

FINDING OF NO SIGNIFICANT IMPACT

BOROUGH OF BLAIRSVILLE PORTION
of the
HOODLEBUG TRAIL

CONEMAUGH RIVER LAKE
INDIANA COUNTY, PENNSYLVANIA

The Borough of Blairsville, Indiana County, Pennsylvania, is seeking a real estate outgrant from the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, Pittsburgh District, for the Hoodlebug Trail. This recreational trail is part of the Millennium Legacy Trail System. Millennium Trails is a national initiative to create, enhance and celebrate more than 2000 trails as part of America's legacy for the new millennium. The Hoodlebug Trail will follow the historic Pennsylvania Main Line Canal and Portage Railroad route. The Blairsville portion of the Hoodlebug Trail would be partially constructed within the boundary of the Corps of Engineers' Conemaugh River Lake project.

The Hoodlebug Trail will be a scenic multi-purpose trail that will provide an opportunity to walk or bike along scenic and diverse natural areas, including the banks of the Conemaugh River. The trail will provide users with an excellent opportunity for improvement of both quality of life and health since users will be able to walk or bike an historic pathway following the course taken by the early Pennsylvania Main Line Canal. Trail users will observe first-hand the beautiful and diverse natural and cultural resources offered by the Western Pennsylvania environment.

An Environmental Assessment for the proposed Hoodlebug Trail was prepared by the Conemaugh Valley Conservancy for the Borough of Blairsville. Its purpose is to identify potential environmental impacts and evaluate their significance and to fulfill reporting requirements of the National Environmental Policy Act, 42 U.S. Code, Sections 4321-4370d, as amended. Considerations included water quality, wetlands, terrestrial habitat, fish and wildlife resources, threatened and endangered species, flood plains, recreation, soils, scenic rivers, and cultural resources. The Environmental Assessment evaluated a preferred alignment, an alternate alignment and a no action plan. The alternate alignment plan and the no action plan were not selected because each of those plans would deprive local residents the future use of this necessary link to the overall historic pathway.

The recommended trail would generally follow an unauthorized trail utilized by ATV riders and would consist of a four-inch limestone base with a limestone double seal tar and chip coat. The trail would be ten-feet wide while the clearing would be 15 feet in width. Vegetation to be removed would consist primarily of invasive Japanese Knotweed and some woody brush. Large trees would be avoided as much as possible. Signage, benches, access gates and railings would be added features, as appropriate.

All necessary coordination with federal and state agencies was conducted to fulfill the requirements of Section 7 of the Endangered Species Act, the Fish and Wildlife Coordination Act, and Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act. None of the comments received suggest that any significant environmental impacts would result. The response letters are included as an Appendix to the Environmental Assessment documentation which is on file in the Pittsburgh District Office.

After careful review and evaluation of beneficial and detrimental aspects related to the development of the proposed Hoodlebug Trail at the Comemaugh River Lake project as described in the Environmental Assessment, I have reasonably concluded that the public interest would be best served by the proposal, and that the associated activities will not significantly affect the quality of the human environment. Construction would be minor with little disturbance resulting from users. The preparation of an Environmental Impact Statement is not warranted. This Finding of No Significant Impact precedes the Corps of Engineers' final decision on the proposed action. A copy of the Finding of No Significant Impact is available for viewing on the Corps of Engineers, Pittsburgh District web site located at www.lrp.usace.army.mil.

11 Dec 2007

Date



Michael P. Crall
Colonel, Corps of Engineers
District Engineer