
FINDING OF NO SIGNIFICANT IMPACT (FONSI)
DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS
FINAL SUPPLEMENTAL ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT
OF THE PROPOSED EXPANSION AND IMPROVEMENTS PROJECT AT
OHIO WESTERN RESERVE NATIONAL CEMETERY
RITTMAN, MEDINA COUNTY, OHIO

The US Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) assessed the potential impacts associated with the proposed expansion and improvements project at the Ohio Western Reserve National Cemetery (OWRNC) in Rittman, Medina County, Ohio. A supplemental environmental assessment (SEA) was prepared in accordance with the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) of 1969, the President's Council on Environmental Quality regulations to implement NEPA (40 CFR Parts 1500-1508), and the Department of Veteran Affairs Environmental Compliance Manual and VA regulations (Title 38 CFR Part 26). The attached final SEA is incorporated by reference into this finding of no significant impact (FONSI).

BACKGROUND

VA developed an environmental impact statement (EIS) in 1992 for the construction and operation of a new national cemetery in Rittman, Ohio to serve the Cleveland region. Approximately 65 acres of the 273-acre property are currently developed for burial and related operations.

VA completed an environmental assessment (EA) in 2015 to identify, analyze, and document the potential physical, environmental, cultural, and socioeconomic impacts associated with expanding and improving the developed area within the OWRNC property. The project was put on hold before construction began. In 2018, the project was relaunched and the scope was modified to accommodate new components.

Through the current SEA process, VA identified, analyzed, and documented any potential changes in physical, environmental, cultural, and socioeconomic impacts associated with the proposed changes in the project scope from the expansion and improvement project previously assessed in the 2015 EA.

SUMMARY OF PROPOSED ACTION

The purpose of the proposed action is to continue to enable the National Cemetery Administration (NCA) to provide eligible veterans and their families with a national cemetery of sufficient size and capacity to serve the projected needs in the Cleveland region for the next 10 years. The proposed action is needed to meet the NCA's goal of providing eligible veterans and their families with reasonable access to VA interment options.

The proposed action is to expand and improve the OWRNC within the existing cemetery property to provide 10 years of interment capacity. The proposed action encompasses items evaluated in the 2015 EA as well as additions to the project scope, which include a new honor guard building and general site improvements to existing structures, roadways, and hardscapes.

SUMMARY OF ENVIRONMENTAL CONSEQUENCES

Based on the SEA, VA determined there would be no significant adverse impacts, considered individually or cumulatively, from the construction or operation of the proposed action to the environmental resources analyzed.

The project is expected to have long-term, significant, beneficial community service impacts by extending the longevity of OWRNC and providing burial services for veterans and their families in the Cleveland region.

Construction related activities, detailed in the SEA, are expected to have short-term, less-than-significant, adverse impact on aesthetics; air quality; geology, topography, and soils; hydrology and water quality; wildlife and habitat; noise; and transportation and parking. Pushing back the edge of a wooded area is expected to result in minor, long-term, adverse impacts on land use and wildlife and habitat. Ceremonial rifle salutes during normal operations are expected to have minor, intermittent, adverse noise impacts. Long-term, direct, minor, adverse impacts to wetlands are expected from filling 0.16 acres of isolated wetlands. No adverse impacts to cultural resources, utilities, or solid and hazardous materials were identified.

Best management practices and mitigation measures outlined in the 2015 EA, the current SEA, and provided in Attachment A to this FONSI will minimize less-than-significant impacts on the resource areas identified.

AGENCY AND PUBLIC COMMENT

The Notice of Availability for the Draft SEA was published in the Medina Gazette on January 16th and 17th, 2020, and the Northern Wayne Post on January 18th, 2020. Concurrently, letters were mailed to stakeholders including federal and state governmental organizations and tribes and an electronic version of the Draft SEA was made available on the VA website. No comments were received during the public comment period. No further evaluation of the proposed action is warranted.

FINDING OF NO SIGNIFICANT IMPACT

This FONSI is based on the attached SEA. The analysis performed in the SEA concludes that there would be no significant, short-term, long-term or cumulative impacts to the human environment, provided best management practices and mitigation measures outlined in the SEA, and included in Attachment A, are fully implemented. Therefore, this FONSI is appropriate and an environmental impact statement is not required.

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Attachment A. Minimization and Management Measures

| Resource Area | Minimization/Management Measures |
|--------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Aesthetics | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Conduct construction activities with a sensitivity toward maintaining the dignity and solemnity of the national cemetery environment during interment services |
| Air Quality | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use appropriate dust control methods during construction activities • Suspend construction activities during high winds • Reduce vehicle speeds to reduce dust generated by vehicles and equipment on unpaved surfaces • Quickly revegetate exposed soils following completion of construction activities |
| Cultural Resources | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • As requested by the State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO), notify SHPO if new or additional effects or historic properties are identified. |
| Geology, Topography, and Soils | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Design, install, and maintain erosion and sediment controls during the duration of construction activities and any subsequent soil disturbance activities near site drainages • Minimize the amount of exposed soils at any given time during construction activities and quickly revegetate following completion of activities • Minimize the disturbance of steep slopes • Provide an undisturbed natural buffer between the activity area and surface drainages (namely Tommy Run), and direct stormwater runoff to vegetated areas • Develop a Stormwater Pollution Prevention Plan, consistent with the requirements of the National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System general permit • Implement spill and leak prevention and response procedures |
| Hydrology and Water Quality | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Utilize native and drought-resistant vegetation for landscaping to reduce irrigation requirements • Route stormwater runoff from impervious surfaces to stormwater retention and drainage areas • Implement spill and leak prevention and response procedures, including maintaining a complete spill kit at the project area, to reduce the impacts of incidental releases of vehicle fluids • Engage contractors or regulatory agencies in locating the new groundwater well to minimize impacts to other groundwater users • Continue responsible use of pesticides and road deicing chemicals, keeping usage to the lowest quantities possible thereby reducing the potential for water quality impacts |
| Wildlife and Habitat | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To reduce effects to biological resources during construction, time all cutting of trees greater than or equal to three inches in diameter at breast height to occur between October 1st and March 31st to avoid adverse effects to threatened and endangered bat species. If trees suitable for bat roosting must be cut during the summer months, have net surveys conducted between June 1st and August 15th, prior to any cutting. |

Attachment A. Minimization and Management Measures

| Resource Area | Minimization/Management Measures |
|----------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Noise | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Schedule construction activities for daylight hours, attempting to minimize impacts to ongoing cemetery operations • Maintain mufflers and sound shielding on construction equipment and routine maintenance equipment • Minimize equipment idling, and shut down construction equipment when not in use |
| Floodplains, Wetlands, and Coastal Zone Management | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Avoid wetlands to the extent practicable • Obtain a Level One Isolated Wetland Permit before impacting wetlands • Mitigate impacts by purchasing wetland bank credits, if available. If credits are not available, mitigate through the In-Lieu Fee Program. |
| Solid and Hazardous Materials | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continue proper vehicle maintenance and inspection to reduce the potential for incidental releases of vehicle fuels |
| Transportation and Parking | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Schedule construction activities such that traffic increases do not coincide with typical morning and evening periods of increased traffic • Route transportation of construction equipment (namely truckloads of excess soils) to minimize impacts on neighboring communities |
| Cumulative Impacts | <p>Given the nature and location of the proposed action within the current cemetery property boundary and its nature as a simple 10-year continuation of current cemetery operations, no significant cumulative adverse effects to any resources are anticipated.</p> |
| Potential for Generating Substantial Controversy | <p>During both the 2015 EA process and the current SEA process, the VA has solicited input from various federal, state, and local government agencies, tribes, and the general public regarding the proposed action. No opposition to the proposed action has been expressed and no areas of controversy were identified.</p> |