ABSTRACT: The U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA), National Cemetery Administration, operates the Wilmington National Cemetery, located in Wilmington, North Carolina. Wilmington National Cemetery is currently the 98th largest cemetery, based on number of burials, in the 135-cemetery National Cemetery system. It is closed for burials as all available burial space has been utilized.

During the Civil War, Wilmington Harbor was one of the most significant import depots for the South. Numerous battles occurred in the surrounding areas as a result. Initial burials at Wilmington National Cemetery were remains of the Union Troops originally buried at Fort Fisher, Smithville (now Southport), along the Cape Fear River, and at points along the Wilmington, Manchester, and the Wilmington and Weldon Railroads.

The initial cemetery property was purchased in 1866 and additional land was purchased in 1877 for a total of 5.1 acres. The cemetery opened in 1867.

The cemetery contains a Superintendent’s Lodge built in 1934 and a service building built in 1937. The cemetery contains 4,976 casket gravesites and 176 in-ground cremated remain gravesites. There have been 6012 casketed interments and 406 cremated remain interments. The grounds contain gravesites, brick walls, extensive turfed and landscaped areas, roadways, and two buildings

The cemetery is located in a residential section of Wilmington.

The National Cemetery Administration desires to lease the Superintendent’s Lodge in order to keep the building occupied to preserve its current condition.

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

BACKGROUND

The U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA), National Cemetery Administration, operates Wilmington National Cemetery, located in Wilmington, North Carolina. Wilmington National Cemetery is currently the 98th largest cemetery, based on the number of total burials that have occurred at each location, in the 135-cemetery National Cemetery system and has no available burial space.

During the Civil War, Wilmington Harbor was one of the most significant import depots for the South. Numerous battles occurred in the surrounding areas as a result. Initial burials at Wilmington National Cemetery were remains of the Union Troops originally buried at Fort Fisher, Smithville (now Southport), along the Cape Fear River, and at points along the Wilmington, Manchester, and the Wilmington and Weldon Railroads.

The cemetery property was purchased in 1866 and additional land was purchased in 1877 for a total of 5.1 acres. The cemetery opened in 1867.

The cemetery contains a Superintendent’s Lodge built in 1934 and a service building built in 1937. The cemetery contains 4,976 casket gravesites and 176 in-ground cremated remain gravesites. There have been 6012 casketed interments and 406 cremated remain interments.

Superintendent’s Lodges, of varying designs, were constructed throughout the national cemetery system to house the supervisor of the cemetery and their family. This assured that the sanctity of the cemetery was maintained at all times. In later years, the lodges became the administrative office of the cemetery.

The Wilmington National Cemetery Superintendent’s Lodge is a Dutch Colonial Revival design. The most distinguishing feature of the design is the main dormer window on the front elevation which has been expanded from two windows to four windows and anchors the front elevation.

The cemetery as well as the Superintendent’s Lodge was placed on the National Park Service’s National Register of Historic Places in 1998.

LOCATION

Wilmington National Cemetery is located at 2011 Market Street near downtown Wilmington, N.C. It is in New Hanover County near the Cape Fear River.
DESCRIPTION OF ALTERNATIVES

No-Action Alternative:
The Wilmington National Cemetery Superintendent’s Lodge would be a vacant. The National Cemetery Administration would continue to maintain the building structure and grounds. Vacant buildings are subject to vandalism and damage due to infrequent inspections, degrading its historic significance.

Proposed Alternative: Lease the Historic Lodge
The Department of Veteran Affairs, National Cemetery Administration, proposes to lease the Superintendent’s Lodge to a tenant that understands the significance of the building and the requirement to adhere to the Secretary of the Interior’s Standards for Historic Properties. Occupied buildings reduce the likelihood of vandalism and can identify any structural or mechanical deficiencies in a timely manner.

BASIS FOR SELECTION

By having the building occupied, it would reduce the likelihood of vandalism and can identify any structural or mechanical deficiencies in a timely manner.

Any tenant would have to adhere to the Secretary of the Interior’s Standards for Historic Properties such as the Lodge.

ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACTS

There have been no significant changes in environmental conditions on the property since the closing of Wilmington National Cemetery in 1998.

No-Action Alternative
Under the No-Action alternative, no impacts to the environment should occur on the property. Vacant buildings, however, are subject to vandalism and damage due to infrequent inspections, degrading its historic significance.

Alternative A- Historic Lodge Tenant
Under Alternative A, the Department of Veteran Affairs, National Cemetery Administration, proposes that the Superintendent’s Lodge be leased to a tenant that would adhere to the Secretary of the Interior’s Standards for Historic Properties such as the Lodge. Occupied buildings reduce the likelihood of vandalism and can quickly identify any structural or mechanical deficiencies.

SPECIFIC AREAS EVALUATED:

Aesthetics – Aesthetics refers to the visual resources including natural and man-made features that give a particular piece of property its aesthetic properties.
The lodge currently receives periodic exterior maintenance to retain its physical integrity. All grounds receive maintenance on a regular basis by a contractor.

**Air Quality** – Air quality refers to the concentration of air contaminants in a specific location. Air quality is determined by the type and amount of pollutants emitted into the atmosphere, the size and topography of the air basin, and the prevailing meteorological conditions. Impacts refer to changes in the air quality related to conditions caused by an action.

The major air contaminants are related to grounds maintenance of turf and landscaping, which will continue.

**Community Services** – Community services refer to services provided by surrounding communities such as police, fire, and ambulance services.

The lease would not result in a change in the use of community services.

**Cultural Resources** – Cultural Resources refers to compliance with the National Historic Properties Act, which addresses the protection of archeological, historic, and cultural resources.

A Cultural Resource Assessment was completed in 2017. The State Properties Office has been contacted and would be notified of any actions on the property.

**Economic Activity** – Economic Activity refers to the effect that the proposed action would have on the economic conditions in the surrounding area.

The cemetery no longer performs burials. Only contracted grounds and building maintenance is performed. No additional economic activity is expected. No increases in staff are expected.

**Floodplains, Wetlands** – Floodplains are those areas delineated by the Federal Emergency Management Agency in their Flood Plain Maps indicating both 100-year and 500-year floodplains.

Wetlands are areas that (1) are subject to inundation or saturation near the surface for a period during the growing season, (2) have a vegetation cover dominated by plants adapted to wet conditions (i.e., hydrophilic plants), and (3) have soils with characteristics that developed due to waterlogging (i.e., hydric soil).

There are no impacts on floodplains or wetlands, associated with the lease of the property.

**Geology and soils** – Geology and soils refers to the potential for loss of soils and changes in geological conditions due to rock excavation, soil erosion and compaction, soil horizon removal, grading, and cutting and filling operations.
There will be no changes to soils or geology.

Hydrology and Water Quality – Hydrology and Water Quality refers to the effect of the action on surface water and groundwater.

There would be no impact on stormwater generation or use of groundwater.

Noise – Noise refers to the generation of noise by construction or normal operations on the property

Normal cemetery landscape maintenance would continue to generate minimal, short term noise.

Property Use - Property Use represents the current and planned use of the property in a jurisdiction by the governing authorities.

The leasing of the lodge would have no effect on the current property use. The planned use is a continuation of existing cemetery operations.

Real Property – Real Property refers to the reduction of land on the tax rolls or reduction in land value.

Leasing of the Lodge would have no effect on real property concerns. The Lodge is part of the existing cemetery and will remain as government property.

Resident Population – Resident Population refers to the addition of cemetery staff, changes in the neighborhood makeup, or alteration of demographic characteristics.

The lease of the historic lodge of the property would have no effect on resident population. It has been in existence since 1867 prior to development of the area. No new staff is planned, and there would be no effect on the neighborhood characteristics.

Solid/Hazardous Waste – The Solid and Hazardous Waste category refers to changes in the proper management of solid waste and hazardous waste in compliance with local, state, and Federal regulations.

There would be no increase in the amount and/or type of solid waste generated and disposed of as a result of leasing the Lodge.

Transportation and Parking – The Transportation and Parking category refers to changes in the vehicular traffic and Parking related to the operations on the property and how it might impact surrounding traffic patterns.

The lease of the lodge would not cause an increase in traffic beyond existing levels generated by current Lodge and cemetery use. The existing entrance would continue to be used. Parking would remain as it currently exists.
Utilities – The Utilities category refers to changes in the use of public utilities at the property.

There would be no change in the use of utilities at the lodge.

Vegetation and Wildlife – The Vegetation and Wildlife category refers to the presence of threatened or endangered species and the removal of trees and vegetation.

The leasing of the lodge would not result in loss of vegetation or wildlife. No federally listed or proposed Endangered or Threatened species are known to exist on the cemetery property.
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1.0 PURPOSE AND NEED

1.1 PURPOSE
The U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA), National Cemetery Administration (NCA), is responsible for providing cemetery services to 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, the National Cemetery Administration is responsible for the operation and maintenance of 135 existing National Cemeteries, and the construction of new National Cemeteries.

The cemetery as well as the Superintendent’s Lodge is on the National Park Service’s National Register of Historic Places.

The purpose of the proposed action is to fulfill a need to lease the Superintendent’s Lodge located at Wilmington National Cemetery. The National Cemetery Administration desires to lease the Lodge to a tenant who will adhere to the Secretary of the Interior’s Standards for Historic Properties.

1.2 NEED
The National Cemetery Administration has determined that there is a need to lease the Wilmington National Cemetery Superintendent’s Lodge. There are no National Cemetery Administration employees utilize the Lodge. The Lodge would be available to lease to a tenant that would adhere to the Secretary of the Interior’s Standards for Historic Properties.

Vacant buildings are subject to vandalism and damage due to infrequent inspections, degrading its historic significance. Occupied buildings reduce the likelihood of vandalism and can quickly identify any structural or mechanical deficiencies.

2.0 DESCRIPTION OF THE PROPOSED ACTION

2.1 THE ACTION
The proposed action is the need to lease the Superintendent’s Lodge at the Wilmington National Cemetery. There are no National Cemetery Administration employees that utilize the Wilmington National Cemetery Superintendent’s Lodge. The Superintendent’s Lodge is available to lease to a tenant that would adhere to the Secretary of the Interior’s Standards for Historic Properties.

2.2 LOCATION
Wilmington National Cemetery is located at 2011 Market Street near downtown Wilmington, N.C. It is in New Hanover County near the Cape Fear River.
During the Civil War, Wilmington Harbor was one of the most significant importation depots for the South. In 1866, land was purchased from a local Wilmington resident for the construction of a national cemetery. Additional adjacent land was purchased in 1877. The cemetery is located in a residential area.

3.0 DESCRIPTION OF ALTERNATIVES

3.1 ALTERNATIVE 1-NO ACTION

Wilmington National Cemetery’s Superintendent’s Lodge will be vacant. National Cemetery Administration will continue to maintain the building structure and grounds. Under the No Action Alternative, there may be no environmental impacts to the property, as it may stay in its present condition. Vacant buildings, however, are subject to vandalism and damage due to infrequent inspections, degrading its historic significance.

3.2 PREFERRED ALTERNATIVE – LEASE THE SUPERINTENDENT’S LODGE

Department of Veteran Affairs National Cemetery Administration proposes to lease out the historic lodge to a tenant that would adhere to the Secretary of the Interior’s Standards for Historic Properties.

Occupied buildings reduce the likelihood of vandalism and can identify any structural or mechanical deficiencies in a timely manner.

4.0 ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT ANALYSIS

4.1 PROCEDURES

Since Federal funding is involved, an Environmental Assessment (EA) was conducted in accordance with the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA), the Council on Environmental Quality (CEQ) regulations implementing NEPA (40 Code of Federal Regulations 1500-1508), and VA Regulations, Title 38 of the CFR, Section 26.4 (a). The VA policy includes provision to:

- Act with care in carrying out its mission of providing services for veterans and to ensure it does so consistently with national environmental policies. Specifically, the VA shall ensure that all practical means and measures are used to protect, restore, and enhance the quality of the human environment;

- Avoid or minimize adverse environmental consequences, consistent with other national policy considerations;

- Prepare concise and clear environmental documents which shall be supported by documented environmental analyses; and

- Preserve historic, cultural, and natural aspects of our national heritage.
4.2 PRIOR ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT STUDIES

No previous Environmental Impact Studies have been completed on this facility.

4.3 AESTHETICS

Aesthetics refers to the visual resources including natural and man-made features that give a particular piece of property its aesthetic properties.

Existing Setting

The cemetery property consists of 5 acres of land containing gravesites, brick walls, extensive turfed and landscaped areas, roadways, and two buildings. It is a closed national cemetery as it has no remaining burial space. Currently, the Historic Superintendent’s Lodge is occupied by a tenant that adheres to the Secretary of the Interior’s Standards for Historic Properties of Historic Buildings in regards to maintenance of the Lodge.

Potential Environmental Impacts and Proposed Mitigation Measures

Under the no action alternative there may be no environmental impacts to the property, as it may stay in its present condition. Vacant buildings, however, are subject to vandalism and damage due to infrequent inspections, degrading its historic significance and appearance.

Under Alternative A, the Historic Lodge will be leased to a tenant that will adhere to the Secretary of the Interior’s Standards for Historic Properties.

4.4 AIR QUALITY

Air quality refers to the concentration of air contaminants in a specific location. Air quality is determined by the type and amount of pollutants emitted into the atmosphere, the size and topography of the air basin, and the prevailing meteorological conditions. Impacts refer to changes in the air quality related to conditions caused by an action.

Existing Conditions

Hanover County is currently listed as an attainment area for air quality by the United States Environment Protection Agency, with one air monitoring station.

Potential Environmental Impacts and Proposed Mitigation Measures

Under the No Action Alternative, there will be no adverse impacts on air quality due to the generation of ground-level ozone by the existing use of gas-powered vehicles and maintenance equipment at the cemetery. Any limited impact is currently being mitigated by annual emissions testing of all vehicles and equipment.
Under Alternative A, there would be no significant change in air quality from current operations. No additional equipment or vehicles are planned. Maintenance equipment used on site will meet all emission standards.

4.5 COMMUNITY SERVICES

Community services refer to services provided by surrounding communities such as police, fire, and ambulance services.

Existing Conditions

Community services are available but not regularly used in the existing cemetery.

Potential Environmental Impacts and Proposed Mitigation Measures

No changes in community services would occur as a result of the lease. No additional community services would be required.

4.6 CULTURAL RESOURCES

Cultural Resources refers to compliance with the National Historic Properties Act, which addresses the protection of archeological, historic, and cultural resources.

Existing Conditions

The cemetery property was purchased in 1866 and additional land was purchased in 1877 for a total of 5.1 acres. The cemetery opened in 1867. Initial burials were remains of the Union Troops originally buried at Fort Fisher, Smithville (now Southport), along the Cape Fear River, and at Points along the Wilmington, Manchester, and the Wilmington and Weldon Railroads.

The cemetery contains a Superintendent’s Lodge built in 1934 and a service building built in 1937. The cemetery contains 4,976 casket gravesites and 176 in-ground cremated remain gravesites. There have been 6012 casketed interments and 406 cremated remain interments. It contains extensive turfed and landscaped areas and roadways.

Superintendent’s Lodges, of varying designs, were constructed throughout the national cemetery system to house the supervisor of the cemetery and their family. This assured that the sanctity of the cemetery was maintained at all times. In later years, the Lodge became the administrative office of the cemetery.

The Wilmington National Cemetery Superintendent’s Lodge is a Dutch Colonial Revival design. The most distinguishing feature of the design is the main dormer window on the front elevation which has been expanded from two windows to four windows and anchors the front elevation.
The cemetery as well as the Superintendent's Lodge was placed on the National Park Service's National Register of Historic Places in 1998.

A Cultural Resource Assessment was completed in 2017. The State Historic Properties Office has been contacted and would be notified of any changes to the Lodge.

**Potential Environmental Impacts and Proposed Mitigation Measures**

Under the no action alternative there may be no adverse impacts on cultural resources. Vacant buildings, however, are subject to vandalism and damage due to infrequent inspections, degrading its historic significance.

Under Alternative A, the lease and improvements of the historic Lodge will cause no adverse impact on cultural resources. Occupied buildings reduce the likelihood of vandalism and can quickly identify any structural or mechanical deficiencies. A letter has been sent to the State Historic Properties office for concurrence.

**4.7 ECONOMIC ACTIVITY**

Economic Activity refers to the effect that the proposed action would have on the economic conditions in the surrounding area.

**Existing Conditions**

Wilmington National Cemetery is closed to future burials. The Lodge is leased to a historic Properties organization for their offices.

**Potential Environmental Impacts and Proposed Mitigation Measures**

Under the no action alternative, the cemetery will not have a tenant in the Lodge, and no employees would be located there.

Under Alternative A, the lodge would continue to be a place of employment.

**4.8 FLOODPLAINS, WETLANDS**

Floodplains are those areas delineated by the Federal Emergency Management Agency in their Flood Plain Maps indicating both 100-year and 500-year floodplains.

Wetlands are areas that (1) are subject to inundation or saturation near the surface for a period during the growing season, (2) have a vegetation cover dominated by plants adapted to wet conditions (i.e., hydrophilic plants), and (3) have soils with characteristics that developed due to waterlogging (i.e., hydric soil).
Existing Conditions

There are no floodplains or wetlands in the Superintendent's Lodge area. The current National Wetlands Inventory does not show any in the cemetery area.

Potential Environmental Impacts and Proposed Mitigation Measures

There are no floodplains or wetlands on the cemetery property.

4.9 GEOLOGY AND SOILS

Geology and soils refers to the potential for loss of soils and changes in geological conditions due to rock excavation, soil erosion and compaction, soil horizon removal, grading, and cutting and filling operations.

Existing Conditions

The Wilmington National Cemetery is a closed, fully developed national cemetery. It contains extensive turfed and landscaped areas and roadways.

Potential Environmental Impacts and Proposed Mitigation Measures

Under the No Action Alternative there would be no adverse impacts to geology and soils.

Under Alternative A, there would no adverse impacts to geology and soils. No changes to the grounds are planned.

4.10 HYDROLOGY AND WATER QUALITY

Hydrology and Water Quality refers to the effect of the action on surface water and groundwater.

Existing Conditions

The cemetery storm water system is designed to handle all surface storm water. No groundwater is utilized.

Potential Environmental Impacts and Proposed Mitigation Measures

Under the no action alternative there would be no adverse impacts to Hydrology and Water Quality.

Under Alternative A there would be no adverse impacts to Hydrology and Water Quality.
4.11 NOISE

Noise refers to the generation of noise by construction or normal operations on the property.

Existing Conditions

The cemetery currently generates some noise as a result of normal cemetery maintenance operations such as turf and landscape maintenance. Most of these activities occur during regular business hours and cause only a minimal adverse impact on the surrounding area. There may be special activities on Veterans Day and Memorial Day. The area surrounding the cemetery contains no sensitive receptors.

Potential Environmental Impacts and Proposed Mitigation Measures

Under the No Action Alternative, noise levels at the cemetery would not change and there would be no adverse impacts.

Under Alternative A, noise levels at the cemetery would not change and there would be no adverse impacts.

4.12 PROPERTY USE

Property Use represents the current and planned use of the property in a jurisdiction by the governing authorities.

Existing Setting

The cemetery has operated as a federal national cemetery since 1867. It is surrounded by a residential area.

Potential Environmental Impacts and Proposed Mitigation Measures

No changes in property use would occur as a result of the lease. The property is currently listed as Federal Government use.

4.13 REAL PROPERTY

Real Property refers to the reduction of land on the tax rolls or reduction in land value

Existing Conditions

The cemetery property is carried on the tax rolls as federal property
Potential Environmental Impacts and Proposed Mitigation Measures

No changes in real property would occur as a result of the lease. The cemetery property would continue to be carried on the tax rolls as federal property.

4.14 RESIDENT POPULATION

Resident Population refers to the addition of cemetery staff, changes in the neighborhood makeup, or alteration of demographic characteristics.

Existing Conditions

The cemetery property was purchased in 1866 and additional land was purchased in 1877 for a total of 5.1 acres. The cemetery opened in 1887. The cemetery has operated as a federal national cemetery since that time.

Potential Environmental Impacts and Proposed Mitigation Measures

The lease of the historic lodge on the property would have no effect on resident population. No new staffs are planned, and there would be no effect on the neighborhood characteristics.

4.15 SOLID/HAZARDOUS WASTE

The Solid and Hazardous Waste category refers to changes in the proper management of solid waste and hazardous waste in compliance with local, state, and Federal regulations.

Existing Conditions

Solid waste is disposed of through a commercial contractor with a weekly pick-up.

Potential Environmental Impacts and Proposed Mitigation Measures

There will be no change in production of solid or hazardous waste as a result of the lease of the Lodge.

4.16 TRANSPORTATION AND PARKING

The Transportation and Parking category refers to changes in the vehicular traffic and Parking related to the operations on the property and how it might impact surrounding traffic patterns.
Existing Conditions

Currently staff and visitors enter by the main entrance of the property along Market Street. Current Lodge tenants Park near the Lodge.

Potential Environmental Impacts and Proposed Mitigation Measures

Under the no action alternative there will be no change and no adverse impacts.

Under Alternative A, no changes and no adverse impacts to transportation or Parking would occur. The existing operations would continue as before

4.17 UTILITIES

The Utilities category refers to changes in the use of public utilities at the property.

Existing Conditions

The cemetery currently uses public water, storm, and sanitary sewers. Electricity is provided by the local provider.

Potential Environmental Impacts and Proposed Mitigation Measures

Under the no action alternative there will be no change in use of public utilities. The Lodge would continue to be heated and cooled to maintain proper heat and humidity.

Under Alternative A, there will be no change in use of public utilities.

4.18 VEGETATION AND WILDLIFE

The Vegetation and Wildlife category refers to the presence of threatened or endangered species and the removal of trees and vegetation.

Existing Conditions

No federally listed or proposed endangered or threatened species are known to exist in the project impact area. All vegetation is part of the historic landscaping.

Potential Environmental Impacts and Proposed Mitigation Measures

Under the no action alternative there will be no change to vegetation or wildlife habitat.

Under Alternative A, there will be no change to vegetation or wildlife habitat.
5.0 SOURCES CONTACTED


National Park Service Properties Briefs:
6.0 FIGURES

Location of Wilmington North Carolina

Satellite View of Wilmington National Cemetery
Wilmington National Cemetery

Superintendent Lodge at Wilmington