U.S. DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS

FINDING OF NO SIGNIFICANT IMPACT (FONSI)
PROPOSED TRANSFER OF LAND FROM THE MARION VETERAN AFFAIRS MEDICAL CENTER TO THE MARION NATIONAL CEMETERY
U.S. DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS
MARION, INDIANA

The United States (U.S.) Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) has prepared an environmental assessment (EA) to identify, analyze, and document the potential environmental impacts associated with the proposed transfer of land from the Marion VA Medical Center (VAMC) to the Marion National Cemetery for the future phased expansion of the cemetery. The EA broadly evaluated the future phased expansion of the Marion National Cemetery within the transferred land, Marion VAMC's retention of an easement, and the construction of sewer mains and road within the land proposed for transfer. The project is located within the Marion VAMC campus in the City of Marion, Indiana.

VA prepared the EA in accordance with the National Environmental Policy Act of 1969 (NEPA; 42 United States Code [U.S.C.] 4321 et seq.), the President's Council on Environmental Quality Regulations Implementing the Procedural Provisions of NEPA (40 Code of Federal Regulations [CFR] Parts 1500–1508), Environmental Effects of the Department of Veterans Affairs Actions (38 CFR Part 26), and VA's NEPA Interim Guidance for Projects.

PURPOSE AND NEED

The purpose of the Proposed Action is to expand the Marion National Cemetery. The Proposed Action is needed to meet the anticipated demands of Veterans and eligible family members in northern Indiana and the surrounding area for the next 100 or more years.

PROPOSED ACTION

The Proposed Action consists of three elements:

1. The transfer of approximately 16.8 acres of land from the Marion VAMC to the Marion National Cemetery.
2. Marion VAMC's retention of an easement within the 16.8 acres for the
    a. construction and operation of replacement sewer mains and
    b. the construction of a road overlying the sewer mains.
3. Marion National Cemetery's future phased expansion of the cemetery within the transferred land.

Of the three elements of the Proposed Action, VA has specific plans and timelines for the first two elements. Thus, this EA analyzed the first two elements in detail. Conversely, because the future phased expansion of the Marion National Cemetery is conceptual at this time, the EA only broadly analyzed the potential impacts associated with the future phased expansion of the cemetery. When future phased expansion plans are available and ripe for detailed analysis, VA would conduct additional NEPA analysis and regulatory agency consultations, as necessary.

ALTERNATIVES

The EA examined two alternatives—the Proposed Action and the No Action Alternative—defined as follows:

- **Proposed Action:** VA would transfer land from Marion VAMC to Marion National Cemetery, retain an easement for replacement sewer mains, construct a road overlying the sewer mains, and perform future phased expansions of the cemetery.
- **No Action Alternative:** VA would not implement the Proposed Action. The Marion National Cemetery would not expand the cemetery and proposed improvements would not occur. The No Action Alternative does not meet the purpose of and need for the Proposed Action. However, as required by the VA NEPA regulations (38 CFR Part 26), the No Action Alternative is evaluated in VA EAs and provides a benchmark against which VA can compare the impacts of the Proposed Action.

SUMMARY OF ENVIRONMENTAL CONSEQUENCES

Table 1 summarizes the potential environmental effects associated with implementing the alternatives. The project-specific measures in Attachment A are incorporated into the Proposed Action and would ensure the impacts would be less than significant.

Table 1 Summary of Potential Environmental Consequences

Resource	Proposed Action	No Action
Aesthetics	Less than significant impact	No impact
Air Quality	Less than significant impact	No impact
Cultural Resources	Less than significant impact	No impact
Geology and Soils	Less than significant impact	No impact
Hydrology and Water Quality	Less than significant impact	No impact
Wildlife and Habitat	Less than significant impact	No impact
Noise	Less than significant impact	No impact
Land Use	Less than significant impact	No impact
Floodplains, Wetlands, and Coastal Zone Management	No impact	No impact
Socioeconomics	Less than significant impact	No impact
Community Services	Less than significant impact	No impact
Solid Waste and Hazardous Materials	Less than significant impact	No impact
Transportation and Parking	Less than significant impact	No impact
Utilities	Less than significant impact	No impact
Environmental Justice	Less than significant impact	Less than significant impact

AGENCY AND PUBLIC COMMENT

VA published a project scoping notice in the *Marion Chronicle-Tribune* on September 30th and October 1st, 2022, and posted the scoping notice to the VA Office of Construction and Facilities Maintenance (CFM) website. VA also emailed scoping notices to federal, state, tribal, and local stakeholders. VA received five responses to the scoping notification and addressed relevant comments in the EA where applicable.

VA made the Draft EA available for public review by announcing the availability of the Draft EA in a notice of availability (NOA) published in the *Marion Chronicle-Tribune* on February 15th and 16th, 2023, by posting the NOA to the VA CFM website, and by notifying federal, state, tribal, and local stakeholders via email. The VA also made the Draft EA and NOA available at the Marion Public Library. VA received one comment on the Draft EA and addressed the comment in the Final EA.

VA initiated Section 106 consultation with the Indiana State Historic Preservation Officer (SHPO). On March 21, 2023, the SHPO concurred with VA's finding no adverse effect on historic properties.

FINDING OF NO SIGNIFICANT IMPACT

Based on the impacts analyses in the EA, which is summarized and incorporated by reference herein, VA concludes that implementing the Proposed Action would not 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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Joshua de Leon
Executive Director, NCA Midwest District
VA National Cemetery Administration

ATTACHMENT A
MITIGATION MEASURES INCORPORATED INTO THE PROPOSED ACTION

VA would implement the following mitigation measures as part of the Proposed Action to address potential impacts to cultural resources and wildlife and habitat:

Cultural Resources

As per the 2018 Memorandum of Agreement (MOA) with the Indiana State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO), the Marion VAMC will engage with a professional (qualified per 36 CFR § 61) to evaluate remaining structures and to discuss revisions to the district boundary with the Survey and Register staff of the Indiana SHPO. If necessary, revisions to the district boundary are found by both parties, Marion VAMC will draft a National Register of Historic Places (NRHP) "Boundary Adjustment" document and request review and signature by Indiana SHPO following the notification process outlines in 36 CFR § 61. Following Indiana SHPO concurrence or comment, the Marion VAMC may submit the Boundary Adjustment document to the National Park Service – NRHP office.

Wildlife and Habitat

If tree clearing cannot be conducted outside of the bat roosting season, a summer presence/absence survey would be conducted to confirm that protected bats are not present prior to tree clearing. The Marion National Cemetery would re-evaluate the potential for protected species during the cemetery expansion design and would coordinate and consult with USFWS and the Indiana Department of Natural Resources prior to any Cemetery construction, as necessary.

Construction activities requiring vegetation removal or disturbance would avoid the peak nesting period of March through August to avoid destruction of individuals, nests, or eggs. If project activities must be conducted during this time, VA would survey for nests prior to conducting work. If a nest is found, and if possible, VA would retain a buffer of vegetation around the nest until the young have fledged or the nest is abandoned.

In addition, VA would:

- Revegetate all bare and disturbed areas with a mixture of grasses (excluding all varieties of tall fescue) and legumes as soon as possible upon completion; turf-type grasses (including low-endophyte, friendly endophyte, and endophyte free tall fescue but excluding all other varieties of tall fescue) may be used in regularly mowed areas only.
- Minimize and contain within the project limits all tree clearings.
- Not cut any trees suitable for Indiana bat or Northern Long-eared bat roosting (greater than 5 inches diameter-at-breast-height, living or dead, with loose hanging bark, or with cracks, crevices, or cavities) from April 1 through September 30.
- Plant five trees, 1 inch to 2 inches in diameter-at-breast height, for each tree which is removed that is 10 inches or greater in diameter-at-breast height.