FINAL

ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT
OF THE PROPOSED
VA SPRING HILL RESIDENTIAL TREATMENT CENTER
PASCO COUNTY, FLORIDA

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS
425 I STREET NW
WASHINGTON, DC 20001

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This Environmental Assessment (EA) has been prepared to identify, analyze, and document the potential physical, environmental, cultural, and socioeconomic impacts associated with The Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) proposed acquisition of a former residential treatment center (RTC) to operate as an RTC by the James A. Haley Veterans Hospital (JAHVH). This EA has been prepared as 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), *Environmental Effects of the Department of Veterans Affairs Actions* (VA*)* (38 CFR Part 26), and relevant guidance from VA's *NEPA Interim Guidance for Projects* (2010).

Proposed Action

VA's Proposed Action is to purchase 40 acres of land that includes an 11,047 square-foot building to operate as a residential treatment center in Spring Hill, Florida, construct an addition to the facility (approximately 4,100 square feet), renovate and expand the parking area, and resurface Turner Loop (0.76 mile). Residential health care is currently provided on a limited basis in the Veterans Integrated Services Networks at JAHVH or by the private sector.

The proposed facility would be staffed by VA.

Purpose and Need

The purpose of the Proposed Action is to increase JAHVH's services and provide a much higher quality of care through a VA-operated RTC in the Tampa Florida area. The proposed RTC would provide evidence-based psychotherapies, evidence-based residential programming (e.g., classes in nutrition and mindfulness exercises), medication assisted treatments, and inpatient detoxification services.

The Proposed Action is needed to address VA residential mental health space gaps and the shortage of Veteran residential care in the Tampa, Florida area. The Proposed Action will reduce the need to use community recovery centers and reduce costs that can be utilized for other Veteran treatment programs.

Alternatives

This EA examines one Action Alternative for the implementation of the Proposed Action and the No Action Alternative.

Proposed Action (Preferred Alternative)

The Proposed Action, which is also the preferred alternative, involves the acquisition, operation, construction and minor upgrades of a former RTC which is currently vacant and not in use. The site is at 14191 Turner Loop in a wooded and residential area with multiple small water bodies in Spring Hill, Florida. The site is west of Turner Loop, and north of Oldenburg Drive on one 40-acre parcel. The 40-acre parcel includes approximately 6 acres of developed property and features an 11,047 square foot building, trees, driveway, parking lot, pole-mounted transformers, and a pond. The site is adjacent to the residential properties in the north, east, and wooded areas to the south and west.

No Action Alternative

Under the No Action Alternative, the Proposed Action would not be implemented. VA would continue to provide limited care at JAHVH and through community recovery centers in the area. The former RTC would remain vacant and may be developed by others for other commercial or residential use, in accordance with local zoning. This alternative would continue to limit VA's ability to provide a higher quality of care for the Veterans in the Tampa Florida area, for specific in-patient services and thus would not meet the purpose of or need for the Proposed Action. However, the No Action Alternative was evaluated in this EA as required under the CEQ regulations and provides a comparative benchmark analysis against which to analyze the effects of the Proposed Action.

Affected Environment and Environmental Consequences

The affected environment of the Action Alternative and its immediate surroundings, or the region of influence of the Proposed Action, is discussed in Section 3 of this EA.

The alternatives are evaluated in this EA to determine their potential direct or indirect impact(s) on the physical, environmental, cultural, and socioeconomic aspects of the Proposed Action's region of influence. Technical areas evaluated in this EA are aesthetics; air quality; cultural resources; geology and soils, hydrology and water quality; wildlife and habitat; noise; land use; floodplains, wetlands, and coastal zone management; socioeconomics; community services; solid waste and hazardous materials; traffic; transportation; utilities; and environmental justice. This section also addresses cumulative impacts and the potential for generating substantial controversy.

Potential Effects of the Action Alternative

The Proposed Action would result in the impacts identified throughout Section 3 and summarized in the table below. These include short-term and/or long-term, less than significant potential adverse impacts to aesthetics, air quality, soils, hydrology and water quality, wildlife and habitat, noise, wetlands, solid waste and hazardous materials, and transportation. All these potential impacts are less than significant and would be further reduced through careful implementation of general best management practices (BMPs), management and minimization measures, and compliance with regulatory requirements, as identified in Section 5. There would be short-term and beneficial impacts to socioeconomics.

Potential Effects of the No Action Alternative

Under the No Action Alternative, the Proposed Action would not be implemented and no improvements to the current level of VA's regional health care services or capability would occur. No beneficial impacts attributable to the Proposed Action would occur and VA's ability to provide improved residential health care services to the Tampa region Veterans would not occur.

Summary of Impact Analysis

Resource Area	Proposed Action Alternative	No Action Alternative
Aesthetics	Construction to expand the facility's footprint and renovate the parking area with additional spaces would reduce the existing green space and alter views from the surrounding area. Any visual effects would be minimized through attractive design. Construction activities would have short-term and minor impacts and would result in less than significant impacts.	None
Air Quality	Construction activities would have short-term and minor impacts from emissions and dust. Long-term minor emissions from the operation of the RTC and vehicle emissions would result in less than significant impacts.	None
Cultural Resources	No historic properties were identified. Less than significant impacts to cultural resources.	None
Geology and Soils	Construction activities from use of heavy equipment and paving would result in less than significant short-term and temporary impacts.	None
Hydrology and Water Quality	Implementation of best management practices and following permit requirements would result in less than significant temporary short-term impacts.	None
Wildlife and Habitat	There is a no effect determination based on the federally and state listed species that may occur on the site. Less than significant impact to vegetation and wildlife habitats.	None
Noise	Construction activities would have noticeable higher noise levels than current levels and would be short-term less than significant impacts. Operation of the RTC would result in negligible short-term and long-term impacts.	None

Resource Area	Proposed Action Alternative	No Action Alternative
Land Use	Construction and operation of the facility is consistent with local zoning and compatible with surrounding land use and would have negligible land use effects.	None
Wetlands, Floodplains, and Coastal Zone Management	Three wetlands are located on the property; however, construction and operation of the RTC Proposed Action would have no impact on wetlands or floodplains. Site is not in a Coastal High Hazard Area of coastal zone.	None
Socioeconomics	Construction would likely result in short-term and beneficial impacts to local employment and personal income. Operation would provide short-term and long-term socioeconomic benefit to the selected site area.	None
Community Services	No significant additional load is expected to be placed on the fire or police departments, increased use of other public or community services as a result of the proposed action. Less than significant impacts.	None
Solid Waste ad Hazardous Materials	No significant adverse short-term or long-term impacts during construction and operation of RTC are anticipated. Long-term operational solid wastes, hazardous materials, and medical wastes would be managed in accordance with applicable federal and state laws.	None
Transportation and Parking	Less than significant adverse short-term or long-term impacts during operation of RTC are anticipated. Minor short-term impacts from construction traffic during road resurfacing and construction activities. RTC would include adequate on-site parking by expanding the parking lot from 20 to 36 parking spaces.	None
Utilities	Long-term less than significant impacts for the operation of the RTC will occur due to increased consumption of utilities.	None
Environmental Justice	Site is not located in a disproportionately high minority or low-income population. No impact	None

Cumulative Impacts

The EA also examines the potential cumulative effects of implementing the proposed action. This analysis finds that the Proposed Action Alternative, with the implementation of the BMPs, management and avoidance measures, and regulatory compliance measures specified in this EA, would not result in significant adverse cumulative impacts onsite or regional natural or cultural resources and would maintain or enhance the socioeconomic environment of the area through the

long-term provision of additional residential health care services to the region's Veterans. The No Action Alternative would not produce these potential positive socioeconomic gains.

Agency and Public Involvement

Agencies consulted for this EA include:

- U.S. Army Corps of Engineers
- U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
- U.S. Environmental Protection Agency
- USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service
- U.S. Department of Transportation
- Florida Department of State, Division of Historical Resources (Florida SHPO)
- Florida Department of Environmental Protection (various departments)
- Florida Department of Transportation
- Florida Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services
- Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission
- Florida Geological Survey
- Florida Natural Areas Inventory
- Pasco County Central Permitting Division
- Pasco County Planning and Development

Responses with project input or information were received from the Florida State Clearinghouse, Pasco County, Long Range Planning Division, and USEPA. Input provided by these agencies is addressed in the appropriate resource sub-sections of Section 3. Written correspondence from the agencies is provided in Appendix A.

Two federally recognized Native American tribes (Miccosukee Tribe of Indians of Florida and Muscogee [Creek] Nation, Oklahoma) were identified as having possible ancestral ties to the Spring Hill area. VA sent Section 106 consultation letters to these Tribes requesting their concurrence that no historic properties would be affected by the Proposed Action. Written correspondence with the Tribes is provided in Appendix B.

VA published and distributed the Draft EA for a 30-day public comment period as announced by a Notice of Availability published in the Tampa Bay Times, a local newspaper of general circulation, on June 23 and 26, 2024. A copy of the Draft EA was also made available on the VA website. One agency, the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, provided comments regarding the Draft EA. The comments and VA's responses are in Section 4.3.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

SECTION **PAGE**

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY **1**
TABLE OF CONTENTS **1**
LIST OF TABLES **5**
LIST OF FIGURES **5**
SECTION 1: INTRODUCTION **1**
1.1 Introduction **1**
1.2 Background **1**
1.3 Purpose and Need **4**
1.4 Decision-Making **5**
SECTION 2: DESCRIPTION OF THE PROPOSED ACTION AND ALTERNATIVES **6**
2.1 Introduction **6**
2.2 Proposed Action Overview **6**
2.3 Alternatives Analysis **6**
2.3.1 Alternatives Development 7
2.3.2 Evaluated Alternatives 7
2.3.3 Alternatives Eliminated from Further Consideration 8
SECTION 3: AFFECTED ENVIRONMENT AND ENVIRONMENTAL CONSEQUENCES **9**
3.1 Introduction **9**
3.2 Aesthetics **9**
3.2.1 Effects of the Action Alternative 10
3.2.2 Effects of the No Action Alternative 10

3.3 Air Quality 10
3.3.1 Ambient Air Quality 10
3.3.2 State and Local Regulations 11
3.3.3 Sensitive Receptors 11
3.3.4 Effects of the Action Alternative 11
3.3.5 Effects of the No Action Alternative 12
3.4 Cultural Resources 12
3.4.1 Effects of the Proposed Action Alternative 14
3.4.2 Effects of the No Action Alternative 14
3.5 Geology and Soils 14
3.5.1 Prime and Unique Agricultural Land Soils 16
3.5.2 Effects of the Proposed Action Alternative 16
3.5.3 Effects of the No Action Alternative 16
3.6 Hydrology and Water Quality 16
3.6.1 Surface Waters 16
3.6.2 Groundwater 17
3.6.3 Effects of the Action Alternatives 17
3.6.4 Effects of the No Action Alternative 17
3.7 Wildlife and Habitat 17
3.7.1 Vegetation 17
3.7.2 Wildlife 18
3.7.3 Threatened and Endangered Species 18
3.7.4 Effects of the Action Alternative 21
3.7.5 Effects of the No Action Alternative 22
3.8 Noise 22
3.8.1 Existing Noise 22
3.8.2 State and Local Regulations 23
3.8.3 Sensitive Receptors 24
3.8.4 Effects of the Action Alternative 24

3.8.5 Effects of the No Action Alternative 25

3.9 Land Use 25

3.9.1 Effects of the Action Alternatives 25

3.9.2 Effects of the No Action Alternative 25

3.10 Wetlands, Floodplains, and Coastal Zone Management 26

3.10.1 Wetlands 26

3.10.2 Floodplains 29

3.10.3 Coastal Zone 30

3.10.4 Effects of the Action Alternatives 30

3.10.5 Effects of the No Action Alternative 30

3.11 Socioeconomics 30

3.11.1 Demographics 30

3.11.2 Employment and Income 32

3.11.3 Protection of Children Document 33

3.11.4 Commuting Patterns 33

3.11.5 Effects of the Action Alternatives 33

3.11.6 Effects of the No Action Alternative 34

3.12 Community Services 34

3.12.1 Effects of the Action Alternatives 34

3.12.2 Effects of the No Action Alternative 34

3.13 Solid Waste and Hazardous Materials 35

3.13.1 Effects of the Action Alternatives 35

3.13.2 Effects of the No Action Alternative 37

3.14 Transportation and Parking 37

3.14.1 Effects of the Action Alternative 37

3.14.2 Effects of the No Action Alternative 38

3.15 Utilities 38

3.15.1 Effects of the Action Alternatives 38

3.15.2 Effects of the No Action Alternative 40

3.16 Environmental Justice 40

3.16.1 Effects of the Action Alternatives 40

3.16.2 Effects of the No Action Alternative 40

3.17 Cumulative Impacts 40

3.17.1 Effects of the Action Alternatives 41

3.17.2 Effects of the No Action Alternative 41

3.18 Potential for Generating Substantial Public Controversy 41

SECTION 4: PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT 42

4.1 Agency Coordination 42

4.2 Native American Consultation 43

4.3 Public Review 44

SECTION 5: MANAGEMENT AND MINIMIZATION MEASURES 46

SECTION 6: LIST OF ENVIRONMENTAL PERMITS REQUIRED 49

6.1 Regulatory Framework 49

6.2 Environmental Permits Required 49

SECTION 7: AGENCIES AND INDIVIDUALS CONSULTED 51

SECTION 8: LIST OF PREPARERS 54

SECTION 9: REFERENCES 56

SECTION 10: LIST OF ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS 58

58

SECTION 11: GLOSSARY 60

LIST OF TABLES

TABLE **PAGE**

Table 1. Federally Listed Species with the Potential to Occur at the Site and State-Listed Species with the Potential to Occur in Pasco County, Florida 19

Table 2. Common Sounds and Their Levels 22

Table 3. Construction Equipment Peak Noise Levels 23

Table 4. Wetland Descriptions 27

Table 5. Demographic Data 32

Table 6. Regional Income 32

Table 7: EPA Comments and VA Response 44

Table 8: Best Management Practices and Minimization Measures Incorporated in Proposed Action 46

LIST OF FIGURES

FIGURE **PAGE**

Figure 1. Regional Location Map 2

Figure 2. Aerial Photograph 3

Figure 3. Facility Construction and Parking Areas 4

Figure 4. Soil Map 15

Figure 5. Wetland Delineation Overview Map 28

Figure 6. Flood Zone Map 29

Figure 7. Census Designated Place Boundaries 31

Figure 8. Utility Map 39

SECTION 1: INTRODUCTION

1.1 Introduction

This Environmental Assessment (EA) has been 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), *Environmental Effects of the Department of Veterans Affairs Actions* (VA*)* (38 CFR Part 26), and relevant guidance from VA's *NEPA Interim Guidance for Projects* (2010).

This EA has been prepared to identify, analyze, and document the potential physical, environmental, cultural, and socioeconomic impacts associated with VA's proposed acquisition of a former residential treatment center (RTC) to operate as an RTC by the James A. Haley Veterans Hospital (JAHVH). It includes construction of an addition to the facility (approximately 4,100 square feet), renovation and expansion of the parking area, and resurfacing Turner Loop (0.76 mile).

In accordance with the cited regulations, this EA allows for public input into the federal decision-making process; provides federal decision-makers with an understanding of potential environmental effects of their decisions, before making these decisions; identifies measures the federal decision-maker could implement to reduce potential environmental effects; and documents the NEPA process.

1.2 Background

VA is proposing to acquire a former RTC, located at 14191 Turner Loop in Spring Hill, Florida to be operated as an RTC by the JAHVH. The acquisition includes the 40-acre parcel of land, owned by Operation PAR, Inc., where the facility is located. The proposed RTC is shown in Figures 1 and 2. The proposed facility and parking construction are shown in Figure 3.

JAHVH is the only VA Medical Center in the Tampa Florida Veterans Health System, and includes 11 outpatient clinics in Tampa, Lakeland, Brooksville, Lecanto, New Port Richey, Riverview, and Zephyrhills, Florida. The JAHVH main campus provides primary care and specialty health services, including cardiology, foot care (podiatry), mental health care, treatment for spinal cord injuries, prosthetics, and more.

On February 1, 2023, the Director, JAHVH, requested the VA's Office of Construction and Facilities Management, Office of Real Property, to provide support to acquire the Operation PAR, Inc., property. The PAR property was built with the same intended function as an RTC and although a Certificate of Occupancy was issued, the facility was never opened or operated as a RTC and has remained vacant. The PAR property includes 34 beds and would immediately increase JAHVH's ability to provide a much higher quality of care, including evidence-based psychotherapies, evidence-based residential programming (e.g., classes in nutrition and mindfulness exercises), medication-assisted treatments, and inpatient detoxification services.

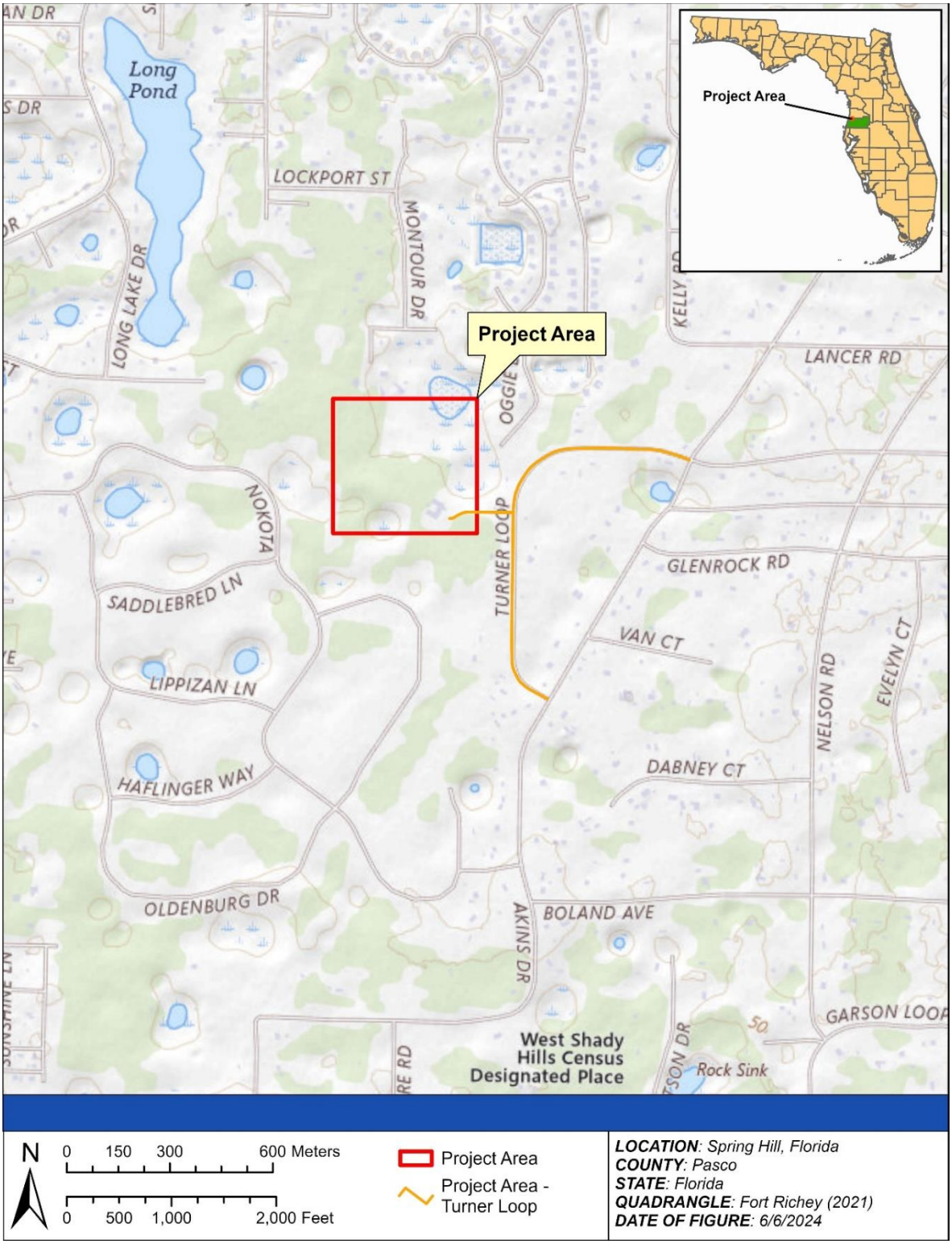


Figure 1. Regional Location Map

Figure 2. Aerial Photograph

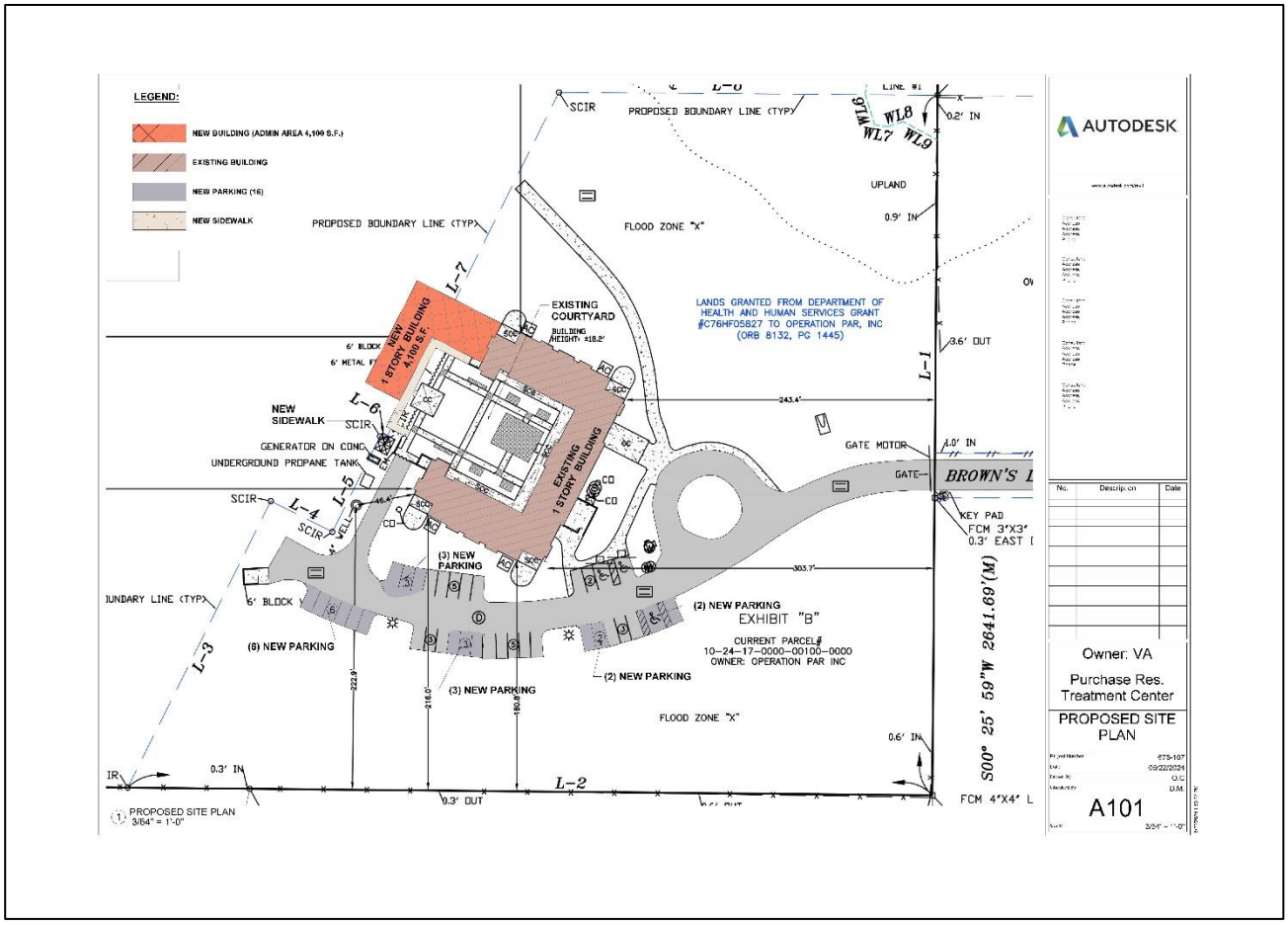


Figure 3. Facility Construction and Parking Areas

1.3 Purpose and Need

The purpose of the Proposed Action is to increase JAHVH's services and provide a much higher quality of care through a VA-operated RTC in the Tampa Florida area. The proposed RTC would provide evidence-based psychotherapies, evidence-based residential programming (e.g., classes in nutrition and mindfulness exercises), medication assisted treatments, and inpatient detoxification services.

The Proposed Action is needed to address VA residential mental health space gaps and the shortage of Veteran residential care in the Tampa, Florida area. The Proposed Action will reduce the need to use community recovery centers and reduce costs that can be utilized for other Veteran treatment programs.

The property includes an 11,047 square-foot building constructed in 2010 as a RTC with 34 beds. The building was constructed under a Health Resources and Service Administration grant that required it to be built to U.S. Department of Health and Human Service construction standards which will help minimize any renovation requirements to bring to VA standards. A VA team did an

extensive review of the property (exterior and interior) conditions and developed specific construction criteria for potential renovations in the future.

1.4 Decision-Making

This EA has been prepared to identify, analyze, and document the potential physical, environmental, cultural, and socioeconomic impacts associated with VA's proposed acquisition and operation of the residential treatment facility in the Tampa, Florida area.

VA, as a federal agency, is required to incorporate environmental considerations into their decision-making process for the actions they propose to undertake. This is done in accordance with the regulations identified in Section 1.1. Ultimately, VA will decide, in part based on the analysis presented in this EA and after having taken potential environmental, cultural, and socioeconomic effects into account, whether VA should implement the Action Alternative identified for the Proposed Action, and, as appropriate, carry out mitigation measures to reduce effects to the environment.

SECTION 2: DESCRIPTION OF THE PROPOSED ACTION AND ALTERNATIVES

2.1 Introduction

This Section provides information regarding the Proposed Action and its alternatives, including those that VA initially considered but eliminated and the reasons for eliminating them. The screening criteria and process developed and applied by VA to identify and assess the number of reasonable alternatives is described, providing the reader an understanding of VA's rationale for analyzing the Action Alternative in this EA.

2.2 Proposed Action Overview

The VA intends to acquire 40 acres of land in Spring Hill, Florida owned by Operation PAR, Inc. to provide residential health care that is currently provided on a limited basis in the Veterans Integrated Services Networks at JAHVH or by the private sector. The VA determined that acquisition of the 40-acre parcel of land that includes a facility and is intended to function as a RTC would provide VA increased capability and better serve this Veteran community.

This project would be executed as a turn-key operation as this project currently complies with the Americans with Disabilities Act and meets all requirements set forth in Executive Order (EO) 13834: *Efficient Federal Operations*. The project will include construction, parking renovations, and road resurfacing to upgrade and repair Turner Loop (0.76 mile) Any other future renovations would be designed and built to VA design criteria and in accordance with local building and zoning codes. VA anticipates it would open the proposed RTC in 2024.

The RTC would operate 24 hours a day, seven days a week. Staff, patients, volunteers, and other guests would primarily be drawn from the Tampa area. The RTC would be available to Veterans and service members from all branches of the U.S. Armed Forces who meet the criteria for treatment at a VA facility.

2.3 Alternatives Analysis

The CEQ and VA regulations for implementing NEPA require reasonable alternatives to be explored and objectively evaluated. Alternatives that are eliminated from detailed study must be identified along with a brief discussion of the reasons for eliminating them. For purposes of analysis, an alternative was considered "reasonable" only if it would enable VA to accomplish the primary mission of providing suitable residential health care facilities that meet the purpose of and need for the Proposed Action. "Unreasonable" alternatives would not enable VA to meet the purpose of and need for the Proposed Action.

2.3.1 Alternatives Development

VA undertook a sequential planning and screening process, seeking viable alternatives for the Proposed Action. The process and its results are summarized below:

- VA reviewed the capabilities of the residential services at JAHVH and its outpatient clinics and then began to search for other potential properties to meet the need. VA considered the acquisition of existing facilities in the Tampa area. VA located one existing site that fit its need and provided financial market opportunities.

- VA examined the Operation PAR, Inc.'s property for its potential to support the Proposed Action. The existing building was constructed under a Health Resources and Service Administration grant that required it to be built to U.S. Department of Health and Human Service construction standards which will help minimize the renovation requirements to bring to VA standards. A VA team of engineers, facilities management professionals (electrical, plumbing, air conditioning, carpentry) Chief of Staff and Mental Health staff did an extensive review of the property (exterior and exterior) conditions and developed specific construction criteria that may be required in the future.

- No other locations were identified that would meet the need.

2.3.2 Evaluated Alternatives

This EA examines the Action Alternative for implementing the Proposed Action and the No Action Alternative. The location of the Action Alternative is shown on Figures 1, 2 and 3.

Proposed Action (Preferred Alternative)

The Proposed Action, which is also the preferred alternative, involves the acquisition, operation, construction, parking renovations, and road upgrades (Turner Loop). of a former RTC which is currently vacant and not in use. The site is at 14191 Turner Loop in a wooded and residential area with multiple small water bodies in Spring Hill, Florida. The site is west of Turner Loop, and north of Oldenburg Drive on one 40-acre parcel. The 40-acre parcel includes approximately 6 acres of developed property and features an 11,047 square foot building, trees, driveway, parking lot, pole-mounted transformers, and a pond. The site is adjacent to the residential properties in the north, east, and wooded areas to the south and west.

No Action Alternative

Under the No Action Alternative, the Proposed Action would not be implemented. VA would continue to provide limited care at JAHVH and through community recovery centers in the area. The Action Alternative would remain vacant and may be developed by others for other commercial or residential use, in accordance with local zoning. This alternative would continue to limit VA's ability to provide a higher quality of care for the Veterans in the Tampa Florida area, for specific in-patient services and thus would not meet the purpose of or need for the Proposed Action.

However, the No Action Alternative was evaluated in this EA as required under the CEQ regulations and provides a comparative benchmark analysis against which to analyze the effects of the Proposed Action.

2.3.3 Alternatives Eliminated from Further Consideration

No other alternatives were identified.

SECTION 3: AFFECTED ENVIRONMENT AND ENVIRONMENTAL CONSEQUENCES

3.1 Introduction

This Section describes the baseline (existing) environmental, cultural, and socioeconomic conditions at the Spring Hill RTC. The existing conditions as it relates to the No-Action Alternative will serve as a baseline from which to identify and evaluate potential changes attributable to the Proposed Action (i.e., affected environment). Baseline environmental conditions were identified during site visits performed in November/December 2023 by Environmental Research Group, LLC (ERG), and from review of aerial photos, topographical maps, existing documents, data from planning and resources agencies' websites, and from communications with VA personnel.

In this EA, impacts are identified as either significant, less than significant (defined as impacts that would not be of the context or intensity to be considered significant under the CEQ regulations), or no/negligible impact. As used in this EA, the terms "effects" and "impacts" are synonymous. Where appropriate and clearly discernible, each impact is identified as either adverse or beneficial. Where possible, impacts are identified as short-term or long term in relation to the length of time the impact would persist.

The CEQ regulations specify that in determining the significance of effects, consideration must be given to both "context" and "intensity" (40 CFR 1508.27):

Context refers to the significance of an effect to society as a whole (human and national), to an affected region, to affected interests, or to just the locality. Significance varies with the setting of the Proposed Action.

Intensity refers to the magnitude or severity of the effect and whether it is beneficial or adverse.

Resource Areas considered in this EA are aesthetics; air quality; cultural resources; geology and soils, hydrology and water quality; wildlife and habitat; noise; land use; floodplains, wetlands, and coastal zone management; socioeconomics; community services; solid waste and hazardous materials; traffic; transportation; utilities; and environmental justice. This section also addresses cumulative impacts and the potential for generating substantial controversy.

3.2 Aesthetics

The proposed RTC site of 40 acres is primarily wooded with about six acres of developed property and located within a wooded and residential area with multiple small water bodies. The site features an 11,047 square foot building, trees, driveway, parking lot, pole-mounted transformers, and a pond. The roads leading to the site are partially paved. The site is bordered to the north by residential properties, wooded areas, and a pond; to the east is by Turner Loop, followed by

residential properties and wooded areas; to the south by Oldenburg Drive and wooded areas; and to the west by wooded areas and Nokota Avenue.

The site was historically wooded with no buildings or landscaping until 2010 when the PAR facility was constructed.

Pasco County controls site development aesthetics through the Land Development Code. Aesthetics requirements in the Land Development Code are minimal, but general requirements are to preserve and enhance aesthetic quality of the natural environment such as trees, topography, and land structures.

3.2.1 Effects of the Action Alternative

Construction activities to expand the facility's footprint by approximately 4,100 square feet and renovate the parking area to add 16 additional spaces would reduce the existing green space and views from the surrounding area would be altered. However, there are no sensitive viewshed receptors located on the site and any visual effects would be minimized through attractive design. Construction activities for the facility, parking areas and resurfacing of Turner Loop (e.g., heavy equipment) would have short-term and minor impacts on aesthetics. These activities would not be aesthetically consistent with the surrounding area, but they would end once construction is complete.

The site would have increased traffic into the facility and pedestrian traffic from the parking areas, to and from the facility, and in the open areas around the facility. The Proposed Action would result in less than significant impacts to aesthetics.

3.2.2 Effects of the No Action Alternative

Under the No Action Alternative, no construction by VA would occur and no aesthetics impacts by VA would result. The Action Alternative site would likely be developed for commercial use or residential use by others, consistent with local zoning. Aesthetics impacts like those associated with the Proposed Action could occur, depending on the use of the sites.

3.3 Air Quality

3.3.1 Ambient Air Quality

The ambient air quality in an area can be characterized in terms of whether or not it complies with the primary and secondary National Ambient Air Quality Standards (NAAQS). The Clean Air Act (CAA) requires the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (USEPA) to set NAAQS for pollutants considered harmful to public health and the environment. NAAQS are provided for the following principal pollutants, called "criteria pollutants" (as listed under Section 108 of the CAA: carbon monoxide, lead, nitrogen oxides, ozone, particulate matter (PM 10 or PM 2.5), and sulfur dioxide.

Areas are designated by the USEPA as "attainment," "non-attainment," "maintenance," or "unclassified" with respect to the NAAQS. Regions in compliance with the standards are designated as attainment areas. In areas where the applicable NAAQS are not being met, a non-

attainment status is designated. Areas that have been classified as non-attainment but are now in compliance can be re-designated as maintenance status if the state completes an air quality planning process for the area. Areas for which no monitoring data is available are designated as unclassified and are by default considered to be in attainment of the NAAQS. According to the USEPA Green Book (March 2024), Pasco County is in full attainment of the NAAQS.

Class I federal lands include areas such as national parks, national wilderness areas, and national monuments. Under the prevention of significant deterioration (PSD) program, all international parks, national wilderness areas and national memorial parks that exceed 5,000 acres, and of national parks that exceed 6,000 acres are designated as mandatory federal Class I areas in order to preserve, protect and enhance air quality. The project is approximately 13.4 miles from the Chassahowitzka Wilderness, a Mandatory Class 1 Federal Area. The CAA gives special air quality and visibility protection to national parks larger than 6,000 acres and national wilderness areas larger than 5,000 acres that were in existence when it was amended in 1977. These are "Class I" areas. Since the project will not trigger PSD review, these Class I considerations do not apply.

3.3.2 State and Local Regulations

USEPA Region 4 and the Florida Department of Environmental Protection (FDEP) Division of Air Resource Management are responsible for air quality planning and permitting for the Spring Hill area. Florida has an approved State Implementation Plan that implements Florida's air quality regulations.

In accordance with Florida Administrative Code 62-210.300, prior to construction, modification, or operation of any unit that emits or can reasonably expected to emit air pollutants, the facility must have appropriate authorization from the Department, including a current appropriate construction and/or operating permit. Units that may require a permit include, but are not limited to, emergency generators, boilers, and gasoline tanks and dispensers. Air permit applications can be submitted on FDEP's Electronic Permit Submittal and Processing System. Categorical and Conditional Exemptions that do not require permitting can be found in Administrative Code 62-210.300(3)(a). There are no known existing air permits.

3.3.3 Sensitive Receptors

Sensitive air quality receptors in the immediate vicinity of the Action Alternative includes the residential neighborhoods on several sides of the site and the closest being within 0.09 miles of the site. An elementary school, The Hope Ranch Learning Academy Hudson Campus, is approximately 1 mile from the site. No other sensitive air quality receptors were identified within 1,000 feet of the action Alternative.

3.3.4 Effects of the Action Alternative

Air emissions generated from the Proposed Action would have less-than-significant direct and indirect, short-term and long-term adverse impacts to the existing air quality environment around the Action Alternative site. Impacts would include short-term and long-term increased air emission levels from operation and paving construction of the proposed RTC and onsite activities.

Operational (long-term) air quality impacts from the RTC would include emissions from equipment, such as tankless water heaters and generators, and vehicle emissions from patients and staff driving to and from the RTC. Two propane-powered emergency generators and associated propane tanks (design based on a 110 kW Kohler #125RZG and a 300 kW generator) will be installed. These engines may be subject to 40 CFR's Subpart JJJJ requirements.

The proposed RTC would have daily site visits by approximately 100 staff, patients, volunteers, and other guests. As such, there would be a localized, less-than-significant increase in vehicle air emissions at the Proposed Action Alternative site. However, regional vehicle emissions would be similar to current emissions as most patients and staff that would use the proposed RTC currently travel to other Tampa area VA health care facilities.

Construction activities would be performed in accordance with federal and state air quality requirements. Emissions associated with road construction include volatile organic compounds, particulate matter (dust), and carbon dioxide. Construction-related emissions are generally short-term, but may still have adverse impacts on air quality, primarily due to the production of dust. Dust can result from a variety of activities, including excavation grading and vehicle travel on paved and unpaved surfaces. Dust from construction can lead to adverse health effects and nuisance concerns, such as reduced visibility on nearby roadways. The amount of dust is dependent on the intensity of the activity, soil type and conditions, wind speed, and dust suppression activities use. Implementing dust control measures/best management practices (BMPs) significantly reduces dust emissions from construction. Construction-related emissions also include the exhaust from the operation of construction equipment, including diesel particulate matter, and volatile organic compounds associated with asphalt paving. The use of newer construction equipment with emissions controls and minimizing the time that the equipment is idling (BMPs) reduces construction equipment exhaust emissions. Implementation of BMPs, discussed in Section 5, would minimize these anticipated less-than-significant adverse, short-term construction-related, air quality impacts.

A Title V operating permit is not anticipated to be required for the proposed RTC boiler equipment, generators, and other equipment as this equipment is not anticipated to emit more than 100 tons per year of any individual or combination of hazardous air pollutants. VA would secure any required air emissions permits from FDEP Air Quality Branch.

3.3.5 Effects of the No Action Alternative

Under the No Action Alternative, no air quality impacts associated with VA's Proposed Action would result. Should the Action Alternative site ultimately be developed by others air quality impacts could occur, depending on future use.

3.4 Cultural Resources

The Proposed Action is in Pasco County approximately 5.5 miles southwest of Spring Hill, Florida and one mile south of the County Line Road dividing Hernando County from Pasco County. The area of potential effect (APE) is defined as the 40-acre acquisition area and the entirety of 0.76-mile Turner loop.

The current land use of the project area is wooded with the surrounding areas being suburban residential. There are scattered openings in the wooded parcel and a two-track wends through the property. Tree species include oak and pine with a moderate amount of deadfall. Turner Loop contains unpaved sections and will require entering into an agreement with Pasco County to resurface as a part of VA's undertaking.

In January 2024 ERG conducted a study of the proposed action site and prepared an Initial Cultural Resources Impact Prediction (ICRIP) and in June 2024 ERG prepared a Supplemental Cultural Resources Impact Prediction (SCRIP) (Appendix C) to refine the APE to include the entire 0.76-mile-long Turner Loop, construction for an expansion of the facility and the parking area. Readily available data pertinent to the history, prehistory, ethnography, and environment of the study area were reviewed and provided a general understanding of the site and how it may have changed through time, identified previously recorded archaeological and historic properties on or near the site, and generated the information and perspectives needed to predict the presence or absence of cultural resources and the character of impacts, if any.

The past use of the site as determined by a review of Google Earth aerial photography dating back to 1985 and data retrieved from the State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO) indicate that no historic buildings occur within the APE. Based on the information from the aerial photographs, prior to the construction of the Operation PAR, Inc. facility in 2010, the site was not developed and was kept in its natural condition of wooded and grass areas.

Review of the Florida Master Site file confirms that there are no previously recorded historical resources, archeological sites nor Traditional Cultural Properties (TCPs) listed in local, state, or national registers or zoning overlays within the APE.

SHPO has previously determined (letter dated July 6, 2005) that no historic properties are present and that none will be affected by the project. No further cultural resources investigations are warranted in the Section 106 process. As no historic buildings are on the property, VA has initiated Section 106 consultation with SHPO and federally recognized tribes, with the finding that the proposed undertaking would result in no historic properties affected.

ERG's review of the Florida Master Site File data confirms that there are no previously recorded historical resources, archeological sites nor TCPs listed in local, state, or national registers or zoning overlays within the APE.

On January 25, 2024, VA signed the scoping notice and sent scoping letters to the Florida Department of State, Division of Historical Resources [the State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO)], the Miccosukee Tribe of Indians of Florida, the Muscogee (Creek) Nation, Oklahoma, and the Pasco County Planning and Development office regarding the Proposed Action and requested input on the proposed action.

On February 5, 2024, the Pasco County Planning and Development Department, Long Range Planning Division, sent a letter of response to the VA and identified four listed historic sites located

within a mile from the site and requested notification of developments in the historic review process.

3.4.1 Effects of the Proposed Action Alternative

Under the Proposed Action Alternative, the site would include ground disturbance to expand of the facility footprint by approximately 4,100 square feet and expand of the parking areas to increase from 20 to 36 spaces. Based on the findings of the ICRIP and SCRIP, no historic properties are listed on the National Register of Historic Places (NRHP) or eligible for listing on the NRHP; no archeological sites nor TCPs are listed in local, state, or national registers or zoning overlays within the APE. The project will have no direct physical or visual effects to known historic, archeological, or TCPs.

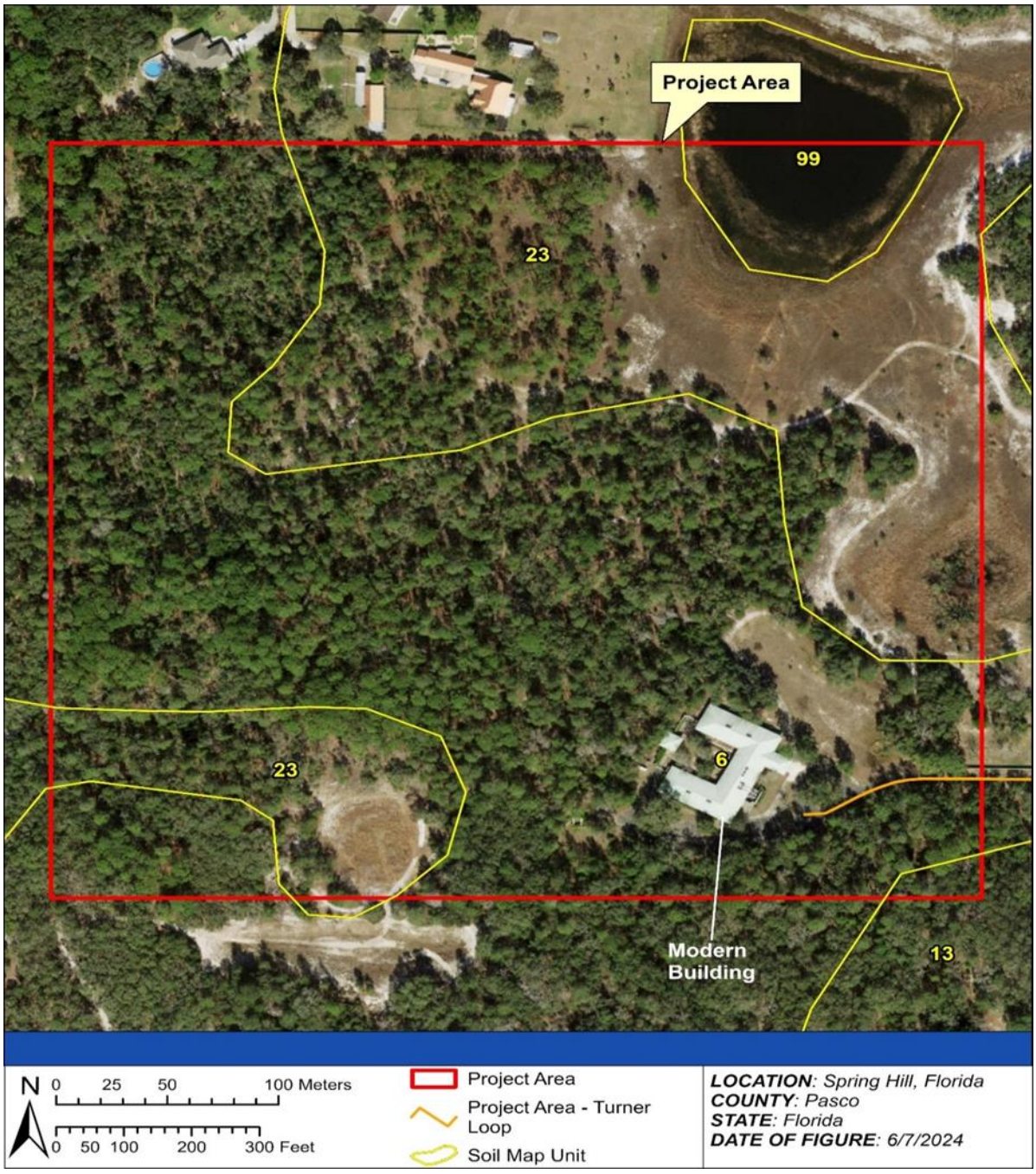
3.4.2 Effects of the No Action Alternative

Under the No Action Alternative, no cultural resources impacts by VA would occur. Based on the results of the Cultural Resource Assessment Surveys, should the Action Alternative site be developed by others, no historic properties would be anticipated.

3.5 Geology and Soils

According to a US Department of Agriculture (USDA)-Natural Resources Conservation Service web soil survey, there are three mapped soil types within the parcel. They are Tavares sand, 0-5 percent slopes (58.7% of site), Candler fine sand, 0 to 5 percent slopes (0.3% of site), and Basinger fine sand, depressional, 0 to 1% slopes (37.6% of site) (Figure 4 Soils). Travers sand comprises the majority of the site and is described as a moderately well drained sand that is typically found on knolls, ridges, and flats of marine terraces. Basinger fine sand is the second most prevalent soil type found within the parcel. It is described as frequently ponded, 0 to 1 percent slopes is a near level, very poorly drained soil found in shallow depressions and sloughs and along edges of freshwater marshes and swamps. It is characterized as a hydric soil and the location of this soil type correlates closely with wetland areas mapped on the property. Candler fine sand, 0 to 5 percent slope is found in a small area at the southeastern corner of the property. It is described as well drained with very low runoff potential and is most commonly found on marine terraces and ridges.

According to the FDEP Florida Geological Survey, Pasco County, including the action alternative site, is located in the Ocala Karst District within the Land O'Lakes Karst Plain Province. The geology is mainly Eocene Ocala Limestone and Oligocene Suwannee Limestone. Karstification is the chemical process in which water dissolves limestone and similar carbonate rocks resulting in fissures, sinkholes, underground streams, and caverns. As a result, the area contains dry sinkholes, depressional wetlands, and coastal springs. This geology provides a potential linkage between polluting activities on the surface reaching the water table.



Notes/Key to Soil Map Units: 6: Tavares sand, 0 to 5 percent slopes**;** 13: Candler fine sand, 0 to 5 percent slopes**;** 23: Basinger fine sand, depressional, 0 to 1 percent slope**;** 99: Water

Figure 4. Soil Map

Florida is seismically stable because it is not located near any tectonic plate boundaries. Earthquakes are very rare.

3.5.1 Prime and Unique Agricultural Land Soils

Prime and unique farmlands are regulated in accordance with the Farmland Protection Policy Act (7 USC 4201, et seq.) to ensure preservation of agricultural lands that are of statewide or local importance. Soils designated as prime agricultural land can produce high yields of various crops when managed using modern farming methods. Prime agricultural land is land that has the best combination of physical and chemical characteristics for producing food, feed, fiber, forage, oilseed, and other agricultural crops with minimum inputs of fuel, fertilizer, pesticides, and labor, and without intolerable soil erosion.

According to the USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service Web Soil Survey, none of the soils at the Action Alternative site are considered prime farmland.

3.5.2 Effects of the Proposed Action Alternative

During construction of building addition, expansion of the parking area, and road construction, less than significant, direct and indirect, short-term temporary soil erosion and sedimentation impacts would be possible due to grading, movement of heavy equipment, and paving. However, such potential adverse erosion and sedimentation effects would be prevented through appropriate BMPs and adherence to the terms of an approved FDEP National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System (NPDES) permit.

During operation of the RTC, no major changes to topography would occur and no impacts to geology or soils are anticipated. The proposed action is not located near any tectonic plate boundaries; therefore, no impacts associated with seismic hazards are identified. In addition, the Proposed Action would not impact prime agricultural land.

3.5.3 Effects of the No Action Alternative

Under the No Action Alternative, the site would likely be operated and developed by others for other commercial use and/or residential use. Should the No Action Alternative be developed by others impacts in addition to those identified above could occur, depending on future use and construction requirements.

3.6 Hydrology and Water Quality

3.6.1 Surface Waters

The proposed action is located within the Indian Creek-Hammock Creek Frontal watershed (hydrologic unit (HUC 031002070305) (USEPA Waters GeoViewer). The watershed covers approximately 44 square miles. This is a coastal watershed, that drains to the Gulf of Mexico through an expansive tidal marshland to Hammock Creek at Aripeka.

Surface waters in this area are limited to small ponds and wetlands. Within the property boundary of the Proposed Action, there are several small wetlands and the parcel overlaps with a pond at the northeastern corner. Wetlands are further discussed in Section 3.10.

3.6.2 Groundwater

Due to the sandy nature of the soil and the karst underlying geology, most water infiltrates the soil and flows as groundwater.

Floridan aquifer system underlies a vast area—about 100,000 square miles that includes all of Florida and parts of Alabama, Georgia, Mississippi, and South Carolina. The Floridan aquifer is the primary source of drinking water throughout its range. The upper Floridan aquifer is highly permeable. These aquifers range in thickness to more than 300 feet along the southeastern Georgia coast and eastern Florida coast. According to the St. Johns River Water Management District, Florida's aquifers information webpage and USGS National Water Quality Assessment Program Circular 1355 (USGS 2014), northeast Florida is located in an area with an unconfined surficial aquifer system overlying a confined Upper Floridan aquifer. The characteristics of an unconfined aquifer combined with karst geology provides a potential linkage between polluting activities on the surface to the water table below.

3.6.3 Effects of the Action Alternatives

Construction activities for road paving such as grading, movement of heavy equipment and paving, could temporarily increase sedimentation and erosion. These activities would expose soil surfaces and could increase the potential for sedimentation and surface runoff. Implementation of measures from the approved erosion and sedimentation plan, the required Florida issued NPDES permit, and the stormwater pollution prevention plan would prevent erosion and sedimentation impacts. The stormwater pollution prevention plan would contain BMPs designed to present stormwater pollution such as silt fences, ditch checks, slope protection, sediment barriers, and revegetation.

The operation of the proposed RTC is not anticipated to impact surface waters or groundwater.

3.6.4 Effects of the No Action Alternative

Under the No Action Alternative, no construction by VA's selected developer would occur. No impacts to water resources at the Action Alternative sites would occur as a result of VA's actions. However, should the sites be developed for commercial or residential use by others, impacts similar to those as identified for the Action Alternatives could occur.

3.7 Wildlife and Habitat

3.7.1 Vegetation

This 40-acre parcel includes approximately 6 acres that have been developed and 34 acres that are undeveloped with some natural slopes and a freshwater pond in the northeast corner, approximately half of which falls within the property boundary. Topography varies from low

wetlands around the pond to wooded uplands on the remainder of the site, with a small grassy depression at the western edge of the south property boundary.

Over half of the site is dominated by a few types of upland pine-oak scrubby flatwoods and sandhill communities. Sand live oak (*Quercus geminata*), sand pine (*Pinus clausa*), longleaf pine (*Pinus palustris*), and American turkey oak (Quercus laevis) are present throughout and vary in dominance. Saw palmetto (*Serenoa repens*) is present throughout the upland communities, but not dominant. Most of the wooded communities had open understory, composed primarily of saplings. The southeast corner along the southern property boundary is xeric hammock (approx. 3 acres), primarily made up of sand pine and sand live oak with some longleaf pine. Moving north through the western half of the site, longleaf pine increases in dominance, with sand live oak present and sometimes abundant but often shorter than in the xeric oak habitat. Turkey oak saplings are common throughout this area, with some larger trees. Southern magnolia (*Magnolia grandiflora*) saplings are present but not abundant, with no mature trees observed. Spanish moss (*Tillandsia usneoides*) is present throughout uplands.

Both native and non-native, invasive plant species were observed within the parcel. Herbaceous species observed in open areas included climbing hempweed (*Mikania scandens*), little bluestem (*Schizachyrium scoparium*), dogfennel (*Eupatorium capillifolium*), reed canary grass (*Phalaris arundinacea*), southern wax myrtle (Morella cerifera), torpedo grass (Panicum repens), black sedge (*Schoenus nigricans*), and prickly pear cactus (*Opuntia humifusa*). Dominant shrubs included American beautyberry (*Callicarpa americana*).

3.7.2 Wildlife

Wildlife observed at the site included many species commonly found in upland wooded areas, and around freshwater ponds. Southern fox squirrels (*Sciurus niger niger*) were present throughout the site. Wild turkey and several species of woodpecker were observed frequently in wooded areas. In total, 37 bird species were recorded, all of which are native and protected under the MBTA.

An area of the site was designated as a gopher tortoise sanctuary as communicated by the property owner but is not an authorized recipient site by Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission and there are no active gopher tortoise permits for the site.

3.7.3 Threatened and Endangered Species

A biological survey was conducted in November 2023 to determine if species listed under the Endangered Species Act (16 United States Code 1531 et seq.) and Florida State Code, Rules, and Regulations (Chapter 68A-27 Rules Relating to Endangered or Threatened Species) could occur at the site.

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) Information for Planning and Consultation (IPaC) tool was used to determine if any federally listed species or critical habitat might be present on the site. The Florida Natural Areas Inventory for Pasco County was used to generate a list of state-listed species with potential to occur. Thirty-five state-listed species (of which seven are also federally listed) could occur in Pasco County. (Florida Natural Areas Inventory 2023). Marine species were eliminated from consideration due to the lack of marine habitat on the site. No critical habitats are present on the property. The IPaC report for the site is provided in Appendix D.

Based on the biological survey, the property has potential habitat for four of the seven federally listed species and 17 of the 35 state-listed species. These habitats—woodland, forested wetland, and wetlands—mostly occur in the southern portion of the subject property. Three state-listed species were observed during biological surveys. For two of these, there are not visible differences between state-listed resident subspecies and migratory subspecies that are not listed, but guidance from the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission dictates that any individuals observed when both populations could be present must be assumed to belong to populations of state-listed subspecies.

A summary of the federally protected species listed in the IPaC reports, their habitat requirements, and the potential presence of their required habitat at the Action Alternative site is provided in Table 1.

A determination of potential effects of the proposed action (use of the existing structure as a residential treatment facility) on each of the protected species identified is provided based on the following criteria:

- No effect: There will be no effects, positive or negative, to listed or proposed resources as a result of the action. Generally, this means no listed resources will be exposed to action and its environmental consequences.

- May affect, but not likely to adversely affect: All effects are beneficial, insignificant, or discountable. Beneficial effects have contemporaneous positive effects without any adverse effects on the species or habitat. Insignificant effects relate to the size of the effect and include those effects that are undetectable, not measurable, or cannot be evaluated. Discountable effects are those extremely unlikely to occur.

May affect and is likely to adversely affect: Listed resources are likely to be exposed to the action or its environmental consequences and will respond in a negative manner to the exposure. The Endangered Species Act requires the federal action agency request initiation of formal consultation with the USFWS when this determination is made.

Table 1. Federally Listed Species with the Potential to Occur at the Site and State-Listed Species with the Potential to Occur in Pasco County, Florida

Common Name	Scientific Name	Federal Status	State Status	Habitat Presence	Observed	Determination of Effect
Birds						
Scott's seaside sparrow	*Ammospiza maritima peninsulae*	Not listed	Threatened	No	No	No effect
Florida burrowing owl	*Athene cunicularia floridana*	Not listed	Threatened	Yes	No	No effect
Marian's marsh wren	*Cistothorus palustris marianae*	Not listed	Threatened	No	No	No effect

Common Name	Scientific Name	Federal Status	State Status	Habitat Presence	Observed	Determination of Effect
Little blue heron	*Egretta caerulea*	Not listed	Threatened	Yes	Yes	No effect
Tricolored heron	*Egretta tricolor*	Not listed	Threatened	Yes	No	No effect
Southeastern American kestrel	*Falco sparverius paulus*	Not listed	Threatened	Yes	Yes	No effect
Whooping crane	*Grus americana*	Experimental population, non-essential	Experimental population, non-essential	No	No	No effect
American oystercatcher	*Haematopus palliatus*	Not listed	Threatened	No	No	No effect
Eastern black rail	*Laterallus jamaicensis jamaicensis*	Threatened	Not listed	No	No	No effect
Wood stork	*Mycteria americana*	Threatened	Threatened	Yes	No	No effect
Everglade snail kite	*Rostrhamus sociabilis plumbeus*	Endangered	Endangered	Yes	No	No effect
Least tern	*Sternula antillarum*	Not listed	Threatened	No	No	No effect
Reptiles						
Loggerhead sea turtle	*Caretta caretta*	Threatened	Threatened	No	N/A	No effect
Gopher tortoise	*Gopherus polyphemus*	Not listed	Threatened	Yes	No	No effect
Short-tailed snake	*Lampropeltis extenuata*	Proposed Threatened	Threatened	Yes	No	No effect
Florida pine snake	*Pituophis melanoleucus mugitus*	Not listed	Threatened	Yes	No	No effect
Insects						
Monarch butterfly	*Danaus plexippus*	Candidate	Not listed	Yes	No	No effect
Plants and Lichen						
Auricled spleenwort	*Asplenium erosum*	Not listed	Endangered	No	No	No effect
Many-flowered grass-pink	*Calopogon multiflorus*	Not listed	Threatened	No	No	No effect
Chapman's sedge	*Carex chapmannii*	Not listed	Threatened	No	No	No effect
Sand butterfly pea	*Centrosema arenicola*	Not listed	Endangered	Yes	No	No effect

Common Name	Scientific Name	Federal Status	State Status	Habitat Presence	Observed	Determination of Effect
Hand fern	*Cheiroglossa palmata*	Not listed	Endangered	No	No	No effect
Piedmont jointgrass	*Coelorachis tuberculosa*	Not listed	Threatened	Yes	No	No effect
Tampa vervain	*Glandularia tampensis*	Not listed	Endangered	Yes	No	No effect
Pondspice	*Litsea aestivalis*	Not listed	Endangered	Yes	No	No effect
Pygmy pipes	*Monotropsis reynoldsiae*	Not listed	Endangered	Yes	No	No effect
Narrowleaf naiad	*Najas filifolia*	Under review	Threatened	Yes	No	No effect
Celestial lily	*Nemastylis floridana*	Not listed	Endangered	No	No	No effect
Britton's beargrass	*Nolina brittoniana*	Endangered	Endangered	No	No	No effect
Widespread polypody	*Pecluma dispersa*	Not listed	Endangered	No	No	No effect
Plume polypody	*Pecluma plumula*	Not listed	Endangered	No	No	No effect
Comb polypody	*Pecluma ptilota var. bourgeauana*	Not listed	Endangered	No	No	No effect

3.7.4 Effects of the Action Alternative

There is a total of 35 species listed by the USFWS and/or the State of Florida which were analyzed for the EA. Federal listed species are: Eastern black rail, Wood stork, Everglade snail kite, loggerhead sea turtle, Eastern indigo snake, Britton's beargrass Three state-listed species were observed during the site survey, Florida sandhill crane, little blue heron, and American kestrel (possibly the Southeastern). It is our conclusion that out of the 35 species, habitat is not present or conditions not maintained that would support 17 of the species. It is our conclusion that habitat does occur which could support the remaining 18 species, including four federal species. The operation of the RTC, construction of building addition, expansion of parking area, and road paving on the currently disturbed Turner Loop will have no effect on the species or habitat present. The use of the existing site structures will continue in a manner similar to their current and historical use.

VA has determined the proposed project would have no effect on species named in the Official Species List obtained from USFWS on April 29, 2024 (Appendix A) which fulfils the requirements of USFWS under Section 7(c) of the Endangered Species Act of 1973, as amended (16 USC 1531 et seq.)

3.7.5 Effects of the No Action Alternative

Under the No Action Alternative, no impacts to biological resources by VA would occur. Should the No Action Alternative be developed by others, impacts in addition to those identified above could occur, depending on future use and construction requirements.

3.8 Noise

3.8.1 Existing Noise

Noise can be defined as unwanted sound. The impact of noise is influenced by the characteristics of the noise, such as the sound level, frequency (pitch), and duration, as well as the characteristics of the receptor (for example, a person or animal). Noise is propagated in the air by vibration. It creates fluctuations in air pressure which propagates as sound waves through the air. The frequency of a sound wave determines its pitch (high or low), and amplitude corresponds to volume. Noise may be intermittent or continuous, steady, or impulsive. It may also be stationary (for example, industrial plant) or transient (from highways, railroads, aircraft), or just random. In this EA, A-weighting is used to characterize the noise since audible sound is the major concern. Common sounds encountered in both outdoor and indoor scenarios are summarized in Table 2.

Table 2. Common Sounds and Their Levels

Outdoor	Sound Level (dbA)	Indoor
Motorcycle	100	Subway train
Tractor	90	Garbage disposal
Noisy restaurant	85	Blender
Downtown (large city)	80	Ringing telephone
Freeway traffic	70	TV audio
Normal conversation	60	Sewing machine
Rainfall	50	Refrigerator
Quiet residential area	40	Library

Source: Harris, 1998

Notes: dBA = A-weighted decibel.

Primary sources of ambient noise (background sound), in the vicinity of the site include transportation and intermittent construction activities. The site is considered relatively quiet with limited noise, if any, from vehicle traffic along County Line Road, which is approximately one mile north of the site. U.S. Highway 19 (approximately three miles east of the site) and U.S. 589

(approximately three miles west of the site) are not considered notable noise-generating sources due to the proximity of the roads in relation to the site. Based on the Federal Transit Administration's Transit Noise and Vibration Impact Assessment Manual, when noise sources are dominated by local streets and community activities, existing noise may be based on population density per square mile (Volpe, 2018). In 2020 census tract 031805, which includes the site, was reported as 546 persons per square mile. Based on population per square mile in the vicinity of the site, existing outdoor ambient noise is estimated to be 45 L_{dn} (average day-night noise level).

According to the National Noise Control Act of 1972, the EPA set a 24-hour exposure level of 70 decibels (dBA) as the level that would prevent measurable hearing loss in individuals over a lifetime. Further, the EPA set a level of 55 dBA outdoors and 45 dBA indoors as the levels at which individuals would not experience annoyance or activity interference (USEPA, 1972). Therefore, the site is currently estimated to be 10 dBA below the outdoor acceptable level of noise and 25 dBA below the level that would cause hearing loss. As such, the noise environment is best characterized as a quiet residential area.

3.8.2 State and Local Regulations

Pasco County has noise ordinances that apply to construction-related noise and does not allow construction activities between the hours of 10:00 p.m. and 7:00 a.m., Monday through Saturday, and all-day Sunday that produce noise exceeding 55 dBA, measured at the nearest property line of an adjacent residential area. Road construction activities would include road paving equipment and construction workers that would directly affect the magnitude and intensity of the construction-related noise levels. Table 3 lists peak noise levels from typical construction equipment at various distances from the source.

Table 3. Construction Equipment Peak Noise Levels

Peak Noise Level (dBA, attenuated)								
Source	Distance from Source (feet)							
	0	50	100	200	400	1,000	1,700	2,500
Heavy truck	95	84-89	78-93	72-77	66-71	58-63	54-59	50-55
Dump truck	108	88	82	76	70	62	58	54
Concrete mixer	108	85	79	73	67	59	55	51
Jackhammer	108	88	82	76	70	62	58	54
Scraper	93	80-89	74-82	68-77	60-71	54-63	50-59	46-55
Bulldozer	107	87-102	81-96	75-90	69-84	61-76	57-72	53-68
Generator	96	76	70	64	58	50	46	42
Crane	104	75-88	69-82	63-76	55-70	49-62	45-48	41-54

Peak Noise Level (dBA, attenuated)								
Source	**Distance from Source (feet)**							
	0	**50**	**100**	**200**	**400**	**1,000**	**1,700**	**2,500**
Loader	104	73-86	67-80	61-74	55-68	47-60	43-56	39-52
Grader	108	88-91	82-85	76-79	70-73	62-65	58-61	54-57
Pile driver	105	95	89	83	77	69	65	61
Forklift	100	95	89	83	77	69	65	61

Combined Peak Noise Level (Bulldozer, Jackhammer, Scraper)					
Combined Peak Noise Level	**Distance from Source**				
	50 feet	**100 feet**	**200 feet**	**¼ mile**	**½ mile**
	103	97	91	74	68

Source: Tipler, 1976.

3.8.3 Sensitive Receptors

Sensitive noise receptors in the vicinity of the site include residential properties on the North and East and wooded to the South and west. An elementary school, The Hope Ranch Learning Academy Hudson Campus, is approximately one mile from the site.

3.8.4 Effects of the Action Alternative

The effects of noise on humans include annoyance, sleep disturbance, and health impacts. Noise may impact wildlife, since many animals rely on their sense of sound for survival, including communication, mating, navigation, and foraging (Malik, 2021). The Proposed Action would have short-term, temporary impacts to the existing noise environment due to road construction activities.

Construction activities are expected to generate noise at levels that will be variable depending on the type, number, and duration of the construction activity. Noise generating sources during construction activities would last through the duration of road paving and would occur during daytime hours. Typical construction projects are executed in stages. This means that each stage is expected to have its own combination of equipment and noise characteristics. Peak noise levels also vary at a given location based on line-of-sight, topography, vegetation, and atmospheric conditions. Peak noise levels would be higher than current noise levels. Combined construction noise, 50-feet from the site could be in the 80 to 102 dBA range. Nearly double the level of existing conditions. However, it is rare that multiple noise-generating equipment is used at the same time and construction activities would comply with local noise ordinances. The peak noise levels would be temporary and intermittent in nature. Construction workers would follow standard federal Occupational Safety and Health Administration requirements to prevent hearing damage.

Implementation of the Proposed Action at the site would result in short-term, less than significant impacts to the existing noise environment.

Operation of the RTC would have negligible, long-term impacts to the existing noise environment. The RTC would be a quiet medical and residential facility with operational noise from heating, ventilation and air conditioning systems typical of other comparably sized commercial buildings and grounds maintenance noise (such as lawn mowing or leaf blowers). Proposed operational activities at the new RTC would also include vehicle traffic to and from the site. The vehicle traffic would not produce excessive noise, is consistent with the existing noise environment of the Action Alternative site and would not produce a significant adverse noise impact on surrounding land uses. Indirect impacts include noise from vehicles of staff, patients, and visitors driving to and from the site.

3.8.5 Effects of the No Action Alternative

Under the No Action Alternative, the noise environment of the Action Alternative site would not be altered by activities of the VA; however, the development of the Action Alternative site by others could produce similar noise impacts as identified under the Proposed Action. Operational noise impacts would be dependent on the specific use of the sites.

3.9 Land Use

The past use of the site, as determined by a review of reasonably ascertainable historical information (i.e., aerial photographs and historical topographic maps), dates back to 1941. The site was not developed and was kept in its natural condition of wooded and grass areas until 2010 when the Operation PAR facility was constructed. The Operation PAR facility was constructed as a RTC; however, it has never been operational and remains vacant. The improvements include a building, parking lot, courtyard, pond, woods, generator, pad-mounted transformer, stormwater drainage basin, and alternative terrain vehicle trails.

Land is currently zoned as agricultural (AC, 98.5% of the property) and Estate Residential District (Estate Residential-1, 1.5%), Conditional uses of Estate Residential-1 zoning include residential treatment and care facilities (Pasco County, Florida – Land Development Code, 509.3). The site is adjacent to the residential properties in the north, east, and wooded areas to the south and west and surrounding properties are located within a residential and wooded area.

3.9.1 Effects of the Action Alternatives

Construction and operation of the facility is consistent with local zoning and compatible with surrounding land use and would have negligible land use effects.

3.9.2 Effects of the No Action Alternative

Under the No Action Alternative, no construction land use impacts due to VA's Proposed Action would occur. The Action Alternative sites would likely be developed by others for commercial or residential use in accordance with local zoning regulations. The land use impacts (and associated community benefits) of any future proposed developments would depend upon the use proposed.

3.10 Wetlands, Floodplains, and Coastal Zone Management

3.10.1 Wetlands

This section discusses wetlands at or near the Action Alternative site and surface waters (streams) as they pertain to wetlands. Additional information regarding surface waters is provided in Section 3.6.

Wetlands on the subject property were identified and delineated by ERG on November 7 and 8, 2023 in accordance with the 1987 U.S. Army Corps of Engineers "Corps of Engineers Wetlands Delineation Manual and the Regional Supplement to the Corps of Engineers Wetland Delineation Manual: Atlantic and Gulf Coastal Plain Region, Version 2.0, dated November 2010 to provide current and accurate wetland boundaries. An isolated wetland, and portions of two wetlands associated with the pond in the northeast portion of the property are described below. The total wetland acres within the property boundary are 2.64 acres, including the pond area.

Wetland 1 is located in the eastern portion of the site and extends beyond the property boundary. The portion of this wetland that is within the property boundary measures approximately 0.14-acres. This wetland is identified by National Wetland Inventory (NWI) as a freshwater emergent wetland (PEM1F). This is an isolated wetland and is a Category III Wetland as defined by Pasco County, Florida (Pasco County, Florida – Comprehensive Plan 2023).

Wetland 2 is located in the northeastern portion of the site and extends beyond the property boundary. This wetland is identified by NWI as a freshwater emergent wetland (PEM1F). The portion of this wetland that is within the property boundary measures approximately 0.54-acres. This wetland is hydrologically connected to the freshwater pond, identified on NWI maps as a freshwater pond (PUBH). It is a Category I Wetland as defined by Pasco County, Florida due to its connection to surface waters (Pasco County, Florida – Comprehensive Plan 2023).

Wetland 3 is located in the northeastern portion of the site and continues off site, the portion of the wetland that exists within the property is approximately 0.66-acres. This wetland is identified by NWI as a freshwater emergent wetland (PEM1F). This wetland is also hydrologically connected to the freshwater pond. It is a Category I Wetland as defined by Pasco County, Florida due to the connection to surface waters.

The freshwater pond (PUBH) is located in the northeast corner of the property and is bisected by the property line. The portion of the pond within the property boundary is approximately 1.3 acres.

Table 4 presents the wetland descriptions in the vicinity of the subject property and Figure 5 presents the wetland delineations.

Table 4. Wetland Descriptions

Wetland Identifier	Wetland Type	Category	NWI Classification	Area (acres)
Wetland 1	Depression Marsh	III	Freshwater Emergent Wetland (PEM1F)	0.14
Wetland 2	Marl Prairie Freshwater Non-Forested	I	Freshwater Emergent Wetland (PEM1F)	0.54
Wetland 3	Slough Marsh	I	Freshwater Emergent Wetland (PEM1F)	0.66
Freshwater Pond	Freshwater Pond	N/A	Freshwater Pond (PUBH)	1.3
TOTAL				2.64

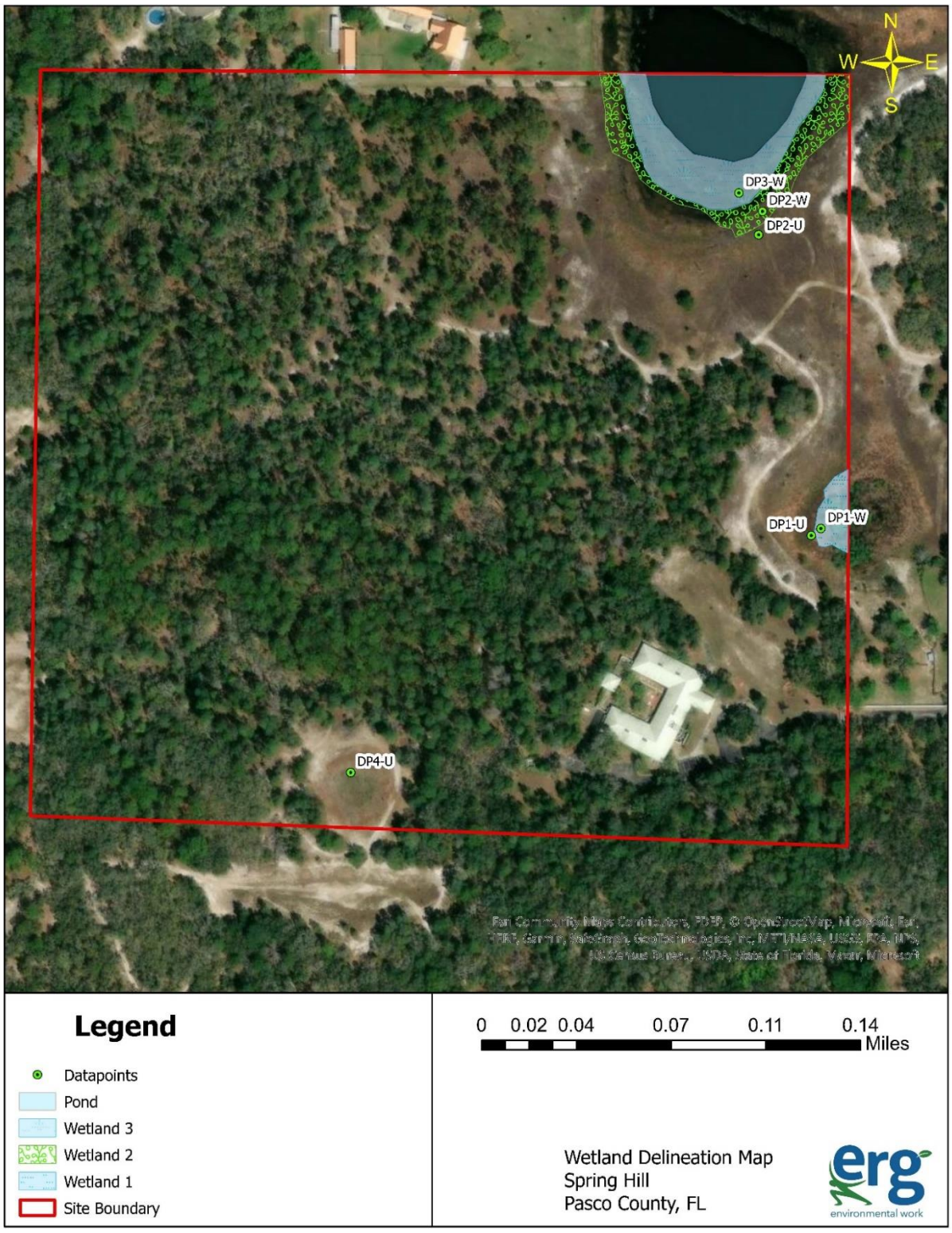


Figure 5. Wetland Delineation Overview Map

3.10.2 Floodplains

The Federal Emergency Management Agency National Flood Hazard Layer Viewer was accessed to identify flood hazard zones within the project site.

The parcel is within (Flood Insurance Rate Map (FIRM) Panel 12101C0040F which indicates that the majority of the site is within Flood Zone X, an area of minimal flood hazard. A small area near the southern boundary and a larger area on the northeastern portion of the site are located within Flood Hazard Zone A, which is within the 100-year flood zone, with a 1% annual chance of flooding and a 26% percent change of flooding over the life of a 30-year mortgage. These areas are correlated with hydric soils and known wetlands on the site. A copy of the flood zone map is provided in Figure 6 (Federal Emergency Management Agency Flood Map Service Center 2023). Figure 6 presents the flood zone map in the vicinity of the subject property.

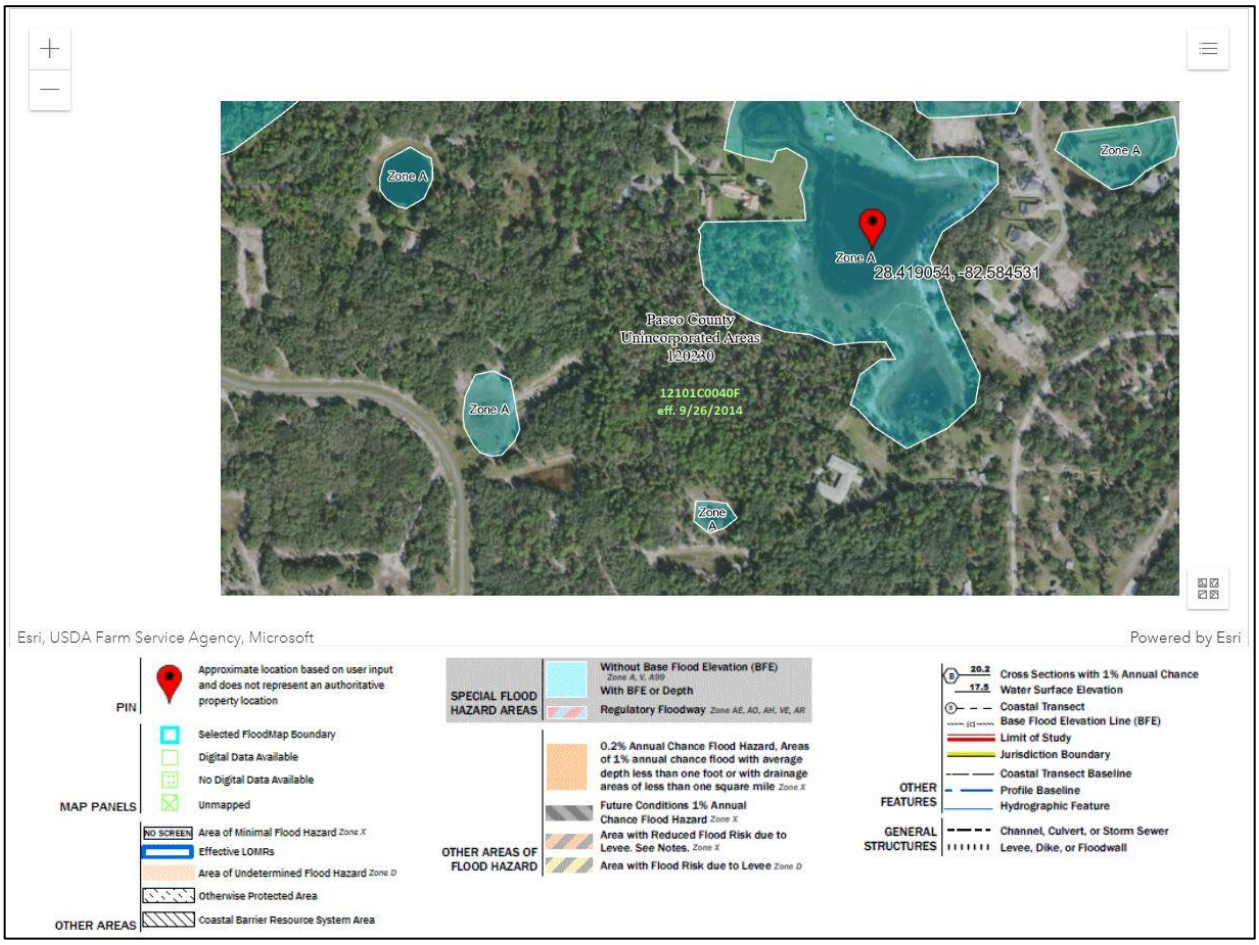


Figure 6. Flood Zone Map

3.10.3 Coastal Zone

The Florida Coastal Management Program administered by the FDEP, coordinates local, state, and federal agency activities to ensure the protection of Florida's coastal zone. The state's Coastal Management Program was approved by the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration in 1981. According to the Pasco County Comprehensive Plan, Pasco Conty is a coastal county; however, the project site is not located within a Coastal High Hazard Area.

3.10.4 Effects of the Action Alternatives

The operation of the RTC, construction of the building addition, expansion of the parking area and road paving on the currently disturbed Turner Loop would have no impact on wetlands, floodplains, or coastal zone.

3.10.5 Effects of the No Action Alternative

Under the No Action Alternative, no impacts to wetlands, floodplains, or coastal zones would occur. Under the No Action Alternative, it is possible that the site would be developed for commercial or residential use by others, which could result in wetland, floodplain, and coastal zone impacts, depending on future use and construction requirements.

3.11 Socioeconomics

The following subsections identify and describe the socioeconomic environment of the region surrounding the Proposed Action to illustrate the socioeconomic factors that have developed the area. Socioeconomic areas of discussion include the local demographics, regional and local economy, local housing, and local recreation activities. Data used were collected from the 2020 Census of Population and Housing (U.S. Census Bureau 2020) and American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates (U.S. Census Bureau 2020). The project is located within the area of Spring Hill and Shady Hills Census Designated Places (CDP) in Hernando and Pasco Counties, respectively. Figure 7 depicts the geographical boundaries of these CDPs as defined by the 2020 Census.

3.11.1 Demographics

Demographic data for the State of Florida is presented in Table 5. The populations of Spring Hill and Shady Hills have slightly more people under the age of 18 and slightly less people over the age of 65 than their corresponding counties or the state of Florida as a whole.

Minority households living in Spring Hill and Shady Hill are lower than that of the State of Florida, and the national average (42.2%). Minority population rates specific to the Action Alternative site are discussed in Section 3.16 (Environmental Justice).

High school graduation rates are more than 5.0% higher in the local and regional areas of the Proposed Action than in the State of Florida. Veterans also make up a larger portion of the population in Shady Hills and Pasco County than the state of Florida, respectively.

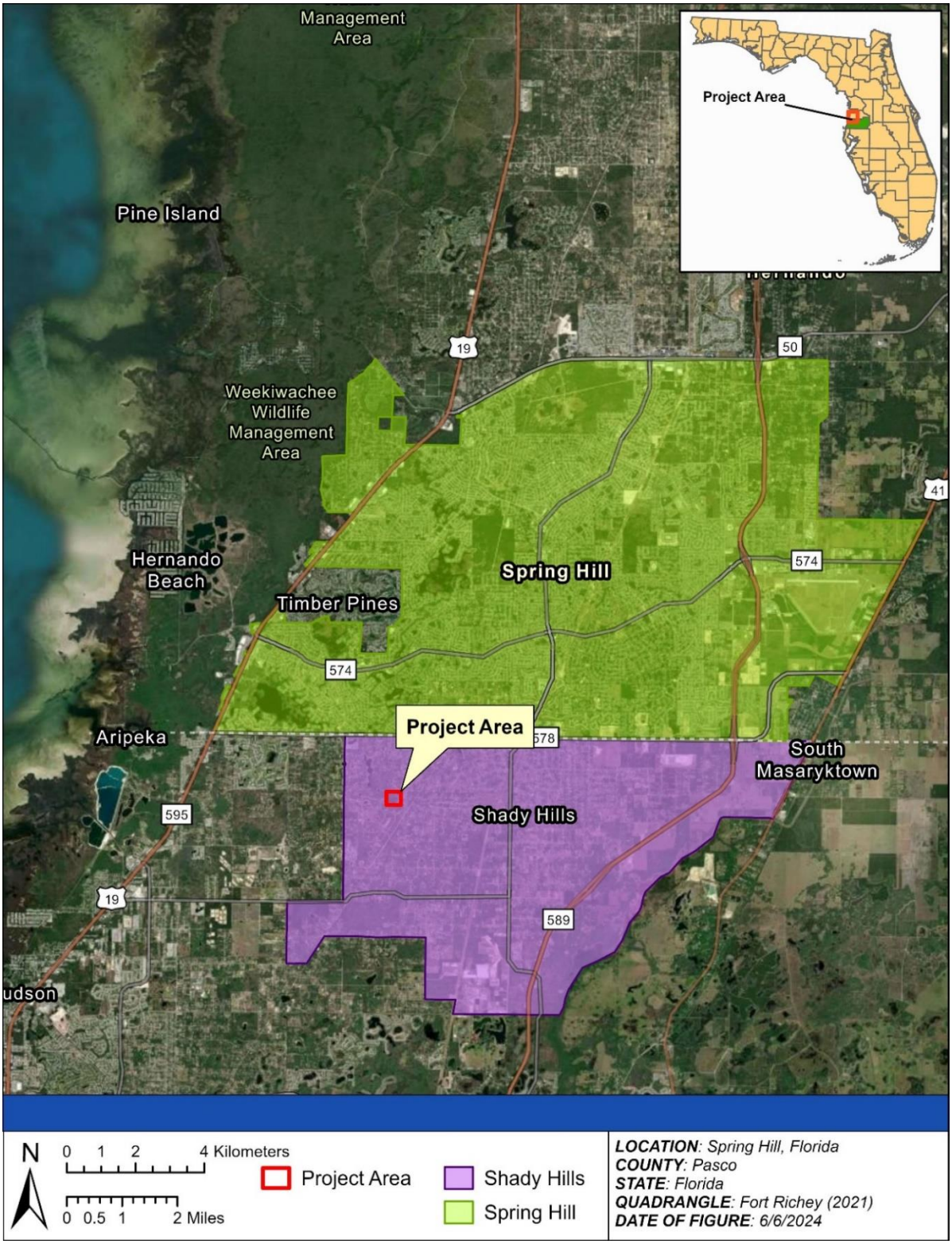


Figure 7. Census Designated Place Boundaries

Table 5. Demographic Data

Area	All Individuals (2020)	Population Under 18 Age Years (2020)	Population Over 65 Age Years (2020)	Minority (2020)	High School Graduates (2020)	Veterans (2020)
Florida	21,538,187	19.9%	20.5%	48.5%	28.6%	1,416,472
Hernando County	194.515	18.4%	27.5%	25.9%	34.1%	19,061
Pasco County	561,891	20.3%	22.6%	30.2%	34.1%	45,995
Spring Hill CDP	113,694	20.6%	23.6%	30.7%	33.7%	10,449
Shady Hills CDP	11,690	22.0%	17.3%	16.5%	33.6%	1,197

Sources: U.S. Census Bureau, 2020 Census, Profile of General Demographic Characteristics, 2015-2020.

3.11.2 Employment and Income

Retail Trade and Health Care & Social Assistance are the top two NAICS Industry Sectors for those employed in Spring Hill and Shady Hills CDPs Median household incomes, poverty levels, and unemployment rates are relatively homogonous when comparing local to regional Census and Department of Labor data projections (Table 6). Household incomes specific to the Action Alternative site is discussed in Section 3.16.

Poverty levels, for the purpose of this EA, are defined as median incomes less than or equal to $26,000 in 2020 and $31,200 in 2024 for a Four-person Family, respectively (U.S. Dept. of Human Health and Services, 2024).

Table 6. Regional Income

Area	Number of Households	Median Household Income	Population Below Poverty Level	Unemployment Rate March 2024
Florida	7,931,313	$57,703	12.9%	3.3%
Hernando County	76,708	$52,210	14.3%	4.5%
Pasco County	209,483	$56,298	12.4%	3.9%
Spring Hill CDP	44,506	$53,282	14.4%	No data available
Shady Hills CDP	4,922	$56,469	13.0%	No data available

Sources: U.S. Census Bureau, 2020 Census, Profile of General Demographic Characteristics, 2015-2020. U.S. Department of Labor, Bureau of Labor Statistics.

3.11.3 Protection of Children Document

Because children may suffer disproportionately from environmental health risks and safety risks, EO 13045, *Protection of Children from Environmental Health Risks and Safety Risks*, was introduced in 1997 to prioritize the identification and assessment of environmental health risks and safety risks that may affect children and to ensure that federal agencies' policies, programs, activities, and standards address environmental risks and safety risks to children. This section identifies the distribution of children and locations where numbers of children may be proportionately high (such as schools, childcare centers, family housing) in areas potentially affected by the Proposed Action.

Children are not regularly present at the sites. However, children may be present in the residential areas near the sites. The Hope Ranch Learning Academy is approximately one mile from the site and there are no other schools or day cares within a one-mile radius. The Hope Ranch Learning Academy would not be impacted by traffic going to and from the proposed facility because there is no direct roadway connection.

3.11.4 Commuting Patterns

Residents of Spring Hill are largely dependent on personal automobiles for transportation to and from work. Other methods of transit may include public transportation (several miles from the site) and carpooling.

Sixty-five percent of workers employed in Spring Hill and Shady Hills commute from locations outside these CDPs. Thirty-five percent of workers employed in Spring Hill and Shady Hills live in the area. Twenty-four percent of workers commute to Spring Hill and Shady Hills from locations outside these CDPs. (U.S. Census Bureau, OnTheMap Application and LEHD Origin-Destination Employment Statistics).

3.11.5 Effects of the Action Alternatives

Construction activities would likely result in short-term and beneficial impacts to local employment and personal income. Construction would provide temporary construction jobs and a minor increase in spending at local restaurants, convenience stores, and gas stations. This would likely result in temporary socioeconomic benefits.

Acquisition and operation of the proposed RTC would provide positions for physician, nursing, and operational support staff in the private sector, thus providing short-term and long-term socioeconomic benefit to the selected site area.

The Proposed Action would result in significant long-term beneficial health impacts by providing a new RTC that would enhance the health care provided to regional U.S. Veterans. Adverse health and safety risks to children would not likely result from the construction activities. No adverse health or safety risks to children are anticipated to result from operation of the new RTC. Children are not regularly present at the Action Alternative site. In addition, once operational, children would only be present at the RTC as visitors; all Veterans are above the age of 18. VA will continue to provide RTC services at JAHVH.

3.11.6 Effects of the No Action Alternative

The No Action Alternative would result in no construction, acquisition, or operation of the facility and no increased short- or long-term economic benefit due to VA's action. The Action Alternative site would likely be developed by others for commercial or residential use in accordance with local zoning. The socioeconomic impacts of any future developments would depend on the proposed use.

Most importantly, the inability of VA to provide adequate health care facilities commensurate with the current and anticipated future needs would result in a significant adverse, long-term, direct impact to U.S. Veterans in the region.

3.12 Community Services

The Action Alternatives site is located within the Pasco County Public School District. One private school (Hope Ranch Learning Academy) is located approximately one mile northwest of the site. No additional high schools, middle schools, or elementary schools are located within one mile of the Action Alternative site.

The Pasco County Sheriff's Office provides police protection to the Action Alternative site and their vicinities. The Pasco County Fire and Rescue Stations 5 and 20 are approximately 3 miles from the site and provide fire protection and emergency medical services to the Actional Alternative site.

The Florida Department of Transportation Pasco County Department of Public Works provide local road and bridge maintenance services in the Action Alternative site vicinity.

The Tampa General Hospital Spring Hill is located approximately three miles northeast of the site. No additional major medical facilities are located within one mile of the Action Alternative sites.

Public transportation in the Spring Hill area is provided by Pasco County Public Transportation. There are 12 routes with fixed bus and paratransit services; however, there are no bus stops located in the immediate vicinity of the proposed RTC.

3.12.1 Effects of the Action Alternatives

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

3.12.2 Effects of the No Action Alternative

Under the No Action Alternative, no acquisition by VA would occur and no impacts to community services would be anticipated. Should the Action Alternative sites be developed in the future by others, community service impacts may occur, depending on the use.

3.13 Solid Waste and Hazardous Materials

49 CFR §171.8 defines hazardous materials as hazardous substances, hazardous wastes, marine pollutants, elevated temperature materials, materials designated as hazardous in the Hazardous Materials Table (49 CFR § 172.101), and materials that meet the defining criteria for hazard classes and divisions in 49 CFR §173. Resource Conservation and Recovery Act (RCRA) defines hazardous wastes at 42 USC. § 6903(5). The Pollution Prevention Act of 1990, 42 USC 13101(b), established a national policy to prevent or reduce pollution at the source, whenever feasible.

The Comprehensive Environmental Response, Compensation, and Liability Act (CERCLA) of 1980 (42 USC § 9601 et seq.) RCRA, Subtitle D are the primary Federal laws for the management and disposal of hazardous substances. The USEPA regulates the management of non-hazardous solid waste according to the RCRA. Under RCRA, the USEPA is also in charge of regulating the handling and disposal of hazardous wastes.

A considerable number of health and safety laws and regulations exist for a wide variety of activities. With regards to worker safety, the U.S. Congress enacted Occupational, Safety and Health Act of 1970, 29 USC § 651 et seq. to assure safe and healthful working conditions for working men and women. Safety and occupational health issues include exposure to natural hazards; one-time and long-term exposure to asbestos, lead, mold, radiation, chemicals, and other hazardous materials; and injuries or deaths resulting from a one-time accident.

RCRA, CERCLA and worker safety, (U.S. Congress enacted OSHA of 1970) regulations would apply to any construction activities which routinely includes use of hazardous materials such as aerosols, coolant, fertilizers, motor oil, vehicle fuel, paint supplies, and solvents that need to be properly stored and handled. Due to the age of the existing building, exposure to lead based paint and asbestos during any renovation activities are not expected.

ERG completed a Phase I Environmental Site Assessment of the 40-acre parcel of land located within a wooded and residential area west of Turner Road, and north of Oldenburg Drive in January 2024. The Phase I Environmental Site Assessment indicated the site contained an 11,047 square foot building (Operation PAR Inc.), trees, driveway, courtyard, parking lot, a propane generator, and one pad-mounted transformer, stormwater drainage basin and a pond. The site was not developed prior to the construction of the Operation PAR facility in 2010 and was kept in its natural condition of wooded and grass areas. The Phase I identified no environmental concerns or recognized environmental conditions (RECs) for the site.

3.13.1 Effects of the Action Alternatives

No significant adverse short-term or long-term impacts during operation of RTC are anticipated. Long-term operational solid wastes, hazardous materials, and medical wastes would be managed in accordance with applicable federal and state laws. Wastes would be collected and properly disposed of by licensed, contracted transportation and disposal companies.

The following criteria should be used to determine impacts:

- The generation of a new waste stream that cannot be immediately or safely managed, under existing protocols.

- The generation of an excessive quantity of waste that cannot be adequately or safely managed under the current protocols.

- Risk of building on contaminated land (mitigated by completion of Phase I Environmental Site Assessment ASTM Practice E 1527-21)

With regards to worker safety, the VA anticipates no adverse impacts from the proposed action alternative if work is conducted in compliance with worker safety regulations, plans, and guidance. Use of diesel fuel or other fuels for powering equipment used in construction, renovations and/or road installation may occur, and it may be necessary to store bulk quantities.

Storage of bulk fuels and other regulated materials during construction activities will need to follow USEPA and Florida Department of Environmental Protection regulations for storing bulk fuels, container inspection, spill prevention, reporting and clean up should a spill occur (FDEP Chapter 62-762. F.A.C. [2023]). Proper secondary containment for mobile refuelers is necessary to prevent releases to the environment and vary based on volume and type. The USEPA website provides details regarding secondary containment requirements.

The VA anticipates no impact associated with hazardous materials used on site during construction activities if properly used, stored, and disposed. A Spill Prevention Control and Countermeasure Plan will be prepared by the contractor(s).

Construction and demolition solid waste (including hazardous materials) may be generated during construction and renovation activities. Accumulation, storage, permitting, and disposal of this waste should follow Pasco County ordinance Chapter 90 -Solid Waste, Section 90-26 through 90-34.

The state of Florida, according to FAC 62-730 with exemptions in 62-730.270, requires that a facility in process of treating, storing, or disposing of hazardous waste obtain a hazardous waste facility permit. Compliance and enforcement areas for this facility that might require a permit could include used oil, pharmaceutical hazardous waste, universal wastes (batteries, mercury, pesticides, aerosol, etc.), and household type hazardous waste. Permits can be Temporary, Construction, or Closure, depending on the work and time associated with the waste.

If operation of the facility includes food service, the FDEP (in accordance with FAC 62-705) requires a copy of the signed, completed service manifest be retained on-site by the grease waste originator and the grease waste hauler for one year. The service manifest documents the removal and disposal of grease waste.

In accordance with FAC (60kb), Section 381.0098, Florida Statutes and Chapter 64E-16, a permit from the Florida Department of Public Health is required prior to commencing operation if the proposed facility will generate, store, or treat 25 pounds or more of biomedical waste in a 30-day period. Pasco County defers to the Florida regulatory code (Chapter 64-E-16) for biomedical permits and waste handling requirements.

3.13.2 Effects of the No Action Alternative

Under the No Action Alternative, no acquisition by VA would occur and no impacts to from solid waste and hazardous materials would be anticipated. Should the Action Alternative sites be operated in the future by others, similar short-term and long-term solid waste and hazardous materials impacts as realized under the Proposed Action could occur, depending upon the use.

3.14 Transportation and Parking

Traffic in the vicinities of the Action Alternative site is regulated by the Florida Department of Transportation.

The regional transportation for the site primarily consists of vehicles. Entrance to the RTC comes from Turner Loop (a collector) and down the approximately 600-foot entrance road that leads to the building. There is a loop for drop-offs, as well as parking on the south side of the building. A small alley is located on the building's southwest side. The proposed action includes resurfacing Turner Loop (0.76 mile) and expanding the parking area from 20 to 36 spaces.

3.14.1 Effects of the Action Alternative

The Proposed Action could have less than significant short-term and long-term, direct and indirect transportation impacts.

During operation, public roadways in the vicinity of the proposed RTC would experience increased traffic as a result of the use of this new facility. The RTC would be open 24 hours a day. VA estimates the RTC would experience approximately 100 Veteran, staff, volunteer and other visitor vehicle stops on an average, weekday, daily basis, generating a total of approximately 200 round-trip vehicle trips per day (100 one-way vehicle trips per day). Given the proposed operational use, traffic generated by the Proposed Action would occur primarily throughout the day; however, shift changes would also occur at night. Patients of the RTC would travel at various times during the day during daylight hours.

Traffic associated with the proposed RTC would be new to the local area because the Veterans who would be served by the RTC currently use the existing JAHVH and community-based services in the Tampa area. The Proposed Action would result in an increase in traffic in the Spring Hill area; however, there would be short-term beneficial impacts as Veterans, staff and visitors will likely be from the local area and no longer traveling to JAHVH.

Construction traffic, consisting of trucks, workers' personal vehicles, and construction equipment would increase traffic volumes in the local area and could cause delays if this occurred during morning and evening peak traffic periods. These activities could result in additional traffic congestion, as well as potential need to manage traffic around the area.

The Proposed Action would have no adverse impacts on parking. The RTC includes on-site parking (approximately 20 spaces) and future development will include approximately 16 additional spaces adequate to accommodate the projected needs of Veterans and VA staff using the proposed RTC.

3.14.2 Effects of the No Action Alternative

Under the No Action Alternative, no transportation or parking impacts associated with the Proposed Action would occur. However, should the Action Alternative site ultimately be developed by others, traffic and parking impacts could occur. The type and magnitude of transportation and parking effects would be dependent upon the future use of the site.

3.15 Utilities

Basic utilities in the vicinity of the Action Alternative site (water, sewer, and electric) are provided by various utility providers. As part of the preparation of this EA, local utility providers were researched, and the property owner provided information to identify the approximate utility locations of existing infrastructure as shown on the utility map (Figure 8). Utility information and providers are as follows:

- **Electric:** Withlacoochee River Electric Cooperative Inc. supplies electrical services up to 30,000 volts due to the facility's 800-amp service. There is also a 110-Kilowatt generator on site.

- **Telecommunications:** CenturyLink provides telephone via utility lines that follow the entrance road to the facility. Verizon Wireless provides internet services.

- **Suburban Propane** services the on-site 300-gallon propane gas tank as there is no natural gas pipelines on the site.

- **Potable Water**: Pasco County Utilities supplies potable water.

- **Septic**: There is no municipal sewage available in the immediate area and a privately owned septic system is located on the site and is sized appropriately for RTC of this size.

- **Stormwater** is primarily routed to an onsite retention pond as no public stormwater services are available.

- **Non-potable water:** An irrigation pump on the property provides a water supply option for non-potable water needs like landscaping.

3.15.1 Effects of the Action Alternatives

Operation of the proposed RTC will increase the consumption of utilities, including electricity, propane, potable water and sanitary sewer discharges. It is not anticipated to require extraordinary utility services beyond those of a similarly sized light industrial/commercial operation and adequate utilities exist to supply the facilities. Utility impacts are anticipated to be negligible.

Figure 8. Utility Map

3.15.2 Effects of the No Action Alternative

Under the No Action Alternative, no utility consumption associated with the Proposed Action would occur. However, should the Action Alternative site ultimately be developed by others, impacts similar to those identified under the Proposed Action could occur. The type and magnitude of utility effects would be dependent upon the future use of the Action Alternative site.

3.16 Environmental Justice

In 1994, EO 12898, *Federal Actions to Address Environmental Justice in Minority Populations and Low-Income Populations*, was issued to focus attention of federal agencies on human health and environmental conditions in minority and low-income communities and to ensure that disproportionately high and adverse human health or environmental effects on these communities are identified and addressed.

According to 2020 U.S. Census data, the proposed action is not located in an area with disproportionately high minority or low-income population relative to the region or State of Florida as a whole. Therefore, the proposed action does not disproportionately affect minority and or low-income populations located in the vicinity of the facility.

3.16.1 Effects of the Action Alternatives

The Proposed Action would have negligible, if any, environmental justice effects. The Proposed Action would not induce significant changes to nearby land-uses or community functions and has potential to provide benefits in the form of increased access to VA RTC Services and ancillary employment opportunities. During construction, effects on nearby residences, such as traffic noise disturbance and deteriorated air quality due to dust, would be limited and controlled through BMPs, thereby minimizing adverse effects to populations within the region of influence.

3.16.2 Effects of the No Action Alternative

Under the No Action Alternative, no action by VA would occur at the site and there would be no environmental justice effect by VA. However, Veterans in the Tampa area, including low-income and minority populations, would continue to be served by undersized, inadequate VA RTC facilities.

3.17 Cumulative Impacts

As defined by the CEQ regulations in 40 CFR Part 1508.7, cumulative impacts are those which "result from the incremental impact of the Proposed Action when added to other past, present, and reasonably foreseeable future actions, without regard to the agency (federal or non-federal) or individual who undertakes such other actions." Cumulative impact analysis captures the effects that result from the Proposed Action in combination with the effects of other actions taken before, during, or after the Proposed Action in the same geographic area.

3.17.1 Effects of the Action Alternatives

The proposed action is located in a suburban area approximately 11 miles north of the center of Spring Hill and adjacent to the residential properties in the north, east, and wooded areas to the south and west. Based on available information, no cumulative significant adverse effects to any resources are anticipated from the Proposed Action.

3.17.2 Effects of the No Action Alternative

Under the No Action Alternative, cumulative impacts would be similar to those identified for the Proposed Action, as the Action Alternative site would likely be developed for other commercial or residential use. The extent of cumulative effects under the No Action Alternative would depend upon that future use. However, cumulative impacts would not likely be significant, as any new development would be subject to zoning requirements and site plan approval.

3.18 Potential for Generating Substantial Public Controversy

As discussed in Section 4, VA has solicited input from various federal, state, and local government agencies regarding the Proposed Action. Several of these agencies have provided input; none of the input has identified opposition or controversy related to the Proposed Action. VA is publishing and distributing this Draft EA for a 30-day public comment period. Public comments will be considered and addressed in the Final EA.

SECTION 4: PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT

VA invites public participation in decision-making on new proposals through the NEPA process. Public participation with respect to decision-making on the Proposed Action is guided by 38 CFR Part 26, VA's policy for implementing NEPA. Additional guidance is provided in VA's NEPA Interim Guidance for Projects (VA 2010). Consideration of the views and information of all interested persons promotes open communication and enables better decision-making. Agencies, organizations, and members of the public with a potential interest in the Proposed Action, such as minority, low-income, and disadvantaged persons, are urged to participate. A record of agency coordination and public involvement associated with this EA is provided in Appendix A and Appendix E, respectively.

4.1 Agency Coordination

VA consulted with the following agencies during the preparation of this EA:

- U.S. Army Corps of Engineers
- U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
- U.S. Environmental Protection Agency
- USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service
- U.S. Department of Transportation
- Florida Department of State, Division of Historical Resources (Florida SHPO)
- Florida Department of Environmental Protection (various departments)
- Florida Department of Transportation
- Florida Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services
- Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission
- Florida Geological Survey
- Florida Natural Areas Inventory
- Pasco County Central Permitting Division
- Pasco County Planning and Development

VA initiated the agency scoping process for the Proposed Action in February 2024, which included an email request for information and comments based on the VA delineated area (area of consideration) for the proposed RTC.

Responses with project input or information were received from the Florida State Clearinghouse, Pasco County, Long Range Planning Division, and USEPA. Input provided by these agencies is addressed in the appropriate resource sub-sections of Section 3. Written correspondence from the agencies is provided in Appendix A. The following summarizes that input, which VA used to focus this EA's analysis:

- **USEPA** indicated they reviewed scoping documents and do not have substantive comments on the proposed action. They understand from the initial scoping notice that the VA had no plans to conduct any construction or demolition projects and intends to use the building as a hospital treatment facility, which was its original purpose. However, they stated it is unclear from the notice whether the current residential treatment is actively operational. It would be helpful to include this information in future documents.
- **Florida State Clearinghouse** stated while it is covered by EO 12372, the Florida State Clearinghouse does not select any of the projects for review. You may proceed with your projects.
- VA initiated the NHPA Section 106 consultation process to the **Florida SHPO** and requested concurrence that implementing the Proposed Action (undertaking) would have no effect on historic properties.
- **Pasco County Planning and Development Department** stated that based on the review of Pasco Mapper, there are four listed historic sites located within Pasco County in proximity of a mile of the subject sites. The County would like to confirm its participation as a consulting party. Currently, we have been able to identify four archaeological sites within a mile from the site: PA01434 – 17135 Akins Drive, PA01435 – Hungry Duck, PA01436 - Long Road, PA 01437 – Triangle Dock, PA01438 – Old Kid, PA01439 – Monkey See, which are ineligible for the National Register. The County requests copies of all documents and submissions made to the SHPO and to be notified of developments in historic review process. They also would like to provide additional comment on the identification of historic properties in the designated area of potential effects if more are found in the near future, as well as provide input on any potential effects to historic properties, and the resolution of any adverse effects.
- USFWL VA has determined the proposed project would have no effect on species named in the Official Species List obtained from USFWS on April 29, 2024.

4.2 Native American Consultation

VA consulted with four federally recognized Native American Tribes as part of this NEPA process, in accordance with 36 CFR 800.2 and EO 13175, *Consultation and Coordination with Indian Tribal Governments*, 6 November 2000. These Tribes, identified as having possible ancestral ties to the area of the Action Alternative site, were invited by VA to participate in the EA process as Sovereign Nations per EO 13175. VA sent Section 106 consultation letters to these Tribes with the finding that no historic properties would be affected by the Proposed Action (undertaking). Written correspondence with the Tribes is provided in Appendix B.

4.3 Public Review

VA initiated the public scoping process for the Proposed Action in February 2024, which included a public notice published in the Tampa Bay Times on February 4 and 7, 2024.

VA published and distributed the Draft EA for a 30-day public comment period as announced by a Notice of Availability to be published in the Tampa Bay Times on June 23 and 26, 2024. A copy of the Draft EA was also made available on the VA website. One agency, the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, provided comments regarding the Draft EA. EPA comments are summarized in Table 7. The responses to the comments are integrated into the Final EA, as applicable.

Table 7: EPA Comments and VA Response

Comment	Response	Section
The EPA recommends the use of diesel controls, cleaner fuel, and cleaner construction practices for on-road and off-road equipment used for transportation, soil movement, and other project activities. The EPA suggests the VA consider the use of clean diesel through add-on control technologies such as diesel particulate filters and diesel oxidation catalysts, repowers, or newer, cleaner equipment.	According to the EA, Table 8, VA has recommended the use of dust control measures (BMPs) during construction and road resurfacing, including use of newer equipment with emissions controls.	3.3 Air Quality
The EPA recommends that the VA provide early information and schedules on demolition and construction activities and expected noise levels and duration to personnel of the nearby facilities. The final EA should estimate the total project construction time (months, years) in order to assess the general magnitude and/or duration of the potential construction noise impact and further discussion of required construction related mitigation plans should be included in Section 6, including the potential need for air quality monitoring.	Comments noted. VA coordination with Pasco County will ensure signage and public notices are provided prior to road paving activities. VA does not have information from the developer on the total project construction timeframe at this time. Section 6 of the EA includes following the Federal Clean Air Act of 1990, which would include air quality monitoring of activities.	3.8.4 Noise
The EPA recommends that any additional conservation measures identified by USFWS during consultation be implemented and ongoing to ensure the health and safety of the listed threatened or endangered species that could potentially be found within the proposed project area. EPA: further	Comment noted. According to the EA, paragraph 3.10.3, Pasco County is a coastal county; however, the project location is not in a Coastal High Hazard Area.	3.7 Wildlife and Habitat

Comment	Response	Section
description of what types of critical public facilities are within the coastal zone would help the reader to better understand impacts to these facilities.		
The EPA recommends that erosion control and sediment control measures be implemented in accordance with the State's NPDES construction general permit requirements, and that the measures be addressed during the design and construction phases of the project. The VA should get all applicable NPDES permit(s) for this facility and project. comply with any local ordinances. The EPA encourages implementing best management practices during and after construction to minimize stormwater impacts on the streams.	EA permits and BMPs will be updated to specify NPDES construction stormwater general permit.	3.6 Hydrology and Water Quality
The EPA acknowledges the VA's statements to follow Pasco County ordinance regarding the accumulation, storage, permitting, and disposal of this waste, and the state of Florida regulations regarding permitting requirements. The EPA also acknowledges the VA's references to State and EPA regulations regarding the use of secondary containment for mobile refuelers.	Comments noted	3.13 Hazardous Materials
The EPA recommends the VA implement community engagement activities prior to construction with the affected communities about construction times, the potential for temporary disruptions of service, potential road closures, delays, and other inconveniences. We further recommend the meetings be held at locations and times that are convenient for the residents of the affected communities.	Comments noted	3.16 Environmental Justice

SECTION 5: MANAGEMENT AND MINIMIZATION MEASURES

This section summarizes the management and minimization measures that are proposed to minimize and maintain potential adverse effects of the Proposed Action at acceptable, less- than-significant levels.

Per established protocols, procedures, and requirements, the developer and its construction contractors would implement BMPs and would satisfy all applicable regulatory requirements in association with the operation of the proposed RTC and road construction at the selected Action Alternative site. These “management measures” are described in this EA and are included as components of each of the Action Alternatives. “Management measures” are defined as routine BMPs and/or regulatory compliance measures that are regularly implemented as part of proposed activities, as appropriate, throughout the Spring Hill, Florida area. In general, implementation of such management measures would maintain impacts at acceptable levels for all resource areas analyzed. These are different from “mitigation measures,” which are defined as project-specific requirements, not routinely implemented as part of development projects, necessary to reduce identified potentially significant adverse environmental impacts to less-than-significant levels.

The routine BMPs, management measures, and avoidance measures summarized in Table 8 would be included by VA’s developer in the selected Action Alternative to minimize and maintain adverse effects at less-than-significant levels.

Table 8: Best Management Practices and Minimization Measures Incorporated in Proposed Action

Technical Resource Area	Best Management Practice/Minimization Measure
Aesthetics	Comply with the development standards of the Pasco County Land Development Code
Air Quality	Use appropriate dust control measures/(BMPs) during construction and road resurfacing. Implement measures to reduce vehicle emissions from construction equipment, such as reducing idling time and using newer equipment with emissions controls. Comply with the applicable FDEP Division of Air Resource Management air quality regulations. Secure any required minor air emissions permits from FDEP prior to construction.
Cultural Resources	Should potentially historic or culturally significant items be discovered during construction, the construction contractor would immediately cease work until VA, a qualified archaeologist, Florida SHPO, the Muscogee (Creek) Nation and the Miccosukee Tribe of Indians of Florida, and other consulting parties 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
Geology and Soils	Control soil erosion and sedimentation impacts during construction by implementing erosion prevention measures through appropriate BMPs and adherence to FDEP NPDES permit.
Hydrology and Water Quality	Control soil erosion and sedimentation impacts during construction by implementing erosion prevention measures through appropriate BMPs and adherence to FDEP NPDES permit.
Wildlife and Habitat	None Required
Noise	The impacts during implementation of the Proposed Action can be minimized by use of engineering and administrative controls. Engineering controls include: • Choosing low-noise machinery, • Maintaining and lubricating equipment and machinery, • Placing a barrier between the noise and sensitive receptor, and • Use of hearing protection for workers. Administrative controls include: • Operating noisy machinery during daytime hours as indicated in the Pasco County noise ordinance, • Limit the amount of time the noisy machinery is operating, and • Establish quiet areas where workers take their scheduled breaks. •Shut down noise-generating heavy equipment when it is not needed •Post proposed construction signage to let local residents know when the operations would be occurring. Mitigation strategies during the operational phase of the Proposed Action may include: • Site planning modifications to attenuate noise, • Relocate or reorient noise sources away from noise-sensitive uses, • Eliminate a sound source (i.e., from emergency vehicles or maintenance vehicles), by installing looped driveways which would remove the need for backup alarms), • Relocate the sound source (i.e., move the driveway to the facility away from nearby receptors), • Engineer the reduction of the sound source (i.e., use higher grade mufflers for service vehicles, insulate enclosures of mechanical equipment, create sound berms, utilize sound blankets, and install sound mitigating walls and windows).
Land Use	None Required

Technical Resource Area	Best Management Practice/Minimization Measure
Wetlands, Floodplains, and Coastal Zone Management	None Required
Socioeconomics	None Required
Community Services	None Required
Solid Waste	Prepare a Spill Prevention Control and Countermeasure Plan for use during construction activities. The VA anticipates no impact associated with hazardous materials used on site during construction activities if properly used, stored, and disposed.
Transportation and parking	Work with FDOT and Pasco County Department of Public Works and obtain FDEP permitting requirements to implement Turner Loop road resurfacing and construction activities.
Utilities	None required
Environmental Justice	None required

SECTION 6: LIST OF ENVIRONMENTAL PERMITS REQUIRED

6.1 Regulatory Framework

This EA has been prepared under the provisions of, and in accordance with NEPA, the CEQ Regulations Implementing the Procedural Provisions of NEPA, and VA's regulations for implementing NEPA (38 CFR Part 26). In addition, the EA has been prepared as prescribed in VA's NEPA Interim Guidance for Projects (VA 2010b). Federal, state, and local laws and regulations applicable to this Proposed Action are specified within this EA, and include:

- Endangered Species Act of 1973, as amended (7 USC 136; 16 USC 1531 et seq.).
- Executive Order 11988, *Floodplain Management* (May 1977).
- Executive Order 11990, *Protection of Wetlands* (May 1977).
- Executive Order 12898, *Environmental Justice* (February 1994).
- Executive Order 13834, *Efficient Federal Operations* (May 2018).
- Energy Independence Security Act Section 438.
- Farmland Protection Policy Act (7 USC 4201, et seq.).
- Federal Clean Air Act of 1990 (42 USC 7401 et seq., as amended).
- Federal Clean Water Act (Federal Water Pollution Control Act) of 1948, as amended (1972, 1977) (33 USC 1251 et seq.); Sections 401 and 404.
- Migratory Bird Treaty Act; 16 USC 703-712, 3 July 1918; as amended 1936, 1960, 1968, 1969, 1974, 1978, 1986, and 1989).
- National Historic Preservation Act of 1966, as amended (36 CFR Part 800).
- Florida Administrative Code
- Pasco County Code of Ordinances
- Southwest Florida Water Management District Regulations

6.2 Environmental Permits Required

In addition to the regulatory framework of NEPA, the CEQ Regulations Implementing the Procedural Provisions of NEPA, VA's regulations for implementing NEPA (38 CFR Part 26), and VA's NEPA Interim Guidance for Projects, the following federal, state, and/or local environmental permits are required as part of this Proposed Action, and include:

- Florida NPDES Permit.
- Florida Department of Public Health Operating Permit
- Pasco County Solid Waste Permit
- Pasco County Department of Public Health Permit biomedical waste permit
- Stormwater permit

SECTION 7: AGENCIES AND INDIVIDUALS CONSULTED

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U.S. Environmental Protection Agency - Region 4
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U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service – Region 4
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SECTION 9: REFERENCES

Environmental Research Group, LLC Initial Cultural Resources Impact Prediction Proposed James A. Haley Veterans Hospital Residential Treatment Center, Spring Hill, Pasco County, Florida. Environmental Research Group, LLC January 2024

Environmental Research Group, LLC Supplemental Cultural Resources Impact Prediction Proposed James A. Haley Veterans Hospital Residential Treatment Center, Spring Hill, Pasco County, Florida. Environmental Research Group, LLC April 2024

Environmental Research Group, LLC Endangered Species Act Biological Survey, Spring Hill, Florida. Environmental Research Group, LLC February 2024

Environmental Research Group, LLC Phase I Environmental Site Assessment for James A. Haley Veterans' Hospital Proposed Residential Treatment Center, 14191 Turner Loop, Spring Hill, Florida 34610. Environmental Research Group, LLC January 2024

Environmental Research Group, LLC Regulatory Requirements Report, Proposed Land Acquisition for the Construction and Operation of the James A. Haley Veterans Hospital Residential Treatment Center, Spring Hill, Pasco County, Florida. Environmental Research Group, LLC December 8, 2023

Environmental Research Group, LLC Final Wetland Delineation Report Spring Hill, Florida. Environmental Research Group, LLC February 2024

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SECTION 10: LIST OF ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

APE	Area of potential effect
BMPs	Best Management Practices
CAA	Clean Air Act
CDP	Census Designated places
CEQ	President's Council on Environmental Quality
CERCLA	Comprehensive Environmental Response, Compensation, and Liability Act
CFR	Code of Federal Regulations
dBA	decibels (A-weighted scale)
EA	environmental assessment
EO	Executive Order
ERG	Environmental Research Group LLC
FDEP	Florida Department of Environmental Protection
JAHVH	James A. Haley Veterans Hospital
ICRIP	Initial Cultural Resources Impact Prediction
IPaC	USFWS Information for Planning and Conservation
NAAQS	National Ambient Air Quality Standards
NEPA	National Environmental Policy Act of 1969
NPDES	National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System
NRHP	National Register of Historic Places
NWI	National Wetland Inventory
PM2.5	particulate matter less than or equal to 2.5 micrometers
PM2.10	particulate matter greater than or equal to 10 micrometers
SCRIP	Supplemental Cultural Resources Impact Prediction
RCRA	Resource Conservation and Recovery Act
RTC	Residential treatment center

SHPO State Historic Preservation Office

TCP Traditional Cultural Properties

USDA U.S. Department of Agriculture

USEPA U.S. Environmental Protection Agency

USFWS U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service

USC U.S. Code

VA U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs

SECTION 11: GLOSSARY

100-Year Flood – A flood event of such magnitude that it occurs, on average, every 100 years; this equates to a one percent chance of its occurring in a given year.

Aesthetics – Pertaining to the quality of human perception of natural beauty.

Agricultural land - Cropland, pastures, meadows, and planted woodland.

Ambient - The environment as it exists around people, plants, and structures.

Ambient Air Quality Standards - Those standards established according to the CAA to protect health and welfare (AR 200-1).

Aquifer - An underground geological formation containing usable amounts of groundwater which can supply wells and springs.

Attainment Area - Region that meets the National Ambient Air Quality Standard (NAAQS) for a criteria pollutant under the CAA.

Best Management Practices (BMPs) - Methods, measures, or practices to prevent or reduce environmental impacts.

Contaminants - Any physical, chemical, biological, or radiological substances that have an adverse effect on air, water, or soil.

Council on Environmental Quality (CEQ) - An Executive Office of the President office composed of three members appointed by the President, subject to approval by the Senate. Each member shall be exceptionally qualified to analyze and interpret environmental trends, and to appraise programs and activities of the federal government. Members are to be conscious of and responsive to the scientific, economic, social, aesthetic, and cultural needs of the Nation; and to formulate and recommend national policies to promote the improvement of the quality of the environment.

Criteria Pollutants - The CAA of 1970 required the USEPA to set air quality standards for common and widespread pollutants in order to protect human health and welfare. There are six "criteria pollutants": ozone, carbon monoxide, sulfur dioxide, lead, nitrogen dioxide, and particulate matter.

Cultural Resources - The physical evidence of our Nation's heritage. Included are archaeological sites; historic buildings, structures, and districts; and localities with social significance to the human community.

Cumulative Impact - The impact on the environment that results from the incremental impact of the action when added to other past, present, and reasonably foreseeable future actions regardless of what agency (federal or non- federal) or person undertakes such other actions. Cumulative impacts can result from individually minor but collectively significant actions taking place over a period of time (40 CFR 1508.7).

Decibel (dB) - A unit of measurement of sound pressure level.

Direct Impact - A direct impact is caused by a Proposed Action and occurs at the same time and place.

Emission - A release of a pollutant.

Endangered Species - Any species which is in danger of extinction throughout all or a significant portion of its range.

Environmental Assessment (EA) - An EA is a publication that provides sufficient evidence and analyses to show whether a proposed system will adversely affect the environment or be environmentally controversial.

Environmental Justice - The fair treatment and meaningful involvement of all people regardless of race, color, national origin, or income with respect to the development, implementation, and enforcement of environmental laws, regulations, and policies.

Erosion - The wearing away of the land surface by detachment and movement of soil and rock fragments through the action of moving water and other geological agents.

Floodplain - The relatively flat area or lowlands adjoining a river, stream, ocean, lake, or other body of water that is susceptible to being inundated by floodwaters.

Fugitive Dust - Particles light enough to be suspended in air, but not captured by a filtering system. For this document, this refers to particles put in the air by moving vehicles and air movement over disturbed soils at construction sites.

Geology - Science which deals with the physical history of the earth, the rocks of which it is composed, and physical changes in the earth.

Groundwater - Water found below the ground surface. Groundwater may be geologic in origin and as pristine as it was when it was entrapped by the surrounding rock, or it may be subject to daily or seasonal effects depending on the local hydrologic cycle. Groundwater may be pumped from wells and used for drinking water, irrigation, and other purposes. It is recharged by precipitation or irrigation water soaking into the ground. Thus, any contaminant in precipitation or irrigation water may be carried into groundwater.

Hazardous Materials - Hazardous materials are defined within several laws and regulations to have certain meanings. For this document, a hazardous material is any one of the following:

Any substance designated pursuant to section 311 (b)(2)(A) of the Clean Water Act.

Any element, compound, mixture, solution, or substance designated pursuant to Section 102 of Comprehensive Environmental Response, Compensation and Liability Act

Any hazardous substance as defined under the Resource Conservation and Recovery Act.

Any toxic pollutant listed under the Toxic Substances Control Act of 1976.

Any hazardous air pollutant listed under Section 112 of CAA.

Any imminently hazardous chemical substance or mixture with respect to which the EPA Administrator has taken action pursuant to Subsection 7 of the Toxic Substances Control Act.

The term does not include: 1) Petroleum, including crude oil or any thereof, which is not otherwise specifically listed or designated as a hazardous substance in a above. 2) Natural gas, natural gas liquids, liquefied natural gas, or synthetic gas usable for fuel (or mixtures of natural gas and such synthetic gas). A list of hazardous substances is found in 40 CFR 302.4.

Hazardous Waste - A solid waste which, when improperly treated, stored, transported, or disposed of, poses a substantial hazard to human health or the environment. Hazardous wastes are identified in 40 CFR 261.3 or applicable foreign law, rule, or regulation.

Hazardous Waste Storage - As defined in 40 CFR 260.10, "... the holding of hazardous waste for a temporary period, at the end of which the hazardous waste is treated, disposed of, or stored elsewhere".

Indirect Impact - An indirect impact is caused by a Proposed Action that occurs later in time or farther removed in distance but is still reasonably foreseeable. Indirect impacts may include induced changes in the pattern of land use, population density or growth rate, and related effects on air, water, and other natural and social systems. For example, referring to the possible direct impacts described above, the clearing of trees for new development may have an indirect impact on area wildlife by decreasing available habitat.

Jurisdictional Wetland – Areas that meet the wetland hydrology, vegetation, and hydric soil characteristics, and have a direct connection to the waters of the U.S. These wetlands are regulated by the USACE.

Listed Species - Any plant or animal designated by a state or the federal government as a threatened, endangered, special concern, or candidate species.

Mitigation - Measures taken to reduce adverse impacts on the environment.

National Ambient Air Quality Standards (NAAQS) - Nationwide standards set up by the USEPA for widespread air pollutants, as required by Section 109 of the Clean Air Act (CAA). Currently, six pollutants are regulated by primary and secondary NAAQS: carbon monoxide, lead, nitrogen dioxide, ozone, particulate matter, and sulfur dioxide.

National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) - U.S. statute that requires all federal agencies to consider the potential effects of major federal actions on the human and natural environment.

Non-attainment Area - An area that has been designated by the EPA or the appropriate state air quality agency as exceeding one or more national or state ambient air quality standards.

National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System (NPDES) - A provision of the Clean Water Act (CWA) that prohibits discharge of pollutants into waters of the United States unless a special permit is issued by the United States Environmental Protection Agency, a state, or, where delegated, a tribal government on an Indian reservation.

National Register of Historic Places (NRHP) – The nation's inventory of known historic properties that have been formally listed by the National Park Service (NPS). The National Register of Historic Places is administered by the NPS on behalf of the Secretary of the Interior. National Register listings include districts, landscapes, sites, buildings, structures, and objects that meet the set of criteria found in 36 CFR 60.4.

Parcel - A plot of land, usually a division of a larger area.

Particulates or Particulate Matter - Fine liquid or solid particles such as dust, smoke, mist, fumes, or smog found in air.

Pollutant - A substance introduced into the environment that adversely affects the usefulness of a resource.

Potable Water - Water which is suitable for drinking.

Prime Agricultural land - A special category of highly productive cropland that is recognized and described by the

U.S. Department of Agriculture's Natural Resources Conservation Service and receives special protection under the Surface Mining Law.

Scoping – An early and open process for determining the extent and variety of issues to be addressed and for identifying the significant issues related to a proposed action (40 CFR Part 1501.7). The scoping process helps not only to identify significant environmental issues deserving of study, but also to deemphasize insignificant issues, narrowing the scope of the NEPA process accordingly, and for early identification of what are and what are not the real issues (40 CFR Part 1500.5(d)). The scoping process identifies relevant issues related to a proposed action through the involvement of all potentially interested or affected parties (affected federal, state, and local agencies; recognized Indian tribes; interest groups, and other interested persons) in the environmental analysis and documentation.

Sensitive Receptors - Include, but are not limited to, asthmatics, children, and the elderly, as well as specific facilities, such as long-term health care facilities, rehabilitation centers, convalescent centers, retirement homes, residences, schools, playgrounds, and childcare centers.

Significant Impact - According to 40 CFR 1508.27, "significance" as used in NEPA requires consideration of both context and intensity.

Context. The significance of an action must be analyzed in several contexts such as society as a whole (human, national), the affected region, the affected interests, and the locality. Significance varies with the setting of the Proposed Action. For instance, in the case of a site-specific action, significance would usually depend upon the effects in the locale rather than in the world as a whole. Both short- and long-term effects are relevant.

Intensity. This refers to the severity of impact. Responsible officials must bear in mind that more than one agency may make decisions about partial aspects of a major action.

Soil - The mixture of altered mineral and organic material at the earth's surface that supports plant life.

Solid Waste - Any discarded material that is not excluded by section 261.4(a) or that is not excluded by variance granted under sections 260.30 and 260.31.

Threatened species - Any species that is likely to become an endangered species within the foreseeable future throughout all or a significant portion of its range.

Topography - The relief features or surface configuration of an area.

Waters of the United States - Include the following: territorial seas and traditional navigable waters; tributaries; lakes, ponds, and impoundments of jurisdictional waters; and adjacent wetlands.

Watershed - The region draining into a particular stream, river, or entire river system.

Wetlands - Areas that are regularly saturated by surface or groundwater and, thus, are characterized by a prevalence of vegetation that is adapted for life in saturated soil conditions. Examples include swamps, bogs, fens, marshes, and estuaries.

Wildlife Habitat - Set of living communities in which a wildlife population lives.