

STAFF REPORT

PLEASE REFER TO DRCC # WHEN SUBMITTING
ADDITIONAL DOCUMENTS



DRCC #:25-1724D

DATE: August 12, 2025

PROJECT NAME: New Jersey Public Health, Environmental, and Agriculture
Laboratory (NJ PHEAL) Expansion

Latest Submission Received: July 31, 2025

Applicant:

New Jersey Department of the Treasury
Division of Property Management and Construction
c/o David Markunas
3 Schwarzkopf Drive
West Trenton, NJ 08628
david.markunas@treas.nj.gov

Engineer:

Jeffrey S. Richter, P.P., P.E.
ACT Engineers, Inc.
1 Washington Boulevard, Suite 3
Robbinsville, NJ 08691
jrichter@actengineers.com

Project Location:

Road	Municipality	County	Block(s)	Lot(s)
3 Schwarzkopf Drive	Ewing Township	Mercer	423	17

Jurisdictional Determination:

Zone A	Major	Nongovernmental

Subject to Review for:

Drainage	Visual	Traffic	Stream Corridors
X	X	X	

**THIS STAFF REPORT IS ISSUED AS A GUIDE TO APPLICANTS IN
COMPLYING WITH DRCC REGULATIONS. IT IS NOT AN APPROVAL.**

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NO CONSTRUCTION SHALL BEGIN UNTIL A CERTIFICATE OF APPROVAL HAS BEEN ISSUED.

Documents Received: Site Plans (13 sheets) dated September 13, 2024, revised January 29, 2025, prepared by ACT Engineering, Inc.; Stormwater Management Plan (208 pages) dated January 28, 2025, prepared by ACT Engineering, Inc. Traffic Report dated July 24, 2025, prepared by Shropshire Associates, LLC. Architectural Renderings (5 sheets) dated November 13, 2024; Elevation Drawings – Sheets A-300, A-310.A, A-310.L, and A-310.W, prepared by USA Architects.

Staff comments continued below.

This application is complete and shall be presented to the Commission for their action with a recommendation of approval at the August 20, 2025, meeting based upon the following analysis:

Existing Conditions: The project area is a 225.4-acre lot, which at its closest point is located approximately 875 feet northwest of the Delaware and Raritan Canal. The project site lies partly in Commission Review Zone A, while the majority of the site is located in Review Zone B. The definition of “Review Zone” at N.J.A.C. 7:45-1.3 directs that if any part of a project site is within Zone A then the entire project shall be considered to be in Zone A.



The project area is bounded by the Department of Corrections Jones Farm property to the north, the Jones Farm property and vacant lands related to Trenton-Mercer airport to the east, Interstate Highway Route No. 295 (Route 295) to the west, and residential developments followed by River Road to the south.

In the existing condition, the property, which is owned by the State of New Jersey, serves as the location for several government agency buildings, including the headquarters,

ancillary buildings, and museum of the Division of State Police, the New Jersey Regional Operations & Intelligence Center (NJ ROIC), the Department of the Treasury Office of Information Technology (NJ OIT) Hub, and the New Jersey Public Health, Environmental, and Agriculture Laboratory (NJ PHEAL). The site also contains an internal road network, paved parking areas, stormwater management infrastructure, areas of maintained lawn, and other site improvements.

The specific project area related to the application consists of approximately 7.5 acres associated with the existing NJ PHEAL facility, a five-story approximate 200,000 square-foot modern building which is bounded to the north by the NJ OIT Hub, Schwarzkopf Drive to the east, the Division of State Police headquarters to the south, and Route 295 to the west.



The Commission has reviewed several project applications related to the project site, including the construction of a one-story warehouse which created approximately 1.75 acres of impervious surface coverage in 1988 (DRCC #88-1724), the NJ ROIC in 2003, which created 3.2 acres of impervious surface coverage (DRCC #03-1724A), and security and other campus upgrades in 2013 (DRCC #13-1724C). The construction of the NJ

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PHEAL facility, which created 7.0 acres of impervious surface coverage, received a Commission certificate of approval in 2009 (DRCC #08-1724B).

Proposed Project: The applicant proposes to construct four building additions totaling 58,000 square feet to the administrative, laboratory, warehouse, and mechanical elements of the NJ PHEAL facility, along with six additional parking spaces, two stormwater subsurface infiltration basins, and other associated infrastructure. Based upon the submitted application, the project proposes to increase impervious surface coverage by 32,234 square feet (0.74 acre), and disturb 137,650 square feet (3.17 acres) of land.

Stream Corridor: The site is located within the Assunpink Creek watershed. A tributary to the Delaware River with a contributory drainage area greater than 50 acres flows parallel to and is located east of the project's property boundary. This tributary does not have a FEMA delineated 100-year floodplain. However, Commission staff has determined that the floodplain associated with the tributary is located more than 100 feet from the proposed project limits. Therefore, the project is not subject to stream corridor impact review pursuant to N.J.A.C. 7:45-9.1.

Stormwater Runoff Quantity: Runoff from the developed portions of the site and undisturbed areas totaling approximately 7.5 acres will discharge to two proposed subsurface infiltration basins, to be located upstream of an existing surface stormwater basin, along the easterly property boundary of the project site. The stormwater management measures have been evaluated at one point-of-analysis, which is an existing storm sewer system located within Schwartzkopf Road.

The applicant has provided engineering calculations verifying that for stormwater leaving the site, post-construction runoff hydrographs for the 2-, 10- and 100-year storm events do not exceed, at any point in time, the pre-construction runoff hydrographs for the same storm events.

The submitted calculations utilized the Natural Resource Conservation Service (NRCS) Technical Release No. 55 (TR-55) hydrologic methodology, NOAA Region C unit hydrograph rainfall distribution, Standard Unit peak rate factor, and current New Jersey 24-hour rainfall frequency data for Mercer County to compute peak runoff flow rates and volumes. The post-developed peak flows were calculated by creating separate pervious and impervious hydrographs for post-developed conditions and combining to develop total post-developed hydrographs. Based upon a review of the submitted calculations, it has been determined that the proposed stormwater management measures will provide enough peak flow attenuation to meet the specific runoff quantity standards at N.J.A.C. 7:45-8.6.

Water Quality: The Commission requires that all proposed full-depth pavement, including newly constructed and reconstructed parking and access drives that are being renewed, in addition to new collection systems for existing impervious surfaces where stormwater is not currently collected, shall comply with water quality standards at N.J.A.C. 7:45-8.7. This includes reduction of the post-construction load of total suspended solids (TSS) in stormwater runoff generated from the water quality design storm by a rate of 80 percent (%) of the anticipated load from the developed site, expressed as an annual average.

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Based upon the submitted application, approximately 2,350 square feet (0.05 acre) of new motor vehicle surface for six new parking spaces is proposed onsite. The submitted stormwater report notes that the design proposes to treat for water quality by installing a filtration water quality treatment device, specifically the UP-FLO Filter by Hydro International, as a stormwater best management practice (BMP) measure. Pursuant to the NJ Stormwater BMP Manual, the TSS removal rate of this BMP is 80%.

Commission staff has determined this application complies with the water quality requirement, because the proposed water quality BMP will treat approximately 3,830 square feet (0.088 acre) of pavement area, which is greater than the amount proposed to be created. Therefore, Commission staff determined the proposed stormwater quality design will address the water quality requirements at N.J.A.C. 7:45-8.7.

Groundwater Recharge: The Commission regulations require that stormwater management measures maintain 100% of the average annual pre-construction groundwater recharge volume for the site, or that any increase of stormwater runoff volume from pre-construction to post-construction for the two-year storm is infiltrated. The submitted groundwater recharge analysis calculation (NJDEP GSR-32 spreadsheet) demonstrates that the annual groundwater recharge deficit for the entire site is 27,312 cubic feet. To infiltrate the post-development recharge deficit, two subsurface infiltration basins are proposed. According to the spreadsheet, the BMPs would provide 82,769 cubic feet of annual groundwater recharge.

The applicant has provided the required soil testing for these infiltration BMPs to confirm both the subsurface permeability rate and elevation of the seasonal high-water table. Commission staff has determined the subsurface infiltration basins will function as designed. Specifically, the groundwater mounding analysis includes tested K_h , or horizontal hydraulic conductivity, along the sides of each basin. Therefore, Commission staff has determined this application is compliant with the groundwater recharge requirements at N.J.A.C. 7:45-8.5.

Non-Structural Methods: To assist in determining that sufficient non-structural stormwater management strategies have been incorporated into the project site design “to the maximum extent practicable,” the Nonstructural Strategies Point System (NSPS) spreadsheet has been completed for this project. The NSPS results indicate that the ratio of proposed to existing site points (143%) exceeds the required site points ratio (104%). Therefore, the project’s proposed non-structural measures are adequate, and the project is designed in accordance with N.J.A.C. 7:45-8.4.

Stormwater Management Maintenance Plan: The applicant has submitted a stormwater management maintenance plan for the site. The submitted plan has been prepared in accordance with the specific requirements of N.J.A.C. 7:45-8.8.

Visual, Historic & Natural Quality Impact: N.J.A.C. 7:45-10.2 directs that the Commission shall review all projects in Review Zone A to determine if the project is in accord with the goals for the Delaware and Raritan Canal State Park as defined in the park’s

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Master Plan. The visual, historic, and natural quality impact review is intended to assure that development within Zone A is not harmful to the character of the environmental types identified in the Master Plan as comprising the park.

The proposed project is located in a Rural canal environment as described in the Master Plan. The Rural canal environment is characterized at N.J.A.C. 7:45-10.2(a) as an area in which natural conditions dominate, but unobtrusive signs of human impact exist. The Master Plan at page 14 notes that despite the intrusive nature of Route 295 and N.J. State Highway Route No. 29 and unmistakable signs of suburban development, the feeling from the canal park is still remarkably open and undeveloped. The Master Plan calls for the enhancement of the access areas and the creation of stronger landscape buffers at a few places. Therefore, nothing with respect to the proposed project is incompatible with these goals.

N.J.A.C. 7:45-10.3(a) directs that major projects are discouraged from the Rural canal environment and authorizes the Commission to impose specific compensatory measures that mitigate the project's potential for harmful impact on the Delaware and Raritan Canal State Park as a condition of approval. Commission staff observes that only a 0.42-acre portion of the 225.4-acre project site is located in Zone A. Moreover, the area of proposed NJ PHEAL expansion is located 2,786 feet from the Delaware and Raritan Canal State Park and is completely screened from view due to topography and intervening structures and vegetation. Given the foregoing, Commission staff determines that there is no harmful impact to the park, and that the imposition of specific compensatory measures is not warranted in this case.

The provisions of N.J.A.C. 7:45-10.3(b), which discourage minor projects in the Rural canal environment, are inapplicable to the proposed project, which is a major project.

N.J.A.C. 7:45-10.4(a) directs that projects in Review Zone A shall be set back from the Delaware and Raritan Canal State Park sufficiently far so that the winter visual and natural quality of the park are not adversely affected. In the Rural canal environment, all structures shall be located 250 feet or more from the nearest boundary of the park. As noted above, the project area is located 2,786 feet from the park. Therefore, the project is in compliance with this requirement.

N.J.A.C. 7:45-10.4(b) directs that projects in Review Zone A shall maintain a reasonable height and scale relationship to nearby structures or vegetation. In the Rural canal environment, structures shall be limited to a height of 40 feet above existing grade where existing vegetation does not provide adequate winter screening. The applicant has submitted architectural elevations which indicate that the proposed building additions would range from 28 feet, 0.5 inches in height for the warehouse addition, 32 feet for the administrative addition, and 92 feet, 9 inches in the case of the laboratory addition, which corresponds to the height of the existing building.

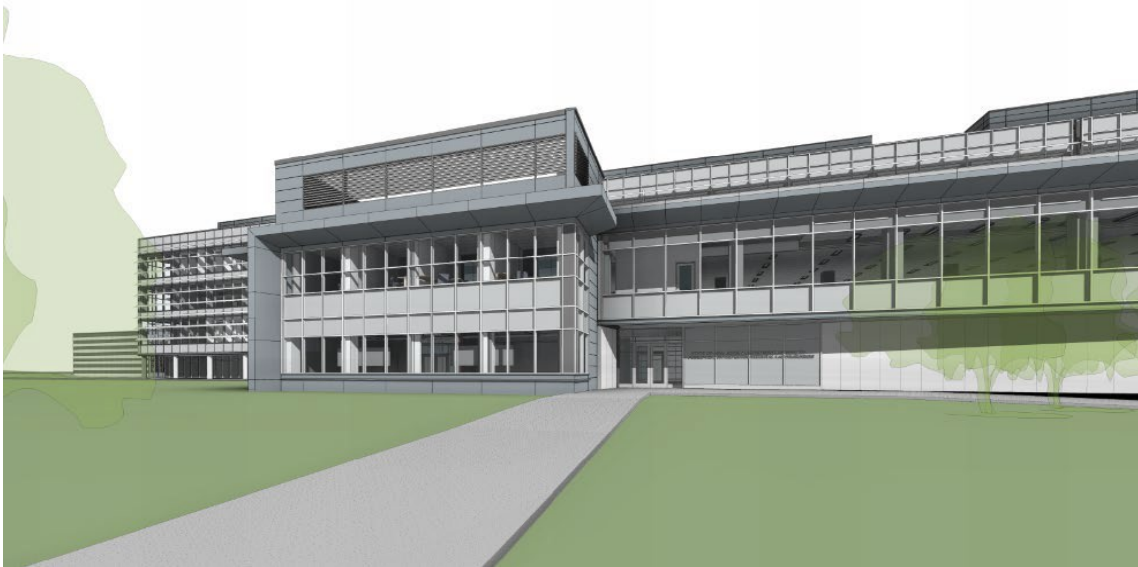
While the height of the laboratory addition is greater than the 40-foot limit, Commission staff observes that the height would not be greater than the existing NJ PHEAL building approved by the Commission in 2009. Commission staff, therefore, recommends that the

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project be granted a waiver of strict adherence from the visual, historic, and natural quality impact review standards based upon the criteria set forth at N.J.A.C. 7:45-12.7(a)1, and 2.ii., which states that a project may be waived from strict adherence to the standards if the applicant establishes to the satisfaction of the Commission that visual screening will continue to exist in the future, and the topography of the land screens the entire project from the view of a person in the Delaware and Raritan Canal State Park.

N.J.A.C. 7:45-10.4(c) directs that for projects in Review Zone A, the exterior appearances of a project shall be in keeping with the character of the Delaware and Raritan Canal State Park's individual environments. Specifically, colors used shall harmonize with the man-made or natural surroundings of the project and shall be typical of colors found in the park environment, and building materials and textures shall harmonize with the surrounding man-made and natural materials.

With respect to materials, the applicant proposes building materials similar to those on the existing NJ PHEAL building. Specifically, the applicant proposes the use of glazed aluminum curtain walls and panels, glass, opaque spandrel glass, a storefront system at the entrance to the proposed administrative area addition, and concrete masonry units. With regard to proposed colors, the applicant proposes a two-tone light and medium grey color scheme which matches the existing NJ PHEAL building.



Commission staff finds the proposed building materials and colors to be sympathetic to the existing NJ PHEAL building, the nearby NJ ROIC, and other buildings located along Route 295 in Ewing Township. The proposed colors harmonize with the surrounding man-made and natural materials and are typical of the built environment of the area. Therefore, Commission staff determines that the project is in compliance with this requirement.

N.J.A.C. 7:45-10.4(d)1 directs that electric, telephone, cable television, and other such lines and equipment shall be underground or otherwise not visible from the Delaware and

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Raritan Canal State Park. Commission staff finds the project to be in compliance with this requirement.

N.J.A.C. 7:45-10.4(d)2 directs that exposed storage areas, outbuildings, exposed machinery service areas, parking lots, loading areas, utility buildings, and similar ancillary areas and structures shall either be completely concealed from view from the Delaware and Raritan Canal State Park or designed to minimize their visual impact on the park. Commission staff finds the project to be in compliance with this requirement.

The provisions of N.J.A.C. 7:45-10.4(d)3 and 4, respectively, which regulate the dimensions and location of commercial signs and outdoor advertising structures, are inapplicable to the proposed project. Letters spelling the name of the building would be applied to the storefront system at the new administrative entrance, but this is not a sign nor is it commercial in nature.

N.J.A.C. 7:45-10.4(d)5 directs that wherever possible, natural terrains, soils, stones, and vegetation should be preserved, and that new vegetation, stones, and soils should be native to the environment in which they are placed. The applicant proposes the removal of six trees to accommodate the proposed building additions.

In addition, the applicant proposes to plant nine Honey Locust (*Gleditsia triacanthos* L.) trees. While not listed on the Commission List of Native Trees, the Honey Locust is listed as native to Mercer County on the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) PLANTS database. The USDA notes that the tree is very hardy and is often used in parking lot islands and along sidewalks. The tree's bean pods are a favorite food of the deer, squirrels, rabbits, opossums, and raccoons. Flowers of this species are also attractive to pollinating insects. Given the foregoing, Commission staff finds the species choice acceptable, and the project to be in compliance with this requirement.

N.J.A.C. 7:45-10.4(d)6 directs that projects that are located in any officially designated Federal, State or local historic district or site shall be assessed for their impact upon that district or site. Recommendations to avoid, minimize, and/or mitigate the impacts of a project on a listed property shall be made in consultation with the New Jersey Historic Preservation Office (SHPO) and based upon the United States Secretary of the Interior's Standards for the Treatment of Historic Properties with Guidelines for Preserving, Rehabilitating, Restoring and Reconstructing Historic Buildings.

A review of the NJ-LUCY online cultural resource viewer indicates that the project area is not located in any designated Federal, State or local historic district or site. Therefore, consultation with the SHPO is not warranted in this case, and the project is in compliance with this requirement.

Background: Ewing Township forms a portion of the western edge of Mercer County (Hunterdon County prior to 1838) and is located east of the eastern bank of the Delaware River. European settlement of the area began in the late 17th century. Early settlers in the western portion of Ewing Township include Richard Scudder, Jacob Reeder, and Thomas Hutchinson. During the course of the 18th century and the beginning of the 19th century,

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those farmers established the area as a center for agriculture in Mercer County. By 1834, residents formed Ewing Township out of a portion of Hopewell Township, Hunterdon County. Four years later, Ewing Township formed part of the newly created Mercer County.

The project site is associated with New Jersey State Police headquarters, which was established on former farmland in 1924. The headquarters campus consists of several vernacular Craftsman and Colonial Revival buildings initially built in the 1920s and 1930s which reflect the institutional professionalism and education of the State Police and their adoption of emerging technologies such as fingerprinting, toxicology, ballistics, and scientific evidence collection.

Traffic Impact: N.J.A.C. 7:45-11.1 directs that major projects in Review Zone A for their traffic impact on roads that enter the Delaware and Raritan Canal State Park or any part of Zone A. The applicant shall submit a traffic impact study that shows the amount of additional traffic generated by the project and the directions in which this traffic will move. If the Commission determines that the additional traffic will have an adverse impact on the park, the applicant shall use any feasible planning techniques that will direct any additional traffic away from the park. If the Commission is satisfied that there are no feasible planning techniques other than as set forth in the project proposal that can direct any additional traffic away from the park, the project shall be approved for traffic impact review.

The applicant has submitted the required traffic impact study, which has estimated the amount of traffic that would result from the proposed 58,000 square-foot addition to the existing NJ PHEAL building, which would increase the number of employees using the building from the existing 148 employees to 223 employees. The study used data published by the Institute of Transportation Engineers (ITE) in Trip Generation, 11th Edition. The study observes that the proposed use is most similar to ITE Land Use Code 730: Government Office Building. The table below indicates the weekday morning and evening peak hour trips based upon the current ITE trip generation rates by number of employees:

ITE Trip Generation						
Development	AM Peak Hour			PM Peak Hour		
58,000 square-foot Government Building Addition (75 additional employees)	In	Out	Total	In	Out	Total
	62	21	83	10	41	51

As indicated in the table above, the total trips (ingress and egress) for the building expansion and 75 additional employees during the morning peak hour is 83 trips and during the evening peak hour is 51 trips.

Commission staff observes that the New Jersey Department of Transportation (NJDOT) defines a “significant increase in traffic” at N.J.A.C. 16:47-1.1 as vehicular use exceeding the previous anticipated two-way traffic generated by 100 movements during the peak hour. Thus, based upon the NJDOT definition, the proposed building addition will not cause a significant increase in traffic added to the roadway.

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The applicant also notes that access to the site is limited to two gated entrances/exits. Route 295 bounds the west side of the site, while River Road (N.J. State Highway Route No. 175) is located between the Delaware and Raritan Canal and the site. The applicant further notes that trips generated by the site will use existing roads. Most of the NJ PHEAL facility employees will use Cosey Road, which provides direct access between the NJ PHEAL building and West Upper Ferry Road, rather than River Road, which is located closer to the canal.

Commission staff determines that the additional traffic generated by the NJ PHEAL building expansion would not have an adverse impact on the park, since the additional traffic would not meet the NJDOT definition of significant. Further, the predominate use of Cosey Road to access the facility constitutes a feasible planning technique that directs additional traffic away from the Delaware and Raritan Canal State Park. Given the site constraints posed by the surrounding roadway network and the obvious security implications of expanding access to the site, Commission staff is satisfied that there are no feasible planning techniques other than as set forth in the project proposal that can direct any additional traffic away from the park, and finds that the project is compliant with N.J.A.C. 7:45-11.

Staff Recommendation: Staff recommends approval.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "John Hutchison", with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

John Hutchison
Executive Director

c. Mercer County Planning Board
Ewing Township Planning Board