
FINDING OF NO SIGNIFICANT IMPACT
U.S. DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS
OHIO WESTERN RESERVE NATIONAL CEMETERY
PHASE 4 GRAVESITE DEVELOPMENT, CEMETERY IMPROVEMENTS, AND MASTER
PLANNING
MEDINA COUNTY, OHIO

BACKGROUND

The U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) has prepared a Final Environmental Assessment (EA) to analyze the potential environmental impacts associated with the Proposed Action: Phase 4 Gravesite Development and Cemetery Improvements Project and Master Planning at the Ohio Western Reserve National Cemetery (OWRNC) located at 10175 Rawiga Road in Seville, Medina County, Ohio. VA National Cemetery Administration (NCA) operates the existing OWRNC. The EA was prepared in accordance with the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) of 1969 (42 United States Code 4321 et seq.), the President's Council on Environmental Quality Regulations Implementing the Procedural Provisions of NEPA (40 Code of Federal Regulations 1500-1508), VA's NEPA regulations (38 CFR 26), and the VA NEPA Interim Guidance for Projects (VA 2010). The attached EA is incorporated by reference into this Finding of No Significant Impact (FONSI).

The purpose of the Proposed Action is to develop additional gravesites, make improvements to the existing cemetery, and master plan for future expansions in order to provide additional burial sites for eligible individuals once the existing OWRNC is at capacity. The Proposed Action would allow VA to continue to provide interment options for eligible Veterans in the region.

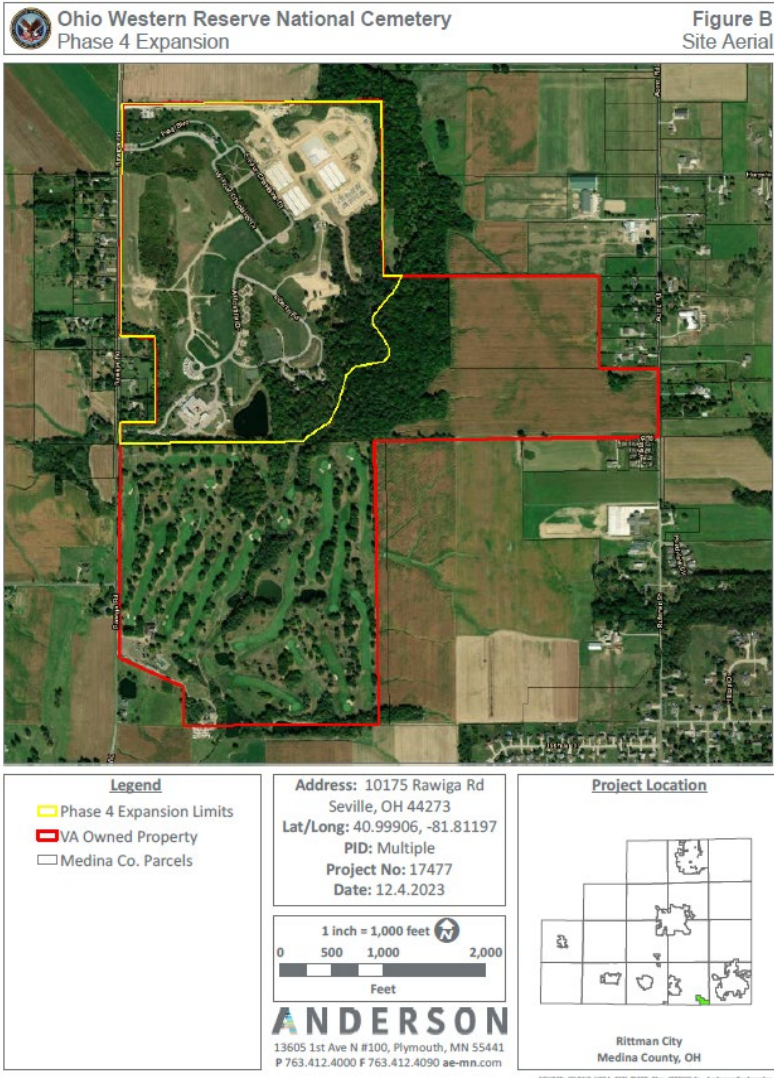
The need for the Proposed Action is to address the projected depletion of remaining interment capacity at OWRNC, in addition to providing necessary improvements to the existing cemetery and planning for future expansions. The Proposed Action would provide VA additional capacity to meet its burial objectives for eligible Veterans in the region. The current OWRNC has expected capacity until the Phase 4 Expansion is expected to be online.

DESCRIPTION OF THE PROPOSED ACTION AND ALTERNATIVES

Proposed Action

The proposed Phase 4 Gravesite Development and Cemetery Improvements (Proposed Action) will include development of the remaining usable land within the current cemetery extents (between Rawiga Rd and Tommy Run). The Proposed Action would develop 6,555 pre-placed crypts, 5,100 in-ground cremain sites, 417 traditional burial sites, and 10,422 columbarium niches. The Proposed Action is expected to contain site elements consistent with the existing cemetery including vehicle and pedestrian pavements, burial sites, columbaria courts, irrigation, storm sewer, and other site infrastructure included but not limited to utilities, roads, signage, and site furnishing. Phase 4 will also include bank stabilization along portions of Tommy Run. The Proposed Action also includes the Master Planning for future phases of expansion onto VA owned lands east of Tommy Run that includes an active agricultural field VA owns and leases for active crop production, and the Rawiga Golf Club to the south of the OWRNC.

VA would follow the NCA Facilities Design Guide while preparing for the Proposed Action. Prior to construction, VA would obtain all applicable Federal, State, and local permits for the Proposed Action from appropriate government authorities. VA would avoid any significant onsite environmental resources through sensitive site design, including avoidance of significant natural resources.



No Action Alternative

Under the No Action Alternative, the Proposed Action Alternative and Master Planning would not be implemented. Veterans and their families in the region would continue to use the OWRNC until interment options are no longer available. In the future, VA would likely seek other land to expand the OWRNC but may not be able to acquire the land contiguous with or near the existing OWRNC. With the No Action Alternative, the VA would not be able to continue offering interment options to the veterans and families within the service area after current burial options are full.

SUMMARY OF ENVIRONMENTAL ANALYSIS

The Final EA analyzed the existing physical, environmental, cultural, and socioeconomic conditions at the Cemetery, the Proposed Action area, and its general vicinity, with emphasis on those resources potentially affected by the Proposed Action. Effects were identified as either significant, minor (that is, common effects that would not be of the context or intensity to be considered significant under NEPA or CEQ Regulations), less-than-significant, or no effect. Where appropriate and clearly discernible, each effect is identified as either adverse or beneficial. Table 1 summarizes these findings and the potential environmental effects of the Proposed Action Alternative and the No Action Alternative. A detailed analysis of the potential effects to these resource areas is provided in the Final EA.

Table 1. Summary of Resource Area Impacts

Resource Area	Proposed Action Alternative	No Action Alternative
Aesthetics	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Minor temporary adverse impacts during construction. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No Impacts.
Air Quality	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Minor temporary adverse impacts during construction. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No Impacts.
Cultural Resources	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No Impacts. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No Impacts.
Geology, Topography, and Soils	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Utilize recommendations from Geotechnical Report to avoid adverse impacts to soils. No adverse impacts anticipated if BMPs and recommendations are followed. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No Impacts.
Hydrology and Water Quality	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Implement BMPs to limit adverse impacts during construction related to soil erosion and sedimentation. • Designed stormwater features and systems will be utilized to avoid impacts to downstream water resources. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No Impacts.
Wildlife and Habitat	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Minor, less than significant adverse impacts to wildlife. Utilize BMPs from USFWS and ODNR. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No Impacts.
Noise	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Minor temporary adverse impacts during construction. • Minor adverse impacts from traffic, site maintenance, and burial gun salutes similar to existing conditions at existing OWRNC. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No Impacts.
Land Use	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No impacts to Phase 4 expansion. Minor impacts from master planning future phases in the agricultural field to the east and Rawiga Golf Club to the south. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No Impacts.
Floodplains, Wetlands, Coastal Zone Management	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Minor, less than significant impacts to floodplain around Tommy Run where bank stabilization will occur. • Potential long-term benefits to Tommy Run from bank stabilization and erosion prevention. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No Impacts.
Socioeconomics	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Positive beneficial impact to regional economy via design, construction, and maintenance jobs. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No Impacts.
Community Services	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No impacts. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No Impacts.
Solid Waste and Hazardous Materials	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Potential minor temporary adverse impacts during construction. Mitigation via BMPs in Section 4.0 to lessen impacts. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No Impacts.
Transportation and Parking	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Temporary adverse impacts during construction as vehicles and equipment go to and from the site. • Minor increases anticipated during operation of cemetery, but existing roadways have capacity to handle additional traffic. • All parking would be designed for the expansion to accommodate additional visitors. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No Impacts.
Utilities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No impacts. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No Impacts.
Environmental Justice	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No impacts. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No Impacts.
Cumulative Impacts	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No impacts. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No Impacts.

AGENCY AND PUBLIC COMMENT

VA consulted the federal, state, local, tribal, and elected officials listed in Section 5.0 Public Involvement of the Final EA as part of an initial scoping process for this EA. A scoping notice was also posted to the VA website and published in the Medina Gazette on February 17 and 20, 2024. A Draft EA was prepared, and a Notice of Availability (NOA) sent out to the listed stakeholders. The Draft EA and NOA were also posted to the VA website and made available as hard copies at the OWRNC, Seville Public Library located at 45 Center Street Seville, Ohio 44273, and the Wayne County Public Library – Rittman Branch located at 75 N Main Street Rittman, Ohio 44270. Comments received during the scoping and Draft EA comment period can be found in Section 5.0 Public Involvement in the Final EA and were utilized to prepare the Final EA.

Copies of correspondence received during the initial scoping period and Draft EA comment period are included in Appendix B of the Final EA. Comments were received from the United States Fish and Wildlife Service, United States Environmental Protection Agency, United States Army Corp of Engineers, Ohio Department of Natural Resources, Ohio History Connection, Ohio Archaeological Council, and Forest County Potawatomi. Stakeholder information and comments have been incorporated into the Final EA, where and as appropriate. Additional details can be found in Section 5.0 Public Involvement of the Final EA and copies of relevant correspondence can be found in Appendix B. Agency Correspondence and Consultation of the Final EA.

FINDING OF NO SIGNIFICANT IMPACT

This FONSI is based on the attached Final EA. After review of the Final EA, VA concludes that the Proposed Action would not generate significant controversy or have a significant adverse effect on the quality of the human environment, provided the mitigation measures and monitoring laid out in the Final EA and Attachment A of this FONSI are followed. VA will implement these measures.

This analysis fulfills the requirements of the NEPA and is consistent with the VA and CEQ regulations implementing the NEPA. An Environmental Impact Statement is not required.

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Attachment A. Mitigation Measures and Monitoring

ATTACHMENT A. MITIGATION MEASURES AND MONITORING

Mitigation measures that are laid out here were compiled within the EA. Mitigation measures are to be used to avoid, minimize, rectify, reduce, or compensate for the adverse effects of an impact to the environment.

VA and its contractors would implement BMPs and satisfy all applicable regulatory requirements in association with the design, construction, and operation of the cemetery expansion and columbarium construction. These mitigation measures are described in the Final EA and are included as components of the Proposed Action Alternative. In general, implementation of such mitigation measures would maintain impacts at acceptable levels for all resource areas analyzed.

Affected Environment Area	BMPs/Minimization Measures
Aesthetic	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use vegetative buffers to enhance viewscape. • Utilize VA Design Guidelines and match to the best extent possible existing exterior facades onsite.
Air Quality	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use appropriate dust suppression methods (such as the use of water, dust, palliative, covers, suspension of earth moving in high wind conditions) during onsite construction activities. • Stabilize disturbed area through re-vegetation or mulching if the area would be inactive for several weeks or longer. • Implement measures to reduce DPM emissions from construction equipment, such as reducing idling time and using newer equipment with emissions controls. • Comply with any applicable ND DEQ and US EPA / OEPA regulations. Utilize the EPA Construction Emission Control Checklist. • Comply with NCA Construction Air Quality Requirements.
Cultural Resources	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • If buried archaeological resources are discovered during construction, cease operation, and contact SHPO/Consulting Parties.
Geology and Soils	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Control soil erosion and sedimentation impacts during construction by implementing erosion prevention measures and complying with the National Pollution Discharge Elimination System (NPDES) permitting process. • Implement effective controls per a site-specific Stormwater Pollution Prevention Plan (SWPPP). • The NPDES permit would require stormwater runoff and erosion management using BMPs, such as earth berms, vegetative buffers and filter strips, and spill prevention and management techniques. • The construction contractor would implement the sedimentation and erosion control measures specified in the NPDES permit and the SWPPP to protect surface water quality.
Hydrology and Water Quality	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Control soil erosion and sedimentation impacts during construction by complying with the NPDES permit and the SWPPP. • Improvements would be designed in accordance with the requirements of EO 13514/EISA Section 438 with respect to stormwater runoff quantity and characteristics. • Ensure the design of the cemetery includes sufficient on-site stormwater management so as not to adversely affect the water quantity/quality in receiving waters and/or offsite areas. Obtain appropriate permits for off-site stormwater discharges.

Wildlife and Habitat	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Native species should be used to the extent practicable when revegetating land disturbed by construction to avoid the potential introduction of non-native or invasive species. • Proper cleaning of construction equipment should be done to the extent practicable, to prevent the spread of non-native/invasive species. • Avoid impacts to water resources to the best extent possible. Utilize BMPs to minimize erosion and sedimentation. • Tree clearing must occur between October 1 and March 31 to minimize impacts to listed bat species. • To the best extent possible, conserve trees with loose, shaggy bark and/or crevices, holes, or cavities, as well as trees with DBH \geq 20. • If a potential or known hibernaculum is found, the DOW recommends a 0.25-mile tree cutting and subsurface disturbance buffer around the hibernaculum entrance. • The DOW recommends no in-water work in perennial streams from March 15 through June 30 to reduce impacts to indigenous aquatic species and their habitat.
Noise	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Post signage at the entry points of the Site providing current construction information, including schedule and activity. Limit, to the extent possible, construction and associated heavy truck traffic to occur between 8:00 a.m. and 6:00 p.m. on Monday through Friday, or during normal, weekday, work hours. • Locate stationary operating equipment as far away from sensitive receptors as possible. • Select material transportation routes as far away from sensitive receptors as possible. • Shut down noise-generating heavy equipment when it is not needed and maintain equipment per manufacturer's recommendations to minimize noise generation. • Encourage construction personnel to operate equipment in the quietest manner practicable (e.g., speed restrictions, retarder brake restrictions, engine speed restrictions, etc.).
Land Use	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • None Required.
Floodplains, Wetlands, and Coastal Zone Management	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Permits will be required if impacts to floodplain or wetlands are proposed from FEMA, USACE, OEPA, and ODNR. • Coordinate permitting activities with the local floodplain administrator. • Utilize proper erosion and sediment controls around water resources to avoid impacts to onsite resources and downstream resources.
Socioeconomics	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • None Required.
Community Services	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • None Required.
Solid and Hazardous Waste	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Comply with VA Standard Operating Procedures and applicable Federal and State laws governing the use, generation, storage, transportation, and disposal of solid and hazardous materials.
Transportation and Parking	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure demolition and construction activities do not adversely affect traffic flow on local roadways; construction would be timed to avoid peak travel hours. • Ensure debris and/or soil is not deposited on local roadways during the demolition and construction activities.
Utilities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Contact applicable utility providers as needed if utility work or larger uses are proposed.
Environmental Justice	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • None Required.