
**FINDING OF NO SIGNIFICANT IMPACT (FONSI)
DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS
PROPOSED LAND ACQUISITION FOR THE EXPANSION OF THE
CAMP BUTLER NATIONAL CEMETERY
SPRINGFIELD (CLEAR LAKE TOWNSHIP), SANGAMON COUNTY, ILLINOIS**

Introduction

A Final Environmental Assessment (EA), included herein by reference, was prepared to identify, analyze, and document the potential physical, environmental, cultural, and socioeconomic impacts associated with the Department of Veterans Affairs' (VA's) Proposed Action to acquire approximately 9.6 acres of land (Site) located approximately 170 feet west of the Camp Butler National Cemetery (CBNC) in Springfield (Clear Lake Township), Sangamon County, Illinois for the future expansion of the cemetery. The EA was prepared 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 VA's NEPA-implementing regulations (38 CFR Part 26).

VA intends to acquire the approximately 9.6-acre Site in 2019 and hold it until such date when the expansion of the CBNC becomes necessary (approximately 5 to 10 years). At that time, and as part of the cemetery design process, VA will perform a supplemental NEPA analysis to reanalyze and reevaluate the potential effects of the construction and operation of the expanded cemetery at the Site. VA will incorporate the avoidance, management, and minimization measures identified in the Final EA into that future design process and supplemental NEPA analysis to minimize potential adverse environmental effects.

The purpose of the Proposed Action is to expand the CBNC to provide a National Cemetery of sufficient size and capacity to serve the projected interment needs of Veterans in central Illinois after the current CBNC burial space is depleted.

A larger, expanded CBNC is needed to continue providing National Cemetery burial benefits to the regional Veteran community. VA estimates space remaining for burials at the CBNC will be fully depleted by 2029. The nearest National Cemetery to CBNC that is accepting new burials is Alton National Cemetery, located approximately 75 miles from CBNC in Alton, Illinois.

1. Description of the Proposed Action and Alternatives

Proposed Action

VA's Proposed Action is to acquire land near the existing CBNC for the future expansion of the cemetery. The future CBNC expansion would provide VA additional capacity to continue providing National Cemetery burial benefits to the regional Veteran community.

VA estimates adequate space remains for burials on current CBNC land through approximately 2029. VA would acquire the Site in 2019 and would hold it until such date when the expansion of the CBNC becomes necessary. It is anticipated that cemetery expansion design and initial development would begin in approximately 5 to 10 years.

Design details of the proposed CBNC expansion do not exist at this time; however future gravesite expansion onto the Site would be designed to be similar in appearance to the existing grounds of the CBNC.

Alternatives Considered

VA considers adjacent/contiguous property to be the first and best option for cemetery expansion as it is the most cost effective and operationally efficient and reduces way finding confusion for visitors. Approximately 9.6 acres of land located approximately 170 feet west of the CBNC, and accessible from CBNC through an easement, is available for purchase and has been offered to VA by the current owner at fair market value. No other feasible sites adjacent to the CBNC or in the immediate vicinity of the CBNC were offered to VA or identified as available for acquisition.

The EA examined in-depth two alternatives, the Proposed Action and the No Action Alternative, defined as follows:

- **Proposed Action:** VA would acquire approximately 9.6 acres of unimproved land approximately 170 feet west (with intervening privately owned land) of the CBNC for future expansion of the CBNC. The northern approximately 3.5-acre portion of the Site is wooded land with an overhead electrical easement. The southern approximately 6.1-acre portion of the Site is cultivated agricultural land. After acquisition, the Site would remain unimproved, mostly agricultural land (under a lease agreement) until such date when the expansion of the CBNC becomes necessary. It is anticipated that cemetery design and initial development would begin in approximately 5 to 10 years. The majority of the Site would be developed with the expanded cemetery.
- **No Action Alternative:** Under the No Action Alternative, the Proposed Action would not be implemented. Veterans and their families residing in central Illinois would continue to use the CBNC until space is no longer available. In the future, VA would likely seek other land to expand the CBNC, but may not be able to acquire land contiguous with or near the existing CBNC. The Site likely would remain unimproved, mostly agricultural land.

The Proposed Action effectively provides additional land necessary to meet the regional cemetery requirements of VA. The No Action Alternative would not enable VA to provide adequate cemetery facilities in central Illinois. However, the No Action Alternative was assessed in the EA to provide a comparative baseline analysis, as required under the CEQ regulations.

2. Environmental Analysis

Environmental Consequences

Proposed Action

Based on the analyses contained in the Final EA, the Proposed Action would result in potential adverse impacts to aesthetics, air quality, cultural resources, geology and soils, hydrology and water quality, wildlife and habitat, noise, solid and hazardous materials, transportation, utilities, and environmental justice. These potential impacts are less than significant and would be further reduced through careful implementation of the Best Management Practices (BMPs), management and minimization measures, and compliance with regulatory requirements as identified in the Final EA.

The CBNC and the approximately 9.6-acre Site both occupy a portion of the former Camp Butler military installation that housed Union soldiers and Confederate prisoners-of-war during the Civil War. The Site and area immediately adjoining to the east were used as barracks from 1862 to 1866, when Camp Butler was closed.

The acquisition of the Site by VA would have no adverse effects on cultural resources. The Illinois State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO) concurred with this determination. The future expansion of the CBNC at the Site could have direct impacts on historic cultural resources associated with former Camp Butler. Prior to completing the expanded cemetery design, a ground-disturbing, archaeological investigation of the Site would be conducted in consultation with SHPO. VA would formally determine the eligibility of any identified historic features for listing on the National Register of Historic Places (NRHP) and would determine the potential adverse effects of the proposed cemetery expansion development in consultation with SHPO. If historic features eligible for listing on the NRHP are identified that would be adversely affected by the proposed CBNC expansion, VA would enter into a Memorandum of Agreement (MOA) with SHPO, Advisory Council on Historic Preservation (ACHP), and other interested parties under Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act (NHPA) to mitigate any adverse effects. With the completion of these NHPA mitigation measures, cultural resources impacts would be minimized or avoided.

The Proposed Action provides VA additional capacity to continue to provide National Cemetery burial benefits to the regional Veteran community, contiguous with the existing CBNC, a significant beneficial socioeconomic effect.

No Action Alternative

Under the No Action Alternative, the Proposed Action would not be implemented. Veterans and their families residing in the central Illinois area would continue to use the CBNC until space is no longer available. In the future, VA would likely seek other land to expand the CBNC, but may not be able to acquire land contiguous or near with the existing CBNC. The Site likely would remain unimproved, mostly agricultural land. Based on the analyses contained in the Final EA, the No Action Alternative would result in significant adverse socioeconomic impacts to Veterans and their families who would have to travel much longer distances (approximately 75 miles) to the nearest National Cemetery for interment, at increased cost and time, and would reduce the frequency of subsequent visits; and significant adverse environmental justice impacts on low-income Veterans and their families in the region who are less able to afford travel to a more distant National Cemetery.

Cumulative Impacts

The EA also examined the potential cumulative effects of implementing each of the considered alternatives. This analysis finds that the Proposed Action, with the implementation of the management and minimization measures specified in this EA, would not result in significant adverse cumulative impacts to onsite or regional natural or cultural resources, and would maintain the socioeconomic environment of the area through long-term provision of required cemetery facilities for regional Veterans. The No Action Alternative would not produce these potential beneficial socioeconomic gains.

Management and Minimization Measures

Prior to completing the expanded cemetery design, a ground-disturbing, archaeological investigation of the Site would be conducted in consultation with SHPO. VA would formally determine the eligibility of any identified historic features for listing on the NRHP and would determine the potential adverse effects of the proposed cemetery expansion development in consultation with SHPO. If historic features eligible for listing on the NRHP are identified that would be adversely affected by the proposed CBNC expansion, VA would enter into a MOA with SHPO, ACHP, and other interested parties under Section 106 of the NHPA to mitigate any adverse effects.

In addition, VA would implement the management and minimization measures summarized in the attached table (Appendix A) to minimize and maintain adverse effects at less-than-significant levels.

3. Regulations

The Proposed Action will not violate NEPA, the CEQ regulations, VA's NEPA regulations; or other federal, state, or local environmental regulations. This will be achieved by implementing the BMPs, management and minimization measures, and regulatory compliance measures described above and included in the attached table (Appendix A).

4. Commitment to Implementation

VA affirms its commitment to implement the BMPs, management measures, and minimization measures identified in the Final EA and this FONSI in accordance with NEPA, the CEQ regulations, and VA's NEPA regulations. Implementation is dependent on funding. VA will ensure that adequate funds are requested in future years' budget(s) to achieve the goals and objectives set forth in the Final EA and this FONSI, and to fund the commitments described above.

5. Agency and Public Involvement

VA has consulted with appropriate federal, state, and local regulatory agencies, and federally recognized Native American Tribes identified as having possible ancestral ties to the area. This consultation is documented in the Final EA. Concerns expressed by pertinent regulatory agencies and Tribes have been addressed in the Final EA.

VA published and distributed the Draft EA for a 30-day public comment period as announced by a Notice of Availability (NOA) published in a local newspaper of general circulation (State Journal – Register) from February 3 through 5, 2019. A copy of the Draft EA was also made available for public review at the Lincoln Library and on the VA National Cemetery Administration website (www.cem.va.gov/cpm/EA.asp). VA received no public comments regarding the Draft EA.

6. Finding of No Significant Impact

After careful review of the Final EA, VA has concluded that implementation of the Proposed Action would not have a significant impact on the quality of the human or natural environment, provided VA implements the BMPs, management and minimization measures, and regulatory compliance measures identified in the Final EA. VA will implement these measures. As part of the cemetery design process, VA will perform a supplemental NEPA analysis to reanalyze and reevaluate the potential effects of the construction and operation of the expanded cemetery at the Site. VA will incorporate the management and minimization measures identified in the Final EA into that future design process and supplemental NEPA analysis to minimize potential adverse environmental effects.

Therefore, per NEPA, the CEQ regulations, and VA's NEPA regulations, I am signing this FONSI. This analysis fulfills the requirements of NEPA and the CEQ regulations. An environmental impact statement will not be prepared.

Philip O.
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Date

Mr. Michael T. Roth
Director, Design & Construction Service
National Cemetery Administration
Department of Veterans Affairs

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Mr. Joshua de Leon
Director, NCA Midwest District
National Cemetery Administration
Department of Veterans Affairs

**Best Management Practices and Minimization Measures
 Incorporated into the Proposed Action**

Technical Resource Area	Best Management Practice/Minimization Measure
Aesthetics	Develop the cemetery in concert with the Site's natural topography. Maintain some natural areas.
	Use vegetative buffers to enhance viewsapes, particularly near the adjacent residential property.
	Comply, to the extent practicable, with the development standards of the Sangamon County Code of Ordinances.
Air Quality	Use appropriate dust suppression methods (such as the use of water, dust palliative, covers, suspension of earth moving in high wind conditions) during onsite construction activities.
	Stabilize disturbed area through re-vegetation or mulching if the area would be inactive for several weeks or longer.
	Implement measures to reduce diesel particulate matter emissions from construction equipment, such as reducing idling time and using newer equipment with emissions controls.
	Comply with the applicable Illinois Environmental Protection Agency Bureau of Air regulations.
Cultural Resources	Prior to completing the expanded cemetery site design, conduct a ground-disturbing archaeological investigation of the Site in consultation with the Illinois Department of Natural Resources Historic Preservation Division (State Historic Preservation Office or SHPO).
	Formally determine the eligibility of any identified historic features at the Site for listing on the National Register of Historic Places and determine the potential adverse effects of the proposed cemetery expansion development in consultation with SHPO.
	If necessary, enter into a Memorandum of Agreement under Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act with SHPO, Advisory Council on Historic Preservation, and other interested parties to mitigate any adverse effects.
	Should potentially historic or culturally significant items be discovered during project construction, the construction contractor would immediately cease work until VA, a qualified archaeologist, SHPO, and the Miami Tribe of Oklahoma are contacted to properly identify and appropriately treat discovered items in accordance with applicable State and Federal law(s).

Technical Resource Area	Best Management Practice/Minimization Measure
<p>Geology, Topography, and Soils</p>	<p>Control soil erosion and sedimentation impacts during construction by implementing erosion prevention measures and complying with the IEPA National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System (NPDES) permitting process. Implement effective controls per a site-specific Stormwater Pollution Prevention Plan (SWPPP). The NPDES permit would require stormwater runoff and erosion management using best management practices, such as earth berms, vegetative buffers and filter strips, and spill prevention and management techniques. The construction contractor would implement the sedimentation and erosion control measures specified in the NPDES permit and the SWPPP to protect surface water quality.</p>
	<p>Complete a Farmland Conversion Impact Rating (Form AD-1006) to address irreversibly converted prime farmland and farmland of statewide importance.</p>
<p>Hydrology and Water Quality</p>	<p>Control soil erosion and sedimentation impacts during construction by complying with the NPDES permit and the SWPPP.</p>
	<p>Improvements would be designed in accordance with the requirements of Energy Independence and Security Act Section 438 with respect to stormwater runoff quantity and characteristics.</p>
	<p>Ensure the design of the cemetery includes sufficient on-site stormwater management so as not to adversely affect the water quantity/quality in receiving waters and/or offsite areas. Obtain appropriate permits for off-site stormwater discharges.</p>
<p>Wildlife and Habitat</p>	<p>Conduct tree felling and clearing between October 15 and March 31 in consultation with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service to prevent potential impacts to Indiana Bats and Northern Long-Eared Bats.</p>
	<p>Construction should be timed to avoid impacts to birds protected under the Migratory Bird Treaty Act. Tree removal would be conducted outside the Red-Headed Woodpecker migratory bird nesting season (May 10 through September 10) so that nests are not disturbed.</p>
	<p>Native species should be used to the extent practicable when re-vegetating land disturbed by construction to avoid the potential introduction of non-native or invasive species. As appropriate, incorporate vegetation/habitat beneficial to honey bees and other pollinators in the site design.</p>

Technical Resource Area	Best Management Practice/Minimization Measure
Noise	Limit, to the extent possible, construction and associated heavy truck traffic to occur between 7:00 a.m. and 6:00 p.m. on Monday through Friday, or during normal, weekday, work hours.
	Locate stationary operating equipment as far away from sensitive receptors as possible.
	Select material transportation routes as far away from sensitive receptors as possible.
	Shut down noise-generating heavy equipment when it is not needed.
	Maintain equipment per manufacturer's recommendations to minimize noise generation.
	Encourage construction personnel to operate equipment in the quietest manner practicable (such as speed restrictions, retarder brake restrictions, and engine speed restrictions).
Land Use	None required.
Wetlands, Floodplains, and Coastal Zone Management	None required.
Socioeconomics	None required.
Community Services	None required.
Solid and Hazardous Materials	Comply with VA Standard Operating Procedures and applicable Federal and State laws governing the use, generation, storage, transportation, and disposal of solid and hazardous materials.

Technical Resource Area	Best Management Practice/Minimization Measure
<p>Transportation and Parking</p>	<p>Work with the Clear Lake Township Highway Services and Sangamon County Highway Department, as applicable, during the cemetery expansion design to identify and implement roadway improvements, if necessary.</p>
	<p>Coordinate with the Illinois Department of Transportation, Clear Lake Township Highway Services, and Sangamon County Highway Department to ensure that construction and operational traffic are considered in the planning of future transportation improvements in the vicinity.</p>
	<p>Ensure construction activities do not adversely affect traffic flow on local roadways; construction would be timed to avoid peak travel hours.</p>
	<p>Ensure debris and/or soil is not deposited on local roadways during the construction activities.</p>
<p>Utilities</p>	<p>Contact the utility providers to determine the connection/extension requirements and implement the necessary requirements.</p>
	<p>Plant low moisture tolerant species suited to central Illinois to minimize irrigation needs.</p>
	<p>Develop a site design that avoids impacts to the existing overhead electrical lines in the northern portion of the Site.</p>
<p>Environmental Justice</p>	<p>None required.</p>