

# **FINDING OF NO SIGNIFICANT IMPACT**

## **U.S. DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS**

### **CONSTRUCTION AND OPERATION OF THE EAST CENTRAL FLORIDA NATIONAL CEMETERY U.S. HIGHWAY 1, SCOTTSMOOR, BREVARD COUNTY, FLORIDA**

#### **Agency:**

National Cemetery Administration (NCA), U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA)

#### **Background:**

The NCA is responsible for providing cemetery services for veterans and other eligible persons pursuant to the provisions of the National Cemeteries Act of 1973 and other statutory authority and regulations. Under this mandate, NCA is responsible for the operation and maintenance of existing national cemeteries and the construction of new national cemeteries.

VA intends to select and acquire a suitable site for the proposed future construction and operation of a National Cemetery within a 37-mile radius of the interchange of Interstate 95, and Routes A1A and 528 near Merritt Island/Titusville, Florida. VA identified Brevard, Orange, and Osceola Counties in the region as preferred locations. This new National Cemetery must be of sufficient size and capacity to serve the projected needs of VA in this region for over 100 years.

#### **Proposed Action:**

VA intends to acquire an approximately 318-acre site southeast of Scottsmeer in Brevard County, Florida for the future construction and operation of the proposed National Cemetery. This Site is located east of Highway 1, north of Johns Road, east and west of Dixie Way, south of Huntington Avenue, and west of the Florida East Coast Railroad, and includes approximately 318 acres of unimproved agricultural and undeveloped land. As part of this proposed action, VA would acquire the Site and the future cemetery would be owned, developed, and operated by VA.

#### **Alternatives:**

In addition to the Proposed Action described above, VA considered a No Action Alternative. Both the Proposed Action Alternative and the No Action Alternative were studied as part of a Programmatic Environmental Assessment (EA), dated July 2012.

## **Potential Environmental Effects:**

The potential environmental effects associated with implementation of the Proposed Action are summarized in the following sections:

### *Aesthetics*

The Proposed Action would produce visual changes. However, given the active agricultural use of the majority of the site, future development of a new National Cemetery would not be expected to require significant tree clearing. Due to the Site's seasonal high water table and low elevations, site elevations would be increased in grave site areas. The raised areas would be visibly noticeable; however, the proposed cemetery would be expected to result in less-than-significant adverse visual effects.

### *Air Quality*

Air emissions generated the Proposed Action would be expected to have less-than-significant direct and indirect, short- and long-term adverse impacts to the existing air quality environment around the Site. Impacts would include short-term and long-term increased air emission levels as a result of construction activities and the operation of the proposed National Cemetery. No long-term significant adverse air quality impacts are anticipated.

### *Cultural Resources*

Based on the results of the Cultural Resources Assessment, which included fieldwork, a review of related source material, and local interviews, it was determined that the Proposed Action would have no effect on significant historical properties, as there are none to affect. Through compliance with the National Historical Preservation Act and other applicable regulations, as well as consultation with the State Historical Preservation Office and federally recognized Native American Tribes, VA would maintain cultural resources effects at acceptable, less-than-significant levels.

### *Geology and Soils*

During construction of the Proposed Action, less-than-significant, direct and indirect, short-term adverse soil erosion and sedimentation impacts are possible as the proposed buildings, parking areas, entrance road, grave sites, and other project components are constructed. Construction and grading activities would remove vegetative cover, disturb the soil surface, and compact the soil, leaving it susceptible to erosion by wind and surface runoff. Such potential adverse effects will be prevented through the utilization of Best Management Practices (BMPs). After the completion of construction activities, and given that the proposed cemetery would be designed to

blend with the existing landscape, no significant long-term adverse geology or soils effects would be anticipated.

### *Hydrology and Water Quality*

The Proposed Action has the potential to result in impacts to surface waters (i.e., wetlands and Waters of the U.S.) at and near the Site. However, it is fully anticipated that through environmentally sensitive site design, good engineering practices, and consultation with authorized Federal, State, and local agencies, these potential impacts would be avoided or mitigated to less-than-significant levels. In addition, VA will implement BMPs and provide proper onsite stormwater management during both construction and operational phases.

VA anticipates that the Proposed Action will maintain a buffer of undisturbed land around the majority of identified surface water resources. However, in those cases where impacts to wetlands and waters of the US cannot be avoided (e.g., at stream crossings), VA will obtain and comply with all necessary permits from State (FDEP and SJRWMD) and Federal (USACE) agencies.

### *Wildlife and Habitat*

The Proposed Action has the potential to result in significant impacts on biological resources. One active and two inactive Gopher Tortoise burrows were identified in the western portion of the Site. However, it is fully anticipated that through environmentally sensitive site design, including maintaining a buffer of undeveloped land around the Gopher Tortoise burrows and habitat, these potential impacts will be avoided or mitigated to less-than-significant levels.

### *Noise*

Based on the proposed use of the site as a cemetery, no long-term noise impacts would be anticipated. Noise generated from the Proposed Action would have short-term impacts to the existing noise environment due to construction activities onsite. Noise generating sources during construction activities would be associated primarily with standard construction equipment and construction equipment transportation. These increased noise levels could directly affect the neighboring area, including the residential properties located adjacent the Site. However, the majority of the site area is more than 200 feet from any residence; as such, noise levels from construction activities should have minimal affect.

### *Land Use*

The Proposed Action would generally result in long-term, direct, positive land use effects within the Brevard County area by preserving open space and developing the Site in accordance with local requirements. The Proposed Action would be consistent with local zoning, and would develop the Site in consonance with local plans.

### *Floodplains, Wetlands, and Coastal Zone Management*

Construction of the Proposed Action has the potential to result in impacts to wetlands and surface waters, and floodplains. However, it is fully anticipated that through environmentally sensitive site design, good engineering practices, and consultation with authorized Federal, State, and local agencies, these potential impacts would be avoided or mitigated to less-than-significant levels. Wetland and surface waters and floodplains would be avoided wherever possible. VA anticipates that the Proposed Action will maintain a buffer of undisturbed land around the majority of identified surface water resources. However, in those cases where impacts to wetlands and Water of the US cannot be avoided (e.g., at stream crossings), VA will obtain and comply with all necessary permits from State (FDEP and SJRWMD) and Federal (USACE) agencies.

VA anticipates that the final cemetery design will maintain a buffer of undisturbed land around the identified floodplains. However, if impacts to the floodplains cannot be avoided, VA will create compensatory flood storage so as not to affect flood elevations onsite or off-site.

### *Socioeconomics*

The Proposed Action by VA would produce no direct socioeconomic effects. Future development of a new National Cemetery is not likely to have adverse socioeconomic effects. In addition, the Proposed Action is anticipated to result in short-term, direct, positive socioeconomic impacts to local employment and personal income.

### *Community Services*

No significant additional load is expected to be placed on the fire or police departments as the result of implementing the Proposed Action. Use of other public or community services as a result of the proposed National Cemetery is not expected. As such, the Proposed Action is expected to have a negligible impact on local community services.

### *Solid and Hazardous Materials*

The Proposed Action would result in short-term, less-than-significant adverse impacts due to the increased presence and use of solid and hazardous materials during construction. No significant adverse long-term impacts during operation are anticipated; long-term operational solid and hazardous materials would be managed in accordance with VA's solid and hazardous materials operational procedures and applicable Federal and State laws.

### *Transportation and Parking*

During construction, the Proposed Action will create construction traffic that would increase traffic volumes in the local area and could cause delays if this occurred during morning and evening peak periods. However, all of the roadways adjacent to the Site

are not heavily used. Thus, only less-than-significant, short-term adverse impacts would be anticipated.

Long-term, it is reasonably presumed that the Proposed Action would contribute much less than a 20 percent increase to local roadways. The Proposed Action, at most, would contribute approximately 250 additional vehicle trips per day, which be less-than-significant, long-term adverse traffic impact.

### *Utilities*

The Proposed Action would result in an increase in the consumption of utilities, including electricity, potable water, and sanitary sewer discharges. All major utility services are available immediately next to or in close proximity to the site. The proposed cemetery would be anticipated to have minimal utility needs. Water would be anticipated to have the largest demand due to the need for maintaining landscaped areas of the cemetery. However, it is anticipated that the cemetery design for necessary site re-grading and stormwater management structures will afford an opportunity to reuse stormwater for irrigation purposes.

### *Environmental Justice*

The Proposed Action is not likely to have an adverse effect on the local population; but is likely to have a short and long-term positive socioeconomic effect on local employment and personal income.

### *Cumulative Impacts*

Implementation of the Proposed Action is not expected to cumulatively significantly adversely impact any technical area discussed above. Cumulative net positive impacts to land use and the local socioeconomic environment would be realized. The Proposed Action would not noticeably contribute to on-site and regional decline in natural resources, and would maintain or enhance the local socioeconomic environment through indirect, positive impacts.

### *Potential for Generating Substantial Controversy*

It is not anticipated that there will be substantial public controversy regarding the Proposed Action. No comments were received during the public comment period. The proposed construction and operation of a National Cemetery is consistent with local zoning plans and surrounding land uses. Additionally, there are positive impacts relative to local employment both during construction and operation.

### **Decision:**

The decision to issue a Finding of No Significant Impact (FONSI) for implementation of the Proposed Action is based on the following factors:

- VA anticipates that final cemetery design will maintain a buffer of undisturbed land around the majority of identified surface water resources. However, in those cases where impacts to wetlands and Water of the US cannot be avoided (e.g., at stream crossings), VA will obtain and comply with all necessary permits from State (FDEP and SJRWMD) and Federal (USACE) agencies;
- VA anticipates that final cemetery design will maintain a buffer of undisturbed land around the majority of identified protected vegetation and wildlife resources. However, in those cases where impacts to protected vegetation and wildlife resources cannot be avoided, VA will consult and comply with Federal (USFWS), State (FFWCC and FNAI), and local (Brevard County) agencies; and
- VA anticipates that the final cemetery design will maintain a buffer of undisturbed land around the identified floodplains. However, if impacts to the floodplains cannot be avoided, VA will create compensatory flood storage so as not to affect flood elevations onsite or off-site.
  - VA will complete a Site Specific Environmental Assessment (SEA) concurrent with the design phase to evaluate the potential for impacts of the specific design features proposed.

**Finding of No Significant Impact:**

After reviewing the Environmental Assessment for the construction and operation of a new East Central Florida National Cemetery, the implementation of the Proposed Action would not constitute a major federal action that would have significant impact upon the quality of the human environment within the meaning of Section 102(2c) of the National Environmental Policy Act of 1969. Accordingly, the preparation of an Environmental Impact Statement is not required.

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Glenn Madderom  
 Chief, Cemetery Development and Improvement Service  
 National Cemetery Administration

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

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Frank Kawulich  
 Director, Memorial Service Network, II  
 National Cemetery Administration

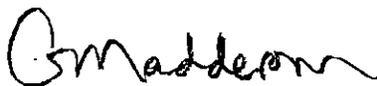
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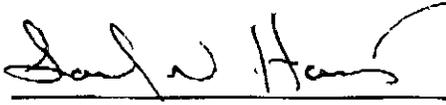
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 Chief, Cemetery Development and Improvement Service  
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Date: \_\_\_\_\_

*for* 

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Frank Kawulich  
 Director, Memorial Service Network, II  
 National Cemetery Administration

Date: 23 July 2012

  
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Jeff Leikin  
Project Manager  
Department of Veterans Affairs

Date: 7/23/12

**CONTACT INFORMATION AND  
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