FINDING OF NO SIGNIFICANT IMPACT

Fort Custer National Cemetery Phase III Expansion and Site Improvements

U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs

Introduction

A Final Environmental Assessment (EA) was prepared to identify, analyze, and document the physical, environmental, cultural, social, and economic impacts associated with the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) National Cemetery Administration's (NCA) Proposed Action to expand and improve the Fort Custer National Post Cemetery ("Cemetery") in Augusta, Michigan. The EA has been prepared in accordance with the following:

- National Environmental Policy Act of 1969 (NEPA; 42 United States Code [U.S.C.] 4321 et seq.)
- Environmental Effects of the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) Actions (38 CFR Part 26)
- The VA's NEPA Interim Guidance for Projects (VA 2010)
- Other relevant laws, regulations, and executive orders

Purpose and Need

The purpose of the Proposed Action Alternative is to provide 15 years of burial supply capacity by developing a portion of the remaining 476-acre undeveloped area of cemetery property, as well as site improvements for cemetery expansion and upgrades to existing facilities to address near-term need. The Proposed Action Alternative will enable the Cemetery to continue providing burial services and facilities for eligible veterans and their family members.

The Proposed Action Alternative is needed to address the projected depletion of remaining interment capacity at the Cemetery, in addition to providing necessary improvements to the Cemetery and planning for future expansions. Fort Custer is among the NCA's top 3 need areas due to depletion projections. The Proposed Action Alternative will provide the VA with additional capacity to meet its burial objectives for eligible veterans in the region.

Proposed Action

Under the Proposed Action Alternative, the VA will develop approximately 14.20 acres of the south portion of the undeveloped property east of Fort Custer Drive to provide a 15-year burial capacity of the following:

- **Pre-placed crypts (PPC)** - Five PPC sections of an equivalent to at least 3,600 PPCs will be to the southeast of the existing Administration Building and next to Dickman Road. All crypts will be numbered in accordance with VA guidelines.
- **In-ground cremains (IGC)** - Two IGC sections of an equivalent of no less than 6,800 IGCs will be east of the memorial path and south of existing burial Sections 14 and 15.
- **Columbarium niches** - The columbarium will add 3,360 niches, which will be to the northeast of the existing Administration Building and east of the memorial path.

Additionally, the Proposed Action Alternative will include development and improvements to the irrigation system, maintenance facilities, pedestrian pavement, storage buildings, the Administration Building, the Public Information Center (PIC)/Restroom Building, Committal Shelter A, stone walls throughout the Cemetery, and Pump House 3W02, as outlined in Section 2.1 of the EA.

The Proposed Action Alternative will meet the NCA's goal of providing eligible veterans and their family members with reasonable access to VA interment options. To fulfill its mission to honor veterans, the VA has determined that there is a need to continue providing veteran burial options at the Cemetery and to ensure future interment availability. The VA provides these benefits under the National Cemetery Act of 1973 and Title 38 U.S.C. Chapter 24. The VA will follow the NCA Facilities Design Guide while preparing for the Proposed Action Alternative. Prior to construction, the VA will obtain all applicable federal, state, and local permits for the Proposed Action Alternative from appropriate government authorities.

No Action Alternative

Under the No Action Alternative, the Proposed Action Alternative would not be implemented. Veterans and their families in the region would continue to use the Cemetery until interment options are no longer available, which is estimated to occur in the near future. 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 existing burial options are full.

The VA did not identify other alternative actions that would accomplish the defined purpose and need for the Proposed Action Alternative. The expansion and site development is in-line with the master plan for the Cemetery.

Potential Environmental Effects

Based on the analysis in the Final EA, the Proposed Action would result in no significant impacts. Table 1 summarizes the findings of the impact analysis by resource area.

Table 1. Findings of the Impact Analysis by Resource Area

Resources Area	Proposed Action	No Action Alternative
Aesthetics	The Proposed Action Alternative will not result in significant impacts to aesthetic resources. Temporary construction-related effects will be limited to the construction period, and permanent changes would be visually consistent with the existing cemetery setting.	There would be no direct, temporary construction-related impacts to aesthetics, and short-term effects would be negligible, site-specific, and neither noticeably adverse nor beneficial because visual conditions would remain generally unchanged. Over time, however, the No Action Alternative would be adverse because the condition and appearance of certain cemetery features would gradually decline with no action.
Air Quality	The Proposed Action Alternative will result in minor, temporary, and site-specific impacts to air quality, associated with construction activities like the operation of construction-related heavy machinery, road paving, and excavation and demolition operations. Upon completion of construction operations, temporary impacts to air quality will subside and the Proposed Action would have no significant impact on air quality.	Under the No Action Alternative, the Proposed Action Alternative would not be implemented and impacts related to air quality would not occur.

Resources Area	Proposed Action	No Action Alternative
Cultural and Historic Resources	The Proposed Action Alternative will result in permanent, site-specific, minor impacts on cultural and historic resources, associated with the demolition of the Storage Building, although the replacement structure will have the same function as the original. No impacts are anticipated from alterations to buildings and structures from the Proposed Action Alternative. Demolition of the Storage Building under the Proposed Action Alternative will have an adverse affect. A MOA will be completed prior to demolition.	Under the No Action Alternative, the Proposed Action Alternative would not be implemented, and impacts related to cultural and historic resources would not occur.
Geology and Soils	The Proposed Action Alternative will result in temporary, site-specific, minor adverse impacts to soils during construction. Following construction, the Proposed Action Alternative will have permanent, site-specific, minor adverse impacts in the developed footprint, where undeveloped land would be converted to developed cemetery use.	Under the No Action Alternative, no new development would occur at the Cemetery, and existing geology, topography, and soil conditions would remain unchanged. Therefore, there would be no impact to geology, topography, or soils.
Hydrology and Water Quality	The minimization measures and Best Management Practices (BMPs) will ensure that the construction and operation of the Proposed Action Alternative will result in temporary, site-specific, negligible adverse impacts to hydrology and water quality. Design elements associated with the Proposed Action Alternative will have beneficial, permanent impacts on hydrology and water quality.	Under the No Action Alternative, no new development would occur at the Cemetery, and existing hydrology and water quality conditions would remain unchanged. Therefore, there would be no impact to hydrology and water quality.

Resources Area	Proposed Action	No Action Alternative
Wildlife and Habitat	Implementation of the Proposed Action Alternative will remove the existing vegetation and displace the existing wildlife within the area as well as those species that use the project area intermittently or seasonally for nesting. The Proposed Action Alternative will not result in direct or indirect impacts on bald eagles. Activities under the Proposed Action Alternative may affect listed bat species due to tree clearing. The Proposed Action Alternative will not likely adversely affect the eastern massanauga. More consultation would be required with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service if the Mitchell's satyr butterfly is observed in the disturbance area. Mitigation measures will be taken to minimize potential impact on monarch butterflies.	Under the No Action Alternative, no new development would occur at the Cemetery. Therefore, no additional impacts to wildlife or habitat over existing conditions would occur as a result of the VA's continued actions.
Noise	The Proposed Action Alternative will have both 1) minor, short-term, site-specific and 2) negligible, long-term, site-specific adverse effects on sensitive noise receptors. These effects will be associated with construction activities and operational noises like ceremonial rifle salutes, respectively.	Under the No Action Alternative, the noise levels to surrounding properties would not change from current cemetery operations. No adverse noise effects would occur. The noise environment of the project area would not be altered.
Land Use	The Proposed Action Alternative will not result in significant land use impacts because it will be consistent with the existing and planned use of the cemetery property and will remain compatible with surrounding land uses.	Under the No Action Alternative, no new development would occur at the Cemetery, and existing land use patterns would remain unchanged. As a result, there would be no impact to land use.

Resources Area	Proposed Action	No Action Alternative
Floodplains, Wetlands, and Coastal Management	Under the Proposed Action Alternative, construction and operation activities would not occur in a floodplain and therefore will not have any impact. The Proposed Action Alternative will not have a significant impact on wetlands or other surface waters due to avoidance and the implementation of BMPs and final vegetative stabilization.	Under the No Action Alternative, construction of the Proposed Action Alternative would not occur. No impacts to floodplains, wetlands, and water resources would occur as a result of the VA's actions.
Socioeconomics	Construction activities associated with the Proposed Action Alternative are expected to generate short-term, direct, local, beneficial effects on employment and household income. The Proposed Action Alternative will have long-term benefits, including providing veteran families in the region with reasonable access to VA interment options and providing the public with upgraded infrastructure and facilities at the Cemetery. BMPs will be applied throughout construction to reduce and manage noise and fugitive dust, helping to limit potential adverse effects on children and other sensitive populations.	Under the No Action Alternative, the southeastern extent of the Cemetery would remain undeveloped. There would be no impacts related to socioeconomics associated with the No Action Alternative.
Community Services	No long or short-term, beneficial or adverse impacts related to community services will be associated with the Proposed Action Alternative.	Under the No Action Alternative, the eastern extent of the Cemetery would remain undeveloped. There would be no impacts related to community services associated with the No Action Alternative.

Resources Area	Proposed Action	No Action Alternative
Solid Waste and Hazardous Materials	The Proposed Action Alternative will result in direct impacts related to solid waste and hazardous materials because construction and ongoing operations would generate additional waste and involve the use or potential disturbance of hazardous substances. During construction, impacts will be temporary, minor, site-specific, and adverse. Renovation and demolishing activities will have temporary, minor, site-specific, and limited adverse effects. Following construction, the Proposed Action Alternative will result in direct, long-term, minor, site-specific, and adverse impacts associated with routine operation and maintenance of the expanded Cemetery. Overall, with implementation of standard waste management and hazardous material controls, the Proposed Action Alternative will not result in significant impacts related to solid waste or hazardous materials.	Under the No Action Alternative, no construction, demolition, or renovation activities would occur at the Cemetery, and existing solid waste and hazardous materials conditions would remain unchanged. As a result, there would be no impact to solid waste and hazardous materials.
Traffic, Transportation, and Parking	Construction of the Proposed Action Alternative will result in minor, temporary, and site-specific impacts on local traffic and transportation. Once operational, the Proposed Action Alternative will not result in a significant impact on traffic or transportation.	Under the No Action Alternative, the Proposed Action Alternative would not be implemented and impacts related to existing traffic and transportation would not occur.

Resources Area	Proposed Action	No Action Alternative
Utilities	The Proposed Action Alternative and associated facility renovations will reconfigure and modify existing utilities but will not significantly increase utility usage or demand. Once operational, expansion area improvements will connect to existing utility services. Therefore, the Proposed Action Alternative will have no significant impact on utilities.	Under the No Action Alternative, the Proposed Action Alternative would not be implemented and impacts related to existing utilities would not occur.

Agency and Public Comment

The VA published a notice of scoping on January 18, 2026, in the *Battle Creek Enquirer* newspaper. The notice described the Proposed Action Alternative and solicited public comments with a deadline of 30 days after the publishing date, or February 16, 2026. Additionally, the VA distributed scoping letters to key stakeholders including Tribes; federal, state, and local agencies; and government representatives. These stakeholders included 12 federally recognized Indian Tribes, the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (Detroit Regulatory District), the U.S. Department of Agriculture (Natural Resources Conservation Service Michigan Office), U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (Michigan Ecological Services Field Office), Michigan State Historic Preservation Office (Cultural Resource Management and Planning), Michigan Department of Natural Resources (Executive Division), Michigan Department of Environment, Great Lakes, and Energy (Water Resources Division), the Village of Augusta, and the Kalamazoo County Government. During the scoping period one response was received from the Keweenaw Bay Indian Community informing the VA that they did not wish to participate in the Section 106 process for the Proposed Action Alternative.

The VA published and distributed the Draft EA for a 30-day public comment period as announced by a Notice of Availability published in the *Battle Creek Enquirer* on May 21, 2026. Review copies of the EA were available on the VA NCA website (https://www.cem.va.gov/ea.asp). Hard copies were available to the public at the McKay-Dole Library located at 105 South Webster, Augusta, MI 49012. Stakeholder notification letters were also sent to the same recipients as the scoping letter. No comments were received during the public review period.

Finding of No Significant Impact

In accordance with NEPA, as amended, and VA regulations (38 CFR 26), any final action by the VA related to the Proposed Action Alternative will be subject to, and contingent upon, compliance with all relevant federal and state environmental laws and regulations.

Based on the analyses in the Final EA, which is summarized and incorporated by reference herein, the VA concludes that implementing the Proposed Action Alternative will 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. This Finding of No Significant Impact completes the NEPA review process for this Proposed Action Alternative.

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