

FINDING OF NO SIGNIFICANT IMPACT ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT NATIONAL CONSERVATION TRAINING CENTER FEBRUARY 9, 2011

The United States Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS) prepared an environmental assessment for the National Conservation Training Center (NCTC) to present various management strategies to control invasive plant species, promote the growth of native plants, control other pests, and prepare for a potentially devastating wildfire. The FWS proposed various methods (such as manual, mechanical, biological, cultural, chemical, and prescribed fire) to achieve management objectives.

There are three primary objectives for management actions at the NCTC based on the purpose and need for the project and FWS direction. The following three objectives guided the development of the Proposed Action (Alternative C):

1. protect and restore the ecological integrity of the native biological communities occurring at the NCTC
2. restore, maintain, and increase native habitat to support a diversity of wildlife occurring at the NCTC
3. protect NCTC assets (structures and natural resources) from potentially devastating wildfire

PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT

Scoping information meetings were held on October 29, 2009, and the official close of the scoping comment period was November 13, 2009, but comments were welcome throughout the environmental analysis process for this EA.

The draft EA was available for public review from November 24, 2010 to December 30, 2010. Notices of the availability of the draft EA were sent by mail (via a postcard) to 246 addresses. The draft EA was posted on NCTC's webpage (<http://nctc.fws.gov/EA>), and newspaper announcements about the availability of the draft EA were published in the Shepherdstown Chronicle on November 25, 2010, and the Martinsburg Journal on November 23rd and 24th, 2010.

ALTERNATIVES

Three alternatives were evaluated in the EA. Alternative C is selected for implementation as described in the final EA that accompanies this Finding of No Significant Impact (FONSI).

Alternative A: No Action—Continue Current Level of Land Management

The no-action alternative for this EA is described as continuation of the current level of management.

Grassland Areas. The overall management objective for grassland habitat (other than areas planned for reforestation) is to restore the former agricultural fields to a native grassland biological community to provide optimum feeding, breeding, and wintering habitat for a diversity of grassland-dependent migratory birds, native pollinating invertebrates, and other native wildlife that are present. This would be accomplished through continued haying, mowing, planting desired species, and chemically treating undesirable species.

Mixed-deciduous Forest Areas. The overall management objective for the forest areas is to protect or re-establish desired species, eradicate undesirable species, and protect forested areas from unplanned ignitions. This would be accomplished through re-establishing desired species, chemically treating undesirable species, and conducting prescribed burns, as needed, to reduce ground fuels.

Wetland/Riparian Areas. The overall management objective for riparian/wetland areas is to protect, maintain, and enhance the biological diversity of riparian/wetland areas. This would be accomplished through planting desired species and chemically treating undesirable species.

Alternative B: Cease All Land Management Activities

This alternative proposes that the NCTC would stop all land management actions—this includes mowing, haying, planting desired species, and chemically treating undesirable species.

Alternative C: Proposed Action (Preferred Alternative)

The same management actions (except haying) that would continue under Alternative A would also continue under Alternative C. The new proposed activities under Alternative C are the use of prescribed fire to manage vegetation and reduce fuel loads and additional actions to control “other pests.” The overall management objectives for controlling other pests are to prevent unacceptable damage or impediment to forests, grasslands, and riparian areas; habitat restoration sites; landscaped areas; and roads, sidewalks, trails, fences, buildings, and other facilities; protect human health and ensure the safety of workers, staff, and guests; and protect habitat and other environmental factors in the process of conducting control measures. This would be accomplished through use of cultural and mechanical controls and chemically treating undesirable species.

DECISION

The FWS decision is to select Alternative C, along with the resource protection measures (mitigation measures) described in Chapter 2, Table 4 of the final EA.

RESOURCE PROTECTION MEASURES

The mitigation measures are referred to as resource protection measures in the EA and are listed in Chapter 2, Table 4 of that document. The resource protection measures are incorporated into the proposal, and they will be effective in reducing the level of environmental effects.

ENVIRONMENTALLY PREFERRED ALTERNATIVE

Alternative C will meet the three overall objectives for land management actions at the NCTC and fully addresses the need for action as presented in Chapter 1 of the final EA. The EA supports the FWS determination that Alternative C can be implemented with no significant adverse effects on vegetation, wildlife, soils, water quality, air quality, and public health and safety, thus it is also the FWS environmentally preferred alternative.

ENVIRONMENTAL CONSEQUENCES OF THE SELECTED ACTION

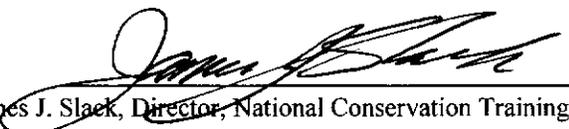
The environmental consequences (effects) of Alternative C are described in detail in Chapter 3 of the EA (that is, "Chapter 3: Affected Environmental and Environmental Consequences").

FINDINGS

I find the selected alternative, alternative C, does not constitute a major federal action that would significantly affect the quality of the human environment. Therefore, in accordance with the National Environmental Policy Act of 1969 and regulations of the Council on Environmental Quality (40 CFR 1508.9), an environmental impact statement is not required.

Recommended: 
Philip D. Pannill, Land Manager, National Conservation Training Center

2/9/2011
Date

Approved: 
James J. Slack, Director, National Conservation Training Center

2-9-11
Date