

Environmental Assessment (EA)

For Construction of Broadband Infrastructure

for the Central East Region of Puerto Rico

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Acronym List

| Acronym | Description |
|---------|--|
| ARRA | American Recovery and Reinvestment Act |
| BMP | Best Management Practices |
| BTOP | Broadband Technology Opportunities Program |
| CAA | Clean Air Act |
| CE | Categorical Exclusion |
| CFR | Code Of Federal Regulations |
| CZMA | Coastal Zone Management Area |
| DOC | Department Of Commerce |
| EA | Environmental Assessment |
| EQ | Environmental Questionnaire |
| FCC | Federal Communications Commission |
| FEMA | Federal Emergency Management Agency |
| FONSI | Finding of Non Significant Impact |
| IEEE | Institute of Electrical and Electronic Engineers |
| INTECO | Iniciativa Tecnologica Centro Oriental, |
| NAAQS | National Ambient Air Quality Standards |
| NEPA | National Environmental Protection Act |
| NTIA | National Telecommunications & Information Administration |
| PRDENR | Puerto Rico Department Environmental Natural Resources |
| RCRA | Resource Conservation and Recovery Act |
| SAC | Special Award Conditions |
| SHPO | State Historical Preservation Office |
| USEPA | United States Environmental Protection Agency |
| USFWS | United States Fish and Wildlife Service |

Acronym

1.1 Executive Summary

Iniciativa Tecnológica Centro Oriental Inc. (INTECO) wireless broadband network has been awarded grant funding from the National Telecommunications and Information Administration (NTIA) through the Broadband Technology Opportunities Program.

The construction of the INTECO wireless broadband network will include the deployment of eight (8) monopole towers, equipment shelters and ancillary facilities at new locations, and the retrofit of fifteen (15) existing communications tower locations, for a total of twenty three (23) sites. The installation of fiber optic cabling and conduit, and the retrofit of an existing building to serve as the administrative operations and network operations center.

The area to be served by the proposed network includes the east-central region of Puerto Rico consisting of nine municipalities (Caguas, Gurabo, Juncos, Naguabo, Ceiba, Cayey, San Lorenzo, Las Piedras, and Humacao). The coverage area will include an area of 413 square miles and serve a population of more than 416,000 citizens (based on year 2000 census data).

The proposed network will provide internet and metro Ethernet products with service tiers ranging from 2 to 9 Mbps of bandwidth. These services will be offered to community anchor tenants as well as third-party service providers and will include three (3) networks tiers.

INTECO evaluated the following alternatives for the project execution:

- No Action Alternative
- Underground Placement Alternative
- Aerial Placement Alternative
- Aerial and Wireless Combination Placement Alternative
- All Wireless Placement Alternative

The alternative selected was the Aerial and Wireless Combination Placement. This combination method costs less, can be installed in a shorter time period and has less environmental impact than the other ones.

INTECO contracted a team of multidisciplinary professionals that evaluated and submitted to local and state agencies the necessary data to recommend the proposed action, construction activities and system routes. No adverse social or economic impacts were determined based on the proposed action. On the contrary the social and economic benefits are very positive and substantial.

Our Environmental Assessment team visited each site to make direct observations and collect pertinent data. We found no historic structures or sites, no evidence of habitat of protected species, no wetlands or water bodies near any of the proposed sites. All of the sites are above the 100 year flood levels

As part of the normal permitting process for this project, INTECO has contacted and consulted with interested local/state and federal environmental and governmental agency, as well as consulted with NTIA's NEPA coordinator and staff archaeologist on overall project guidance.

Each agency was provided with a description and maps of the proposed project showing the area that could be affected by the proposed routing of new and/or replacement fiber optic cable in the area. Each agency was provided with INTECO consultants contact information so that comments and revisions to the proposed project and potential, if any effect on the environment can be reviewed by INTECO consultants. The consulted agencies are as follows:

- US Fish and Wildlife Service
- Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA)
- State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO)
- Coastal Zone Management Area (CZMA)
- Puerto Rico Department of Environmental and Natural Resources (DENR)
- Service Wetland Management
- Puerto Rico Environmental Quality Board (PREQB)
- Puerto Rico Electrical Power and Authority (PREPA)

Some of these agencies have subsequently submitted responses, related to the INTECO project in the Central East Region of Puerto Rico.

The state and federal agencies involved in the preliminary consultation and / or review of the initial documents found no significant impacts to the existing environment Therefore; this EA supports the construction of the 8 proposed tower locations and the retrofit of 15 existing towers.