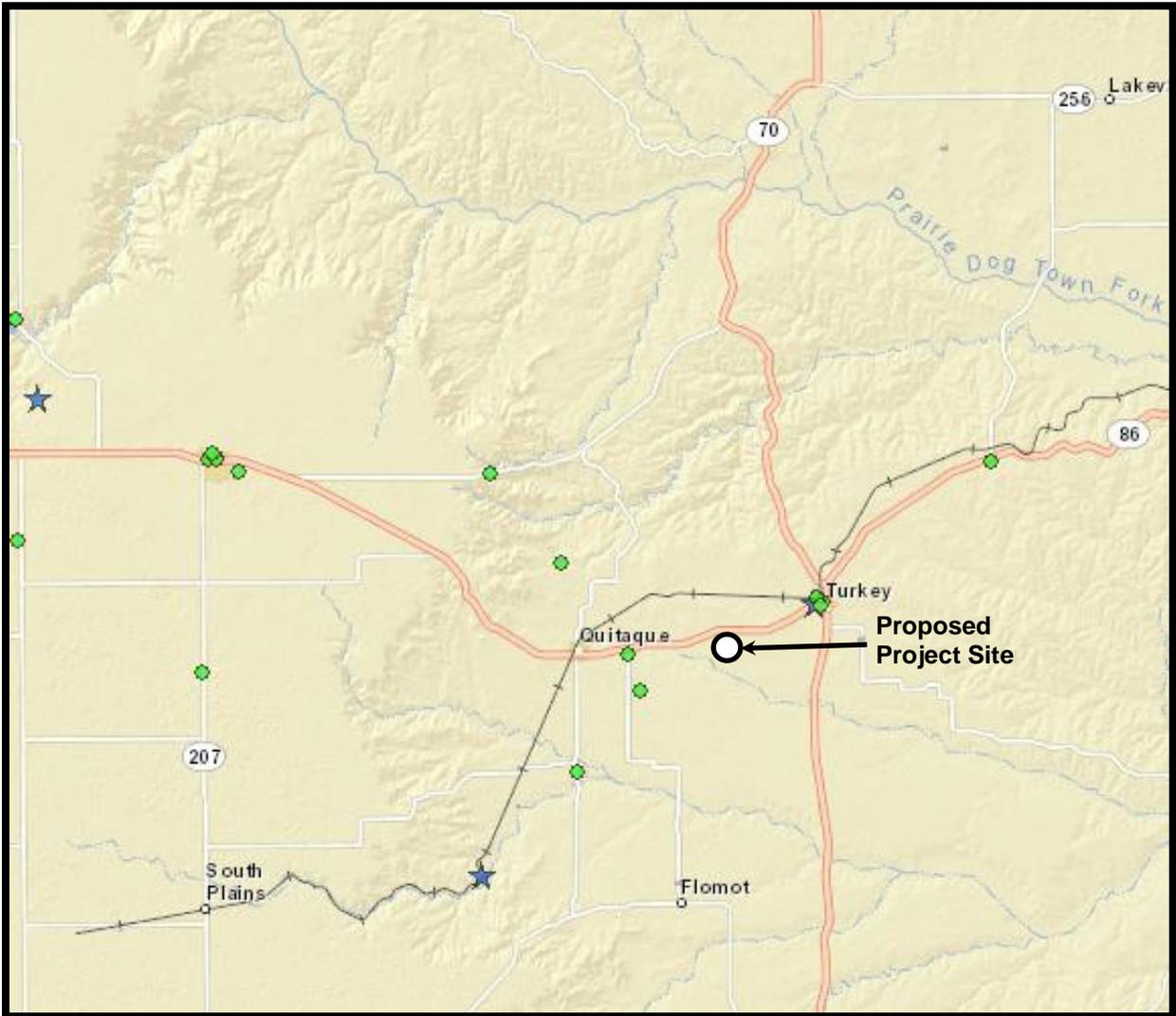
Common Name	Scientific Name	Federal Status	State Status
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Texas horned lizard *Phrynosoma cornutum* T

open, arid and semi-arid regions with sparse vegetation, including grass, cactus, scattered brush or scrubby trees; soil may vary in texture from sandy to rocky; burrows into soil, enters rodent burrows, or hides under rock when inactive; breeds March-September

PROPOSED PROJECT SITE: Historic Properties (Texas Historical Commission [THC] sites)

There are no THC-list properties or resources within close proximity of the proposed tower site.



◆ - THC-listed sites in Briscoe County

PROPOSED PROJECT SITE: Historic Properties (National Register of Historic Places [NHRP] sites)

There are no NHRP -list properties or resources within close proximity of the proposed tower site. The only two sites listed on the federal database are:

Reference	State	County	City	Resource	Address	Listed
75001960	TX	Briscoe	Quitaque	Lake Theo Folsom Site Complex	Address Restricted ¹	19750428
73001960	TX	Briscoe	Silverton	Mayfield Dugout	7 mi. NW of Silverton	19730618

¹ - Site is located to the north of the proposed project site in Caprock Canyons State Park

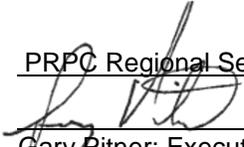
PROPOSED PROJECT SITE:

NEPA LAND USE CHECKLIST

Site #: NA	Site Name: Briscoe County Tower Site	Site Address: Located on the Valley ISD campus on State Hwy 86; Briscoe Co. TX		
Coordinates: N36-16-23.0 / W102-51-21.4	Expert Federal / State Jurisdictional Agencies	Summarize any preliminary finding of positive effects	Check one Box	
			Yes	No
1. Will the facility be located in an officially designated wilderness area?	National Park Service, U.S. Forest Service, Bureau of Land Management, National Wilderness Preservation System			X
2. Will the facility be located in an officially designated wildlife preserve	U.S. Dept. of Interior—Fish & Wildlife Service (USFWS), National Wildlife Refuge System			X
3. Will the facility affect listed and proposed threatened or endangered species or designated critical habitat?	United States Fish and Wildlife Service, State Wildlife Agency			X
4. Will the facility affect districts, sites, buildings, structures or objects listed, or eligible for listing, in the National Register of Historic Places?	State Historic Preservation Office			X
5. Will the facility affect Indian Religious sites?	Native American Tribal Groups			X
6. Will the facility be located in a Flood Plain?	Federal Emergency Management Agency			X
7. Will the facility construction involve significant change in surface features?	PRPC staff managing the project construction work			X
8. Will the antenna towers and/or supporting structures be equipped with High Intensity White Lights?	PRPC staff managing the project construction work			X
9. Will the facility result in human exposure to radiation in excess of the applicable safety standards?	PRPC staff managing the project construction work			X
Additional Considerations				
10. Will the facility be located within one mile of a National Scenic or Historic Trail?	National Park Service			X
11. Will the facility affect National Wild and Scenic Rivers?	National Wild and Scenic River System			X

The undersigned has reviewed and approved the completion of this NEPA Checklist for the above-mentioned site.

Prepared by: PRPC Regional Services Staff

Signature:  Gary Pitner; Executive Director

April 30, 2015
Date



April 30, 2015

Mr. Ronald D. Twohatchet
Chairperson
Kiowa Indian Tribe of Oklahoma
P.O. Box 369
Carnegie, Oklahoma 73015

In Regard To:

Consultation Under 36CFR 800.4(j)
State Homeland Security Grant Program (SHSP)
SAA Award Number 14-SR 99017-05
Briscoe County, TX (N34-22-07.8 / W100-59-08.4)
New Communications Tower Project

Dear Mr. Twohatchet,

The Panhandle Regional Planning Commission (PRPC) has built and now maintains a public safety radio communications system that serves the entire 26-county area of the Texas Panhandle. The system, called PANCOM, was built with funding provided through the SHSP grant program.

The PRPC has had some challenges in providing clear, reliable radio reception across Briscoe County from PANCOM's current Hall County tower location (a leased site). The PRPC recently received some additional SHSP funding to build a new tower at an alternate location that will provide us the ability to improve radio communications in both Briscoe and Hall Counties (see enclosed map). By improving first responder radio communications; this project will also contribute to an improvement to public safety in the coverage area served by this new tower.

Generally speaking, the proposed project includes the construction of a new 300' guyed wire communications tower on the backside of the Valley ISD campus, located midway between the City of Quitaque (in Briscoe County) and the City of Turkey (in Hall County) on State Hwy 86. The project also includes the installation of a communications shelter at the tower base. The shelter and tower base will be fence-enclosed.

As the designated representative of the Kiowa Indian Tribe of Oklahoma; you're being contacted in accordance with the provisions of 36CFR 800.4(j). The Kiowa Indian Tribe of Oklahoma has indicated that Briscoe County is within the Tribe's area of interest. Having done our due diligence review and assessment, the PRPC believes that the proposed project site contains no cultural resources or artifacts and has no significance to the Kiowa Indian Tribe of Oklahoma.

Should you disagree with this finding and have additional information we should consider, or if you have any questions, please do not hesitate to call. If we don't hear from you within thirty calendar days, the PRPC will assume that you agree within our determination and will proceed with the project. Thank you Sir.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Gary Pitner", is written over a faint, larger version of the same signature.

Gary Pitner, Executive Director
Panhandle Regional Planning
Commission



April 30, 2015

Mr. Alonzo Chalepah
Acting Chairperson
Apache Tribe of Oklahoma
P.O. Box 1220
Anadarko, Oklahoma 73005

In Regard To:

Consultation Under 36CFR 800.4(j)
State Homeland Security Grant Program (SHSP)
SAA Award Number 14-SR 99017-05
Briscoe County, TX (N34-22-07.8 / W100-59-08.4)
New Communications Tower Project

Dear Mr. Chalepah,

The Panhandle Regional Planning Commission (PRPC) has built and now maintains a public safety radio communications system that serves the entire 26-county area of the Texas Panhandle. The system, called PANCOM, was built with funding provided through the SHSP grant program.

The PRPC has had some challenges in providing clear, reliable radio reception across Briscoe County from PANCOM's current Hall County tower location (a leased site). The PRPC recently received some additional SHSP funding to build a new tower at an alternate location that will provide us the ability to improve radio communications in both Briscoe and Hall Counties (see enclosed map). By improving first responder radio communications; this project will also contribute to an improvement to public safety in the coverage area served by this new tower.

Generally speaking, the proposed project includes the construction of a new 300' guyed wire communications tower on the backside of the Valley ISD campus, located midway between the City of Quitaque (in Briscoe County) and the City of Turkey (in Hall County) on State Hwy 86. The project also includes the installation of a communications shelter at the tower base. The shelter and tower base will be fence-enclosed.

As the designated representative of the Apache Tribe of Oklahoma; you're being contacted in accordance with the provisions of 36CFR 800.4(j). The Apache Tribe of Oklahoma has indicated that Briscoe County is within the Tribe's area of interest. Having done our due diligence review and assessment, the PRPC believes that the proposed project site contains no cultural resources or artifacts and has no significance to the Apache Tribe of Oklahoma.

Should you disagree with this finding and have additional information we should consider, or if you have any questions, please do not hesitate to call. If we don't hear from you within thirty calendar days, the PRPC will assume that you agree within our determination and will proceed with the project. Thank you Sir.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Gary Pitner", is written over a faint, larger version of the same signature.

Gary Pitner, Executive Director
Panhandle Regional Planning
Commission



April 30, 2015

Mr. Johnny Wauqua
Chairperson
Comanche Nation
P.O. Box 908
Lawton, Oklahoma 73502

In Regard To:

Consultation Under 36CFR 800.4(j)
State Homeland Security Grant Program (SHSP)
SAA Award Number 14-SR 99017-05
Briscoe County, TX (N34-22-07.8 / W100-59-08.4)
New Communications Tower Project

Dear Mr. Wauqua,

The Panhandle Regional Planning Commission (PRPC) has built and now maintains a public safety radio communications system that serves the entire 26-county area of the Texas Panhandle. The system, called PANCOM, was built with funding provided through the SHSP grant program.

The PRPC has had some challenges in providing clear, reliable radio reception across Briscoe County from PANCOM's current Hall County tower location (a leased site). The PRPC recently received some additional SHSP funding to build a new tower at an alternate location that will provide us the ability to improve radio communications in both Briscoe and Hall Counties (see enclosed map). By improving first responder radio communications; this project will also contribute to an improvement to public safety in the coverage area served by this new tower.

Generally speaking, the proposed project includes the construction of a new 300' guyed wire communications tower on the backside of the Valley ISD campus, located midway between the City of Quitaque (in Briscoe County) and the City of Turkey (in Hall County) on State Hwy 86. The project also includes the installation of a communications shelter at the tower base. The shelter and tower base will be fence-enclosed.

As the designated representative for the Comanche Nation; you're being contacted in accordance with the provisions of 36CFR 800.4(j). The Comanche Nation has indicated that Briscoe County is within the Nation's area of interest. Having done our due diligence review and assessment, the PRPC believes that the proposed project site contains no cultural resources or artifacts and has no significance to the Comanche Nation.

Should you disagree with this finding and have additional information we should consider, or if you have any questions, please do not hesitate to call. If we don't hear from you within thirty calendar days, the PRPC will assume that you agree within our determination and will proceed with the project. Thank you Sir.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Gary Pitner", is written over a faint, larger version of the same signature.

Gary Pitner, Executive Director
Panhandle Regional Planning
Commission

Cc: Mr. Jimmy Arterberry THPO
Comanche Nation

415 West Eighth Avenue
P.O. Box 9257
Amarillo, TX 79105
(806) 372-3381
(806) 373-3268 (fax)
www.theprpc.org

Attachment N





April 30, 2015

Mr. Mark Wolfe
Executive Director
Texas Historical Commission
P.O. Box 12276
Austin, Texas 78711

In Regard To:

Consultation Under 36CFR 800.4(j)
State Homeland Security Grant Program (SHSP)
SAA Award Number 14-SR 99017-05
Briscoe County, TX (N34-22-07.8 / W100-59-08.4)
New Communications Tower Project

Dear Mr. Wolfe,

The Panhandle Regional Planning Commission (PRPC) has built and now maintains a public safety radio communications system that serves the entire 26-county area of the Texas Panhandle. The system, called PANCOM, was built with funding provided through the SHSP grant program.

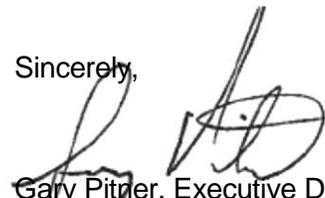
The PRPC has had some challenges in providing clear, reliable radio reception across Briscoe County from PANCOM's current Hall County tower location (a leased site). The PRPC recently received some additional SHSP funding to build a new tower at an alternate location that will provide us the ability to improve radio communications in both Briscoe and Hall Counties (see enclosed map). By improving first responder radio communications; this project will also contribute to an improvement to public safety in the coverage area served by this new tower.

Generally speaking, the proposed project includes the construction of a new 300' guyed wire communications tower on the backside of the Valley ISD campus, located midway between the City of Quitaque (in Briscoe County) and the City of Turkey (in Hall County) on State Hwy 86. The project also includes the installation of a communications shelter at the tower base. The shelter and tower base will be fence-enclosed.

In accordance with the provisions of 36CFR 800.4(a) and the Antiquities Code of Texas (Texas Natural Resources Code, Section 191.0001 et. seq.), the PRPC has conducted a historical and cultural survey and reviewed the published list of the National Register of Historic Places and the most recent publication listing state historic places. To the best of our knowledge the project site has no archaeological or historical significance.

Should you disagree with our findings and have additional information we should consider, or if you have any questions, please do not hesitate to call. If we do not hear from you within thirty calendar days, we will assume that you agree within our determination and will proceed with the project. Thank you Sir.

Sincerely,



Gary Pitner, Executive Director
Panhandle Regional Planning
Commission

Proposed Project Site: FAA Notification



There are two airports in Briscoe County. Neither is within an area of concern with regard to the proposed tower location.

State Region ADO	City County	Facility Name Ownership/Use	Location ID Site Number	Airport Reference Point Coordinates	Runway Length / Width	Surface Type
TX ASW TEX	QUITAGUE BRISCOE	HENSON FARMS PR/PR	3TS5 24585.9*A	34-21-42.0100N 101-05-00.0300W	3000' / 50'	Dirt
TX ASW TEX	SILVERTON BRISCOE	SILVERTON MUNI PU/PR	79XS 24799.1*A	34-28-00.2300N 101-18-01.5770W	3530' / 190'	Turf

Information pertaining to these facilities can be found of the Federal Aviation Administration's website at: http://www.faa.gov/airports/airport_safety/airportdata_5010/menu/#reports.

14 CFR Part 77.9 states that any person/organization who intends to sponsor any of the following construction or alterations must notify the Administrator of the FAA:

- any construction or alteration exceeding 200 ft above ground level
- any construction or alteration:

- within 20,000 ft of a public use or military airport which exceeds a 100:1 surface from any point on the runway of each airport with its longest runway more than 3,200 ft
- within 10,000 ft of a public use or military airport which exceeds a 50:1 surface from any point on the runway of each airport with its longest runway no more than 3,200 ft
- within 5,000 ft of a public use heliport which exceeds a 25:1 surface
- any highway, railroad or other traverse way whose prescribed adjusted height would exceed the above noted standards
- when requested by the FAA
- any construction or alteration located on a public use airport or heliport regardless of height or location.

● Please populate the form below and accept the Restriction of Liability Statement in order to register.
 ● A *valid Username* is at least 4 characters long and may contain letters, numbers, or the following special characters (- _ @ .). No spaces are allowed in a Username.
 ● A *valid Password* is at least 8 characters long and contains one letter, one number, and one special character (e.g., Fly2*High, gliDer\$77, @ntenna#5).
 ● Required fields indicated with an asterisk*

* First Name:	<input type="text" value="John"/>
* Last Name:	<input type="text" value="Kiehl"/>
* Email Address:	<input type="text" value="jkiehl@theprpc.org"/>
* Username:	<input type="text" value="jkiehl"/>
* Password:	<input type="password" value="....."/>
* Retype Password:	<input type="password" value="....."/>
* Phone Number:	(<input type="text" value="806"/>) <input type="text" value="372"/> - <input type="text" value="3381"/> ext <input type="text"/>
Fax Number:	(<input type="text" value="806"/>) <input type="text" value="373"/> - <input type="text" value="3268"/>
Organization/Company:	<input type="text" value="Panhandle Regional Planning"/>
* Address 1:	<input type="text" value="415 West Eighth Avenue"/>
Address 2:	<input type="text"/>
* City:	<input type="text" value="Amarillo"/>
* State:	<input type="text" value="Texas"/> ▼
-OR-	
* Non-US State:	<input type="text"/>
* Country:	<input type="text" value="United States"/> ▼
* Zip / Post Code:	<input type="text" value="79101"/>

Restriction of Liability Statement

The FAA makes no claims, promises, or guarantees about the accuracy, verification of the set-up of user accounts, completeness, or adequacy of the contents of this website and expressly disclaims liability for errors and omissions in the contents of this website. No warranty of any kind, implied, expressed or statutory, including but not limited to warranties of non-infringement of third party rights, title, merchantability, fitness for a particular purpose and freedom from computer virus, is given with respect to the contents of this website or its hyperlinks to other Internet resources. Reference in this website to any specific commercial products, processes, or services, or the use of any trade, firm or corporation name is for the information and convenience of the public, and does not constitute endorsement, recommendation, or favoring by FAA.

I accept the above statement.

The PRPC has initially registered on the FAA's Obstruction Evaluation/Airport Airspace Analysis site (<https://oeaaa.faa.gov/oeaaa/external/portal.jsp>) and will submit the requisite notification information to the FAA once this draft has been approved.