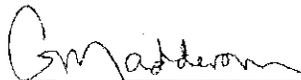


**FINDING OF NO SIGNIFICANT IMPACT
(FONSI)**

DEPARTMENT OF VETERAN AFFAIRS

**PROPOSED NEW SOUTHERN COLORADO NATIONAL
CEMETERY
EL PASO COUNTY, COLORADO**

JULY 2012



8/30/12

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FINDING OF NO SIGNIFICANT IMPACT
PROPOSED NEW SOUTHERN COLORADO NATIONAL CEMETERY
EL PASO COUNTY, COLORADO

BACKGROUND

In the State of Colorado, there are currently two national cemeteries open to full burial options. Fort Lyon National Cemetery in Las Animas, Colorado serves the southeast portion of the state and Fort Logan National Cemetery in Denver, Colorado serves the central portion of the state. These two cemeteries are separated by over 200 miles. Fort Lyon National Cemetery started as an Army Post Cemetery in 1867 and is estimated to have sufficient full burial option capacity beyond the year 2030. Fort Logan is expected to close for casketed burials in 2028 and slightly longer for cremation inurnments.

The U.S Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) identified a need for a new National Cemetery in Southern Colorado and published a solicitation for an appropriate new site.

Numerous responses to this solicitation (i.e., offering of sites) were received by VA. VA created a Site Selection Board (SSB) to further evaluate each site. The SSB visited each site and ranked each site based on specific (selection) criteria. Through this screening process, VA selected four sites for further analysis in accordance with the Programmatic Environmental Assessment (PEA) to identify, analyze, and document the potential physical, environmental, cultural, and socioeconomic effects associated with the selection and acquisition of a site for establishing a national cemetery in Southern Colorado. Preparation of this PEA is required in accordance with the National Environmental Policy Act of 1969 ([NEPA]; 42 United States Code [USC] 4321 et seq.), the President's Council on Environmental Quality (CEQ) Regulations Implementing the Procedural Provisions of NEPA (40 Code of Federal Regulations [CFR] 1500-1508), and 38 CFR Part 26 (Environmental Effects of the Department of Veterans Affairs Actions). This PEA also has been prepared in accordance with VA's NEPA Interim Guidance for Projects (2010).

PROPOSED ACTION

The Proposed Action is the selection and acquisition of a suitable site for the proposed future construction and operation of a National Cemetery within El Paso County, Colorado that will provide interment facilities for eligible veterans in the Southern Colorado area in accordance with the Veterans Benefit Act of 2010 (Public Law 111-275). VA identified El Paso County as the preferred location. The proposed project will develop the first phase of the cemetery by constructing 10 years of interment capacity including full-casket and cremains gravesites, administration and maintenance facilities and associated infrastructure such as roadways, utility systems, irrigation, signage and landscaping. The proposed cemetery will provide interment services to a large veteran population in the Southern Colorado area and will be of sufficient size and capacity to serve the projected needs of VA in this region for at least the next 100 years. The Proposed Action will develop approximately 4,000 gravesites for casket interments, 3,500 columbarium niches and 1,500 in-ground sites for cremated remains, for a total of 9,000 interment sites.

A master plan will be prepared which addresses development of the entire site and design development will be accomplished focusing upon the first phase of construction. Construction of an early turnover burial area will be completed in late 2015 in order to allow for burials prior to completion of the permanent Phase I facilities in early 2017. The VA Program Guide (PG-18-15, Volume D), A/E Submission Instructions for National Cemetery Projects will be followed, as well as the National Cemetery

Administration (NCA) Facilities Design Guide. The design will culminate in the preparation of contract documents to be used for competitive bidding purposes.

Following conclusion of the public comment period and further evaluation, these four sites have been narrowed by VA to two for this proposed new National Cemetery: Bradley Heights or Rolling Hills.

DECISION

After reviewing the Programmatic Environmental Assessment for the construction and operation of a new Southern Colorado National Cemetery, VA has determined that implementation of the Proposed Action at either Bradley Heights or Rolling Hills would not constitute a major federal action that would have significant impact upon the quality of the human environment within the meaning the National Environmental Policy Act. Accordingly, the preparation of an Environmental Impact Statement is not required.