

REVISED FINDING OF NO SIGNIFICANT IMPACT
PROPOSED LAND ACQUISITION FOR NATIONAL EDUCATION AND TRAINING CENTER
VICINITY OF HARPER'S FERRY, WEST VIRGINIA

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (Service) is proposing to acquire property near Shepherdstown, West Virginia, for the Service's National Education and Training Center (NETC).

An Environmental Assessment (EA) was prepared which addressed five alternative land acquisition sites and a no-action alternative (copy enclosed). The acquisition of a selected site is an essential first step in meeting the Service's goal to construct a facility that would provide a training center for Service staff and scientists. General considerations were that the site would accommodate a development envelope of at least 250 acres and that the selected site would fully conform with Federal, State, and local plans and requirements.

A notice of availability for the EA and Finding of No Significant Impact (FONSI) was published in the Federal Register on July 9, 1991. At that time, the selected alternative was Site E -- Driggs (Quarry) and Springs Run. However, due to the difficulty in remediating minor contamination on the site, the Service has determined that it is not in the best interest of the government to acquire Site E.

The new selected alternative is Site D -- Terrapin Neck. Site D is located approximately three miles north of Shepherdstown, West Virginia. The Potomac River serves as the northern boundary, with Terrapin Neck Road to the east, and Shepherd Grade Road bordering the southwestern sections of the site. The site occupies approximately 525 acres and is comprised of forested land, agricultural land, and open fields.

Site D was selected because it has many of the amenities which would be supportive of the NETC goal. The picturesque site overlooks the Potomac River Valley and is surrounded by a diversity of habitats. Several 18th and 19th century buildings occur on the site that will be maintained for their historical value. Community acceptance of Site D is anticipated to be good. Except for several debris piles containing minor, former farm-related refuse, no other hazardous materials or evidence of other contaminants occur on the property. Although some minor improvements may be needed, the capacity of existing roadways appears adequate. We anticipate no adverse impacts to State or Federal rare, threatened, or endangered species that may occur on the site.

The other land acquisition alternatives considered were the Gibson and Capriotti Properties, Cooper Farm, Nalls Property, Driggs (Quarry)/Springs Run, and no-action.

The previous plan to include a public education (habitat) component to the NETC has been dropped.

A small portion of riverine wetlands system is located in the northern part of the site and a small pond occurs near the farm buildings, but all reasonable alternatives were considered in the evaluation of this project. Any project-caused wetland and floodplain impacts will be minor to negligible. The project complies with the provisions of Executive Orders 11988 and 11990.

Based on my review and evaluation of the enclosed Environmental Assessment and other supporting documentation, I have determined that the acquisition of Site D for the Service's National Education and Training Center is not a major Federal action which would significantly affect the quality of the human environment within the meaning of Section 102(2)(C) of the National Environmental Policy Act of 1969. Accordingly, preparation of an environmental impact statement on the proposed action is not required.

Suzanne Mayer

Director
Acting

FEB 20 1992

Date

Reference:

Environmental Assessment, dated December 1990

Enclosure