

# Transcript

October 7, 2025, 6:29PM

BA

**Bennett, Alec (CFM)** 1:06

So hello everyone here in the East Coast, it's 2:30 PM. So I just want to give it another minute or two while people are still joining the call and then we will get started.

So I see it's almost.

So it's 232.

Here on the East Coast and to respect everyone's time, I'm going to get started.

Thank you.

For participating in this webinar.

For the state Veterans Home Construction grant program, this webinar is intended to just kind of provide background and talk through a proposed draft nationwide programmatic agreement for the program.

On behalf of the US Department of Veterans Affairs.

This is part of our overall.

National Historic Preservation Act kind of compliance protocol. Next slide please.

So before I jump in before we get started.

You know, this meeting is being recorded for those who not able to participate. the VA is also taking notes, and we'll retain a summary for the administrative record.

If you would prefer not to be recorded, please decide either to just listen today.

Or sign out and e-mail the historic Preservation office at the e-mail address that is on the screen.

VA does acknowledge that consultation is A2 way government to government exchange.

VA will meet with any tribal or native Hawaiian leader or their section 106 representative that requests a private or one-on-one meeting or discussion concerning the proposed MPA.

Or any state Veterans Home program undertaking.

Please use the e-mail on the screen.

To to arrange a meeting.

Next slide please.

Thank you for joining today's meeting to discuss VA's proposed nationwide programmatic agreement for state Veterans Home program.

It has been about a year since we had.

A meeting about this proposal.

My name is Al Bennett.

I am the deputy Federal Preservation officer for the US Department of Veterans Affairs.

I am joined by today by a couple.

Of my VA colleagues, including.

Angela McArdle, who is the VA Federal preservation officer.

Before we get started, Please note that the chat feature will be monitored throughout this call.

You can ask questions or post comments in the chat.

We do ask that you use the chat feature if you have a kind of specific document or Web page reference so that we can record that link correctly.

These notes will be included in the administrative record.

We will pause the presentation at a couple of points to make room for questions.

We will also take questions at the end of the presentation.

You please feel free to use the hand raised feature if you would like to ask a question or provide a comment.

The comment period on the draft nationwide programmatic agreement remains open through October 17th.

The asks that you provide recommendations and suggestions via e-mail.

These comments will be collated reviewed.

Summarized.

And posted to the VA Historic Preservation Office website.

This is the second round of meetings related to the proposed MPA. If you have a colleague or know of someone who cannot attend today, please let them know that registration remains open.

They can register by sending an e-mail or visit, visiting the VA Historic Preservation Office website.

We will be holding one more of these webinars.

Tomorrow afternoon.

Next slide please.

So the purpose of this meeting.

VA distributed the night the draft nationwide programmatic agreement for the state Veterans Home Grant program in September.

That draft was included in the e-mail notifying you of this webinar.

It is also available online on the VA Historic Preservation Office website.

The purpose of today's meeting is to discuss the draft nationwide programmatic agreement.

In the interest of everyone's time, VA intends to discuss these kind of specific stipulations that are here on the screen. But.

Will open the floor at the end of the presentation to comments about other portions of the draft.

Huh.

Next, next slide please.

So stipulation 6 in the nationwide programmatic agreement relates to the proposed exemptions, specifically undertaken undertakings that have been identified to fall below the threshold.

For adverse effects historic properties.

It is important to note that these exemptions would apply only in undertakings without ground disturbance or if ground disturbance is required.

In areas that have been determined not to contain intact archaeological deposits, either because the land was tested in the last 10 years or because the area does not have the potential due to known disturbance.

And.

And that the state home subject to the undertaking, was constructed after 1985 or determined, not historic, through consultation.

If these conditions are met, VA would, or, if the excuse me, if these conditions are not met. If these conditions are not met, then VA would follow standard section 106 consultation.

Now, in addition to this on the slide, we do want to make clear that VA would follow standard Section 106 consultation for certain types of state veterans, home grants, certain types of undertakings, including the construction of new state veterans, home facilities within the program these types.

Projects are often known as bed replacement projects.

I did want to take the time during this webinar to kind of introduce that term.

That is a term that is used within the state Veterans Home Grant program to to really specifically.

Refer to you know new construction of facilities.

In addition to this.

Demolition projects.

Would follow the standard.

Section 106. Process.

Next slide please.

So this slide calls out Appendix B in the proposed nationwide programmatic agreement appendix.

B includes a list of the proposed exemptions.

One thing that I do want to call out is that the state Veterans Home Grant program has these kind of broad categories for certain types of projects.

You know, safety projects are one of these broad categories.

Many state Veterans Home grants.

Support safety projects such.

Safety projects such as nurse call systems or infection control. Those would be the types of projects that would be included under Appendix B.

Those would be the types of projects that would be part of this exemption list.

Other exempted projects.

Relate to renovations or alterations of existing buildings and infrastructure.

You know, and other types of projects, you know relating to, for example, mold remediation.

Roof replacements.

And other and other.

Interior space renovations. All of these types of projects, you know, connect to the terminology within the the state home grant program and would be part of this Appendix B.

So let me just take my breath there.

Are there any questions about the proposed process and stipulation 6 or the list and Appendix B?

So hearing no questions, I'm going to move on to the next slide.

So this slide relates to.

Stipulation one of the kind of smaller parts and stipulation 6 relating to high probability for archaeological deposits.

After we submitted.

The draft NPA out to out for public comments. We have received a comment from a stakeholder.

You know, asking a question about this stipulation.

And so.

Because of that comment, we did want to.

You know.

Call your attention to the stipulation we want to make sure the consulting parties you know are aware, so if you do have comments relating to this particular stipulation, you know, please e-mail the historic preservation at VA Gov e-mail address.

As mentioned, VA will will consider all comments.

Next slide please.

So for this stipulation.

As we discussed in our earlier calls from last fall, one of VA's primary goals in pursuing this NPA is the establishment of emergency or disaster response procedures.

One of the big reasons why we're doing this is because during the COVID-19 pandemic, the the state Veterans Home.

Construction Grant program did receive dedicated funds.

That were connected to the Cares Act were directly connected to COVID response.

And because there had been the emergency declaration.

Virginia did utilize emergency procedures for those.

Projects.

One of the.

Kind of consistent feedback that we did receive from the Advisory Council on Historic Preservation, ACHP recommended that, you know, VA put in place emergency procedures.

For this program.

And so that is, you know, a part of how we how we got here.

So the proposed procedures relate to VA's role.

As the Grand Tour of funds, this is a important point to kind of keep in mind. You know, VA is granting funds to state veterans homes for construction.

These are not.

VA owned facilities state veterans homes are owned and operated by states.

Under.

The 38 CFR part 59.

You know there is a a grant program.

VA you know, matches states for certain qualified construction projects. That is the

the state veteran's Home grant program.

But these are not, you know, facilities that are run by Virginia, staffed by Virginia.

These are, you know, state facilities. And so it is important to keep in mind, you know, when we're talking about kind of emergency response.

You know, VA is the grantor of funds, but it's really those.

State agencies that are, you know, working these facilities and kind of responding to emergency, responding to a disaster.

So you know, in the draft, NPA in the proposed NPA?

First, Virginia would apply the exemptions that we have already covered.

Two emergency responses.

So for example, if there was a, you know, replacement nurse call system, that was part of an emergency response that would be exempt.

Just as it was following the regular procedures.

In in stipulation 6.

If a proposed undertaking was not exempted, VA would consult.

You know, within the comment period afforded by 36 CFR 812.

B. You know and then the other piece to this, if the in the event of a ongoing disaster or an emergency, you know kind of similar to the COVID-19 pandemic.

VA has requested that that ACHP extend.

And the 30 day period afforded by 812.

D.

So let me stop there. Are there any questions related to this stipulation to the proposed emergency and disaster response procedures?

OK, hearing none.

Next slide please.

This slide is just intended for kind of an open discussion. If there are any questions or comments related to any portion of the draft or the grant program.

Well, one thing just to you know, reiterate, you know if you have, you know, specific tax recommendations, specific comments you know, please feel free to you know send us an e-mail if you would like to comment now in the chat please do so and and follow up V.

E-mail we are welcome to accept comments that way.

None. Next slide please.

So this slide really outlines the next steps for this process.

VA has been.

Capturing a summary of each of these consultation meetings.  
And we will post that to the historic Preservation Office website.  
We would appreciate it if all comments on the draft be cemented by October 17th.  
Once that comment period is over.  
You know, my office will be reviewing all of the comments, all of the.  
Feedback that we've received and then we are going to be developing a matrix.  
That matrix will include.  
You know comments and responses and we are going to post that to the.  
VA Historic Preservation Office website we will also be pushing that out via e-mail.  
We will.  
You know, consider all comments that we received and then you know on that basis  
make make edits and revisions to the draft.  
Next slide please.  
So here again, this is our, you know, website that's dedicated to this initiative. I  
believe that it's also been posted into the chat.  
And and here again is the you know e-mail address that that we're using to.  
Take in comments.  
If there are no other.  
Questions. Next slide please.  
I just wanted to say thank you.  
For signing in.  
We.  
You know, certainly appreciate the engagement and feedback.  
You know, we will.  
You know, as said, you know, take into account.  
Any comments responses we receive from you about the proposal and?  
You know.  
Provide you with.  
Our responses as well, so.  
With that, you know I I do.  
Thank you again for, you know, logging on to the webinar.  
And you know, we will certainly be in touch after the comment period as we as we  
move this initiative forward.  
Thank you.

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