FINDING OF NO SIGNIFICANT IMPACT (FONSI)

DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS

ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT OF THE PROPOSED LAND TRANSFER FROM THE SEPULVEDA AMBULATORY CARE CENTER TO THE LOS ANGELES NATIONAL CEMETERY NORTH HILLS, LOS ANGELES COUNTY, CALIFORNIA

The U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) has prepared an Environmental Assessment (EA) to evaluate the potential physical, environmental, cultural, and socioeconomic impacts associated with the proposed transfer of 26.4 acres of land from the Sepulveda Ambulatory Care Center (SACC) for expansion of the Los Angeles National Cemetery (LANC) in North Hills (Los Angeles County), California.

PURPOSE AND NEED

The purpose of the Proposed Action is to provide expanded burial options at the LANC for Veterans and eligible family members in the greater Los Angeles area. This project is needed because the LANC is currently limited to columbaria burials and subsequent internments only.

DESCRIPTION OF PROPOSED ACTION AND ALTERNATIVES

The Proposed Action would transfer approximately 26.4 acres of land from east side of the SACC at 16111 Plummer St., North Hills, CA to the National Cemetery Administration (NCA) for construction of a new national cemetery to expand burial options and capacity of the LANC. The new cemetery would provide casketed and other in-ground burial options and create additional capacity to continue providing National Cemetery burial benefits to the Veteran community in the greater Los Angeles area. NCA planners are projecting to provide approximately 56,265 gravesites along with associated supporting services and infrastructure.

Under the No Action Alternative, VA would not construct a new cemetery at the Project Site. The land would remain a part of the SACC. The current LANC at 950 S. Sepulveda Blvd. would remain the only national cemetery in the greater Los Angeles area. This cemetery only offers columbarium burials and has no options for casketed or other in ground burials. Therefore, eligible Veterans in the greater Los Angeles area will need to continue using private cemeteries for local casket burial services or travel approximately 75 miles east of Los Angeles to the Riverside National Cemetery in Riverside, California, for these services.

SUMMARY OF ENVIRONMENTAL CONSEQUENCES

Cemetery construction is expected to result in minor to moderate short-term impacts associated with air emissions (e.g., dust, equipment and vehicle exhaust), noise, and transportation. Other negligible impacts include potential for soil erosion, stormwater runoff, and solid waste generation. Operation of the National Cemetery has the potential to generate noise and draw upon irrigation resources. The minimization and management measures outlined in the EA and included in Appendix A to this FONSI will minimize the potential for these adverse impacts.

There would be negligible or minor net beneficial effects on the local socioeconomic and environmental justice from increased employment opportunities during cemetery construction as well as availability of Veteran cemetery services to local Veteran populations.

AGENCY AND PUBLIC COMMENT

The Notice of Availability for the draft EA was published in the *Los Angeles Times* newspaper on January 27 and 29, 2023, and notices were mailed to selected federal, state, and local agencies, elected officials, Native American Tribes, and other key stakeholders. The California State Historic Preservation Officer provided concurrence that no historic properties would be affected by the Proposed Action. The draft EA was made available for review in print at the Mid-Valley Regional Library and for electronic download from the VA website. Two comments were received during the comment period and addressed in the final EA.

FINDING OF NO SIGNIFICANT IMPACT

Based on the impacts analyses in the EA, which is summarized and incorporated by reference herein, it is the conclusion of VA that the implementation of the Proposed Action would not generate significant public controversy nor have a significant adverse impact on the quality of the natural or human environment within the meaning of Section 102(2c) of NEPA. Therefore, preparation of an Environmental Impact Statement is not required.

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Executive Director, NCA Pacific District
VA National Cemetery Administration

Attachment A. Minimization and Management Measures Incorporated into the Proposed Action in this EA

Technical Resource Area	Minimization and Management Measures
Air Quality (Section 3.2)	Apply SCAQMD Rule 403 Best Available Control Measures for fugitive dust, including: • Apply water or other soil stabilizers to exposed surfaces (e.g., parking areas, staging areas, soil piles, graded areas, and unpaved access roads) in sufficient quantity to prevent generation of dust plumes • Stabilize exposed soil with vegetation or mulching to minimize erosion and dust generation • Pre-water soils prior to trenching • Limit vehicle speeds on unpaved areas to 15 miles per hour. • Apply gravel/paving to all haul routes as soon as possible to all future roadway areas • Install and utilize a wheel washing system to remove bulk material from tires and vehicle undercarriages before vehicles exit the site • Cover all haul trucks transporting soil, sand, or other loose material off-site.
	Require nonroad trucks and construction equipment to meet or exceed USEPA Tier 4 exhaust emissions standards for heavy-duty nonroad compression-ignition engines
	Require a registered Cal/OSHA asbestos abatement contractor to perform all disturbance and/or removal of asbestos containing material (ACM). Removal work shall be conducted in accordance with SCAQMD's Rule 1403 and Cal/OSHA requirements for removal work as well as other applicable state and federal rules and regulations.
Cultural and Historic Resources (Section 3.3)	In the event that cultural resources are discovered during ground disturbing activities, all work in the immediate vicinity of the find (within a 60-foot buffer) will cease and a qualified archaeologist meeting Secretary of Interior standards will assess the find to determine eligibility. As requested by the FTBMI, after the archaeologist makes an initial assessment of the nature of the find, the tribe will be contacted about any pre-contact and/or post-contact finds to provide Tribal input with regards to significance and treatment. If the finding is deemed significant, a professional Native American monitor procured by the FTBMI will be retained to observe all remaining ground-disturbing activities.
Geology and Soils (Section 3.4)	Obtain a National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System (NPDES) Construction General Permit and develop and implement a site-specific Stormwater Pollution Prevention Plan (SWPPP)
	Comply with the requirements of VA specification 01 57 19, Temporary Environmental Controls, for the protection of erodible soils, including the installation of erosion and sedimentation control devices such as berms, dikes, drains, sedimentation basins, grassing, and mulching.
Noise (Section 3.7)	Implement noise control as outlined in VA specification 01 57 19, Temporary Environmental Controls, which requires providing sound-deadening devices on equipment, using shields or other physical barriers to restrict noise transmission, and providing sound-proof housings or enclosures for noise-producing machinery.
	Comply with City of Los Angeles construction noise ordinance limits on construction hours (LAMC 41.40)
	Design and install landscaping that provides a noise buffer from sensitive receptors surrounding the Project Site

Technical Resource Area	Minimization and Management Measures
Solid Waste and Hazardous Materials (Section 3.11)	Develop and implement a construction and demolition debris recycling plan to divert project waste from local landfills
Transportation and Parking (Section 3.12)	Prepare and implement a Work Zone Transportation Management Plan including the following elements: • Schedule project-generated construction truck trips outside the peak commute hours to reduce potential traffic congestion during peak morning and evening commute periods. • Comply with transportation permit requirements of Caltrans and California Highway Patrol when scheduling construction truck trips carrying oversized loads. In addition, provide pre-notification to local-police, fire, and emergency service providers of the timing, location, and duration of construction activities that could affect the movement of emergency vehicles on area roadways. • Place signs along appropriate roads to notify drivers of construction traffic throughout the duration of the construction period. Advance warning signs (e.g., "ROAD WORK AHEAD," "SLOW TRUCKS," and/or "TRUCKS TURNING AHEAD"), flaggers, and speed control (including signs informing drivers of state-legislated double fines for speed infractions in a construction zone) shall be provided to achieve required speed reductions for safe traffic flow through the work zone.
Utilities (Section 3.13)	Use low-moisture-tolerant species suited to the Los Angeles area to minimize irrigation needs