



**US Army Corps
of Engineers®**

Pittsburgh District

Planning and Environmental Branch
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1000 Liberty Avenue
Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania 15222

Public Notice Date: 1 August 2018
Expiration Date: 31 August 2018

NOTICE OF AVAILABILITY

Draft Environmental Assessment for Woodcock Creek Lake 2018 Master Plan Crawford County, Pennsylvania

The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, Pittsburgh District, is evaluating a proposed revision of the 1975 Woodcock Creek Lake Master Plan and invites comments on environmental impacts of the adoption of the proposed 2018 updates. The Pittsburgh District will consider all submissions received or postmarked by the expiration date of the public comment period. The nature or scope of the proposal may be revised upon consideration of the comments received.

Project information and the drafts of the Master Plan, Environmental Assessment, and Finding of No Significant Impact are available electronically at:

<https://www.lrp.usace.army.mil/Missions/Recreation/Lakes/Woodcock-Creek-Lake/Woodcock-Creek-Lake-Master-Plan/>

Comments can be submitted in writing to the address posted at the top of this notice to the attention of Heather Wood, or emailed to heather.l.wood@usace.army.mil. Comments must be received or postmarked no later than **31 August 2018 to ensure consideration.**

DRAFT FINDING OF NO SIGNIFICANT IMPACT
WOODCOCK CREEK LAKE MASTER PLAN UPDATE
MAHONING CREEK WATERSHED

The US Army Corps of Engineers, Pittsburgh District (Corps) is proposing to adopt a new Master Plan as the strategic land use planning document to guide comprehensive management and development of all project recreational, natural and cultural resources at Woodcock Creek Lake in northwestern Pennsylvania. The original Master Plan (MP) was completed in 1967 and last updated in 1975. Changes in Corps regulations and community needs necessitate a revision to these Master Plans. The revised MP will replace the draft and provide a balanced, up to date management plan that follows current Federal laws and Corps regulations while sustaining natural resources and providing outdoor recreational experiences.

In compliance with the National Environmental Policy Act, the Corps prepared an Environmental Assessment (EA) that evaluated impacts to the physical environment, biological environment and community setting. The EA examines three alternatives: No Action, the preferred alternative of adopting a revised MP with an emphasis on conservation and low-density recreation development, and a revised MP alternative with high-density recreational development. The preferred alternative changes the land and water classifications, most notably the addition of sensitive area and water surface classifications. The revised plan also lays out future recommendations for management of both recreation and natural resources.

The No Action alternative does not meet the purpose of providing a strategic land use management plan that balances the development of recreation features with environmental stewardship practices and natural resource conservation and is in compliance with current regulations, policies and laws governing Master Plans. Under the No Action alternative, the original development-focused document would prevent a proactive approach to resource management.

I have reasonably determined that implementation of the revised Woodcock Creek Lake MP will not constitute a major Federal action significantly affecting the quality of the human environment, as defined in the Council on Environmental Quality's current regulations for implementing the National Environmental Policy Act. The preparation of an environmental impact statement is therefore unwarranted and the public interest will be best served by the implementation of the proposed action. This determination precedes the Corps of Engineer's final decision concerning this proposed action. The MP and EA will be circulated for a 30-day review period.

Date

John P. Lloyd
Colonel, Corps of Engineers
District Engineer

Environmental Assessment

Woodcock Creek Lake Master Plan Update

Allegheny River Watershed



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1 Purpose and Need

1.1 Introduction and Background

The US Army Corps of Engineers (Corps) is responsible for the maintenance, restoration, and stewardship of natural resources on the multipurpose reservoir projects it manages. To facilitate the management and use of these lands, the District maintains a Master Plan (MP) for each reservoir project. An MP is a strategic land use management document that guides the comprehensive administration and conservation of natural and cultural resources, and the development of recreation at Corps reservoirs. The Pittsburgh District is proposing to adopt and implement a revision to the Woodcock Creek Lake MP.

Authorized by the Flood Control Act of 1944, Woodcock Creek Lake became operational in 1973 after a two-year construction period. It is one link in a system of 16 Flood Control Projects and provides protection for the Upper Allegheny River Valley along French Creek.

The original MP was completed in 1967 and last updated in 1975. Changes in Corps regulations and community needs necessitate a revision. The revised MP will replace the former version and provide a balanced, up-to-date management plan that follows current Federal laws and Corps regulations, while sustaining Woodcock Creek Lake's natural resources and providing outdoor recreational experiences. The revised MP applies changes to the land and water classifications and lays out future recommendations for management of both recreation and natural resources.

1.1.1 Land Allocation Categories

In updating the MP, land allocation and land use classifications are revised to ensure consistency with the land's authorized purpose. Land allocations identify the authorized purposes for which Corps' lands were acquired. There are four categories of allocation:

1. Operations: These are the lands acquired for the congressionally authorized purpose of constructing and operating the Project. The location of all dam facilities as well as the lake, are included in this allocation.
2. Recreation: These lands were acquired specifically for the congressionally authorized purpose of recreation. These lands are referred to as separable recreation lands. Lands in this allocation can only be given a land classification of "Recreation."
3. Fish and Wildlife: These lands were acquired specifically for the congressionally authorized purpose of fish and wildlife management. These lands are referred to as separable fish and wildlife lands. Lands in this allocation can only be given a land classification of "Wildlife Management".
4. Mitigation: These lands were acquired specifically for the congressionally authorized purpose of offsetting losses associated with development of the project. These lands are referred to as separable mitigation lands. Lands in this allocation can only be given a land classification of "Mitigation".

1.1.2 Current Land Classification Categories

Land classifications refine the land allocations and considers public desires, legislative authority, regional and Project-specific resource requirements, and suitability. Land classification indicates

the primary use for which Project lands are managed, providing for development and resource management consistent with authorized purposes and other Federal laws.

Project Operations

This classification includes lands required for the dam and associated structures, powerhouse, operations center, administrative offices, maintenance compounds, and other areas that are used to operate and maintain the Lakes. Where compatible with operational requirements, Project Operations lands may be used for wildlife habitat management and recreational use. Licenses, permits, easements, or other outgrants are issued only for uses that do not conflict with Project operational requirements.

High Density Recreation

These lands are designated for intensive levels of recreational use to accommodate and support the recreational needs and desires of visitors. They include lands on which existing or planned major recreational facilities are located and allow for developed public recreation facilities, concession development, and high-density or high-impact recreational use. In general, any uses of these lands that interfere with public enjoyment of recreation opportunities are prohibited. Low-density recreation and wildlife management activities compatible with intensive recreation use are acceptable, especially on an interim basis. No agricultural uses are permitted on those lands, except on an interim basis for maintenance of scenic or open space values. Permits, licenses, and easements are not issued for non-compatible manmade intrusions, such as pipelines, overhead transmission lines, and non-project roads, except where warranted by the public interest and where no viable alternative area or route is available.

Environmentally Sensitive Areas (ESAs)

This classification consists of areas where scientific, ecological, cultural, or aesthetic features have been identified. Any development of public use on lands classified as such is normally prohibited to ensure that these sensitive areas are not adversely impacted. For example, agricultural uses are not permitted on lands with this classification.

Multiple Resource Management Lands

This classification includes lands managed for one or more of the following activities:

- **Low Density Recreation.** These lands are designated for dispersed and/or low- impact recreation use. Development of facilities on these lands is limited. Emphasis is on providing opportunities for non-motorized activities, such as walking, fishing, hunting, or nature study. Site-specific, low-impact activities, such as primitive camping and picnicking, are allowed. Facilities may include boat ramps, boat docks, trails, parking areas and vehicle controls, vault toilets, picnic tables, and fire rings. Manmade intrusions, including power lines, non-project roads, and water and sewer pipelines, may be permitted under conditions that minimize adverse effects on the natural environment. Vegetation management, including agricultural activities that do not greatly alter the natural character of the environment, are permitted for a variety of purposes, including erosion control, retention and improvement of scenic qualities, and wildlife management. Hunting and fishing are allowed, pursuant to tribal or state fish and wildlife management regulations, where these activities are not in conflict with the safety of visitors and project personnel.

- **Wildlife Management.** Proper management techniques will be applied wherever the opportunity exists to improve conditions for wildlife, recreation, scenic value, timber, wildfire prevention, pest control, and watershed protection.
- **Future or Inactive Recreation Areas.** This sub-classification consists of lands for which recreation areas are planned for the future or lands that contain existing recreation areas that have been temporarily closed

Water Surface

There are four possible sub-classifications:

- **Restricted.** Water areas restricted for project operations, safety, and security purposes.
- **Designated No-Wake.** To protect environmentally sensitive shoreline areas, recreational water access areas from disturbance, and/or public safety.
- **Fish and Wildlife Sanctuary (FWS).** Annual or seasonal restrictions on areas to protect fish and wildlife species during periods of migration, resting, feeding, nesting, and/or spawning.
- **Open Recreation.** Those waters available for year-round or seasonal water-based recreational use.

1.2 Project Area

The Project Area is defined as the land held by the Corps in fee at Woodcock Creek Lake, located on French Creek in the Allegheny River watershed in Crawford County, northwestern Pennsylvania (PA). It consists of about 1,732-acres, including flowage easement that will be covered by this revised MP. A project area map is located in Appendix B, Plate 1.

1.3 Purpose and Need

A MP conceptually establishes and guides the orderly development, administration, maintenance, preservation, enhancement, and management of all natural, cultural, and recreational resources of Corps lands, providing a strategic land use management plan that balances the development of recreation features with environmental stewardship practices and natural resource conservation, in compliance with current regulations, policies, and laws. The original 1967 draft MP focused on construction and development recommendations for recreation areas. The 1975 revision updated data on existing conditions, maintenance, and expansion of recreational facilities, but no longer serves its intended purpose, due to regulatory changes and the substantial evolution of the Project, regional demographics, and surrounding land usage. The Corps has also updated its policies directing the development and implementation of MPs (most notably in EP-1130-2-550 Change 5, dated 30 January 2013), which includes updating the categories of land classifications used to define project lands.

The need for the update was determined by a MP evaluation that identified a number of deficiencies that no longer made it a viable document. There have been significant changes in regional natural resources management, including: the naming of special status species, competing interests for resources, energy extraction, invasive species, and development of state wildlife plans. Changes in area demographics and culture have also changed the types of recreation demanded. Philosophical changes in agency management have occurred, notably, the 2009 establishment of a Non-Recreational Outgrant Policy that altered permitted land-use on all

Corps properties. Significant data gaps were also identified. In order to meet these new directives and comply with Corps policy requiring regular updates to MPs, the District proposes to adopt the revised Woodcock Creek Lake MP with updated land classifications and a revised set of recommendations for future development and improvements.

This Environmental Assessment (EA) addresses the proposed adoption and implementation of the revised Woodcock Creek Lake MP – Preferred Alternative/Recreation Development. It analyzes potential impacts of implementing the MP upon the natural, cultural, and human environment. The EA has been prepared in accordance with the National Environmental Policy Act of 1969 (NEPA), as amended; regulations of the Council on Environmental Quality (CEQ); and Corps regulations, including Engineer Regulation 200-2-2, Procedures for Implementing NEPA. The EA references the attached Woodcock Creek Lake MP.

The typical focus of NEPA compliance consists of environmental impact assessments for individual projects, rather than for long-range management plans. However, application of NEPA to broader and more strategic decisions not only meets the CEQ implementing regulations and Corps regulations for implementing NEPA, but also allows the Corps to begin considering the environmental consequences of their actions long before any physical activity is undertaken.

Environmental documents prepared concurrently with the MP can influence and modify strategic land use decisions. The intention of the MP is to develop land classifications that will guide the sustainable development of resources at Woodcock Creek Lake. This EA evaluates a variety of approaches to assess potential environmental impacts of proposed future recreation features. It examines recreational activities in broad categories listed as “high” and “low” density based on developmental needs, rather than specific projects. Additional coordination and documentation will be conducted, as appropriate, for future projects that are initialized by this proposed MP. If the District determines it is in the best interest of the public to accept the MP and reclassify Corps-managed lands, the District would perform additional site-specific compliance with Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act and Section 7 of the Endangered Species Act and obtain any required permits for specific future projects/actions. Future projects would also be reviewed to identify which actions discussed within this EA may be classified as categorical exclusions in accordance with Paragraph 9 of ER 200-2-2, consistent with CEQ definitions under 40 CFR 1508.4, and which actions would require additional analysis under a tiered NEPA document.

1.4 Prior NEPA Documentation

A Statement of Findings, Woodcock Creek Lake, was prepared in advance of the 1975 MP revision.

2 Alternatives

This EA examines three alternatives: a No-Action Alternative, in which the current MP (circa 1975) would continue to guide operations and management; a preferred alternative of adopting a revised MP with an emphasis on a conservation/recreation mix scenario (40%-60% of the land is used for conservation/recreation); and a high-density recreation intensive alternative (90%-100% of the land is used for recreation).

Data collection, public comments, and findings of the MP team determined that the Preferred Alternative conservation/recreation mix was the only alternative that would meet the purpose, need, and objectives of the master planning process for Woodcock Creek Lake. The alternative also meets the need for sustainable management and conservation of natural resources within the project, while providing for current and future quality outdoor recreational needs of the public, and providing consistency with updated Corps regulations. Compared to the No-Action Alternative, the preferred alternative presents minor changes to existing management practices and brings them in line with current practices.

2.1 No Action

Inclusion of the No-Action Alternative is prescribed by CEQ regulations and serves as the baseline against which Federal actions must be compared. Under this alternative, the District would not approve the adoption or implementation of a revised MP, thereby failing to meet current regulations or goals regarding regularly updating master plans, i.e., the 1975 MP would continue to provide the only source of comprehensive management guidance, although out-of-date and no longer adequately addressing the needs of the District, other management partners, or users of Woodcock Creek Lake. Furthermore, the 1975 MP does not include the revised land classifications, in accordance with current Corps regulations (see Chapter 3.2). Finally, retaining the 1975 MP would prevent a proactive approach to managing Woodcock Creek Lake, given future major developments or resource management policies would require approval on a case-by-case basis without the benefit of evaluation within the context of an overall plan.

2.2 Revised MP – 40%-60% Conservation/Recreation Mix (Preferred Alternative)

Adopting this course of action is the District's preferred alternative. The revision changes the land and water classifications, most notably the addition of sensitive area and water surface classifications. The revised MP also lays out future recommendations for management of both recreation and natural resources.

The management recommendations were developed through comments, interviews, public meeting workshops, and the completion of surveys. These management recommendations are non-regulatory and available for use by any citizen, group, or agency. Development of new, modern facilities would potentially include partnering with stakeholders to share in the cost, operation, and maintenance of any such asset. Further detail regarding these recommendations is available within the MP (Sections 1.5 and 1.6, and 7). Below are the recommendations, grouped by similar impact types:

Enhance and protect public lands:

- Inventory natural and cultural resources
- Identify and assess threats to the Project
- Establish working relationships with federal, state, academy, and NGOs to achieve and maintain desired resource conditions

Cultivate volunteers, public-private partnerships, and grants:

- Develop MOU or MOA with potential partners
- Establish educational programs
- Create incentives for volunteer groups

- Establish a “Friends” group, Student Conservation Association, or American Conservation Experience organization
- Complete 18 hole disc golf course

Provide safe, memorable connections as part of multiple destination points:

- Improve ranger safety through improved communications and monitoring devices
- Improve visitor safety through routine inspections of playground equipment, boat patrols, and emergency response access
- Connect with other District lakes and locks through a brochure that lists all Projects and explores different activities and amenities
- Coordinate with local tourism bureaus, chambers of commerce, and regional planning commissions
- Establish an annual signature event to promote and raise awareness of the Project

Leverage emerging technology to the Corps stories and enhance visitor experiences:

- Public interaction occurs through technology
 - Interpretive programming and updated educational signage is included in Operational Management Plan annual updates
 - Use of QR codes for bulletin boards, trail heads, and visitor center for information about the Project or activities
 - Visitors encouraged to submit photos on social media
- Embrace emerging technology to improve information collection (e.g., fish habitat structures, disc golf course, other amenities)
- Enhance public outreach
 - Create an app or link to other apps
 - Update bulletin boards and kiosks
 - Use social media to promote outdoor recreational activities
 - Use the Public Affairs Office to promote success stories
 - Install new and updated signage

2.3 Revised MP – 90%-100% High-Density Recreation

An alternative revision for recreation use is to expand existing developed areas and seek to create new ones. Development of up to 90 percent of the low-density recreation to high-density recreation could occur under this alternative. This would necessitate the creation of additional impervious surfaces (roads and parking lots), plus extension of existing water and electricity utilities, and possible construction of new permanent structures. All of which would require regular maintenance and services, increasing O&M costs.

This is not the preferred plan because of the initial cost of the development and the recurring costs of operation and maintenance of added facilities. With a significant increase in funding and visitor numbers, feasibility of this alternative could improve in the future.

3 Affected Environment

3.1 Physical Environment

3.1.1 Hydrology and Floodplains

See MP sections 2.1 Hydrology and 2.3.7 Water Quality & Sedimentation for information.

3.1.2 Water Quality

See MP section 2.3.7 Water Quality & Sedimentation for information.

3.1.3 Air Quality

Woodcock Creek Lake is located in a generally rural area of Northwestern Pennsylvania that exhibits fair air quality compared to more urbanized areas. There are only minor sources of air contamination within the project area, primarily associated with vehicles. The following table provides current air quality standards for six principal air pollutants, as defined by the Clean Air Act, and their current levels (i.e., “status”), averaged across Armstrong, Indiana, and Jefferson Counties. The National Ambient Air Quality Standards (NAAQS) are the concentrations of these principal pollutants, above which, adverse effects on human health may occur.

Table EA- 1. National Ambient Air Quality Standards (NAAQS) and air quality status (either attained on non-attained) for Crawford County as of Feb. 13, 2017.

Pollutant	NAAQS (standards)	Averaging Time	Status (County) *
Carbon Monoxide (as of 2011)	9 ppm (10 mg/m ³)	8-hour	Full Attainment
	35 ppm (40 mg/m ³)	1-hour	Full Attainment
Lead (as of 2008)	0.15 µg/m ³	Rolling 3-Month Avg	Full Attainment
Nitrogen Dioxide (as of 2010)	53 ppb	Annual	Full Attainment
	100 ppb	1-hour	Full Attainment
Particle pollution (PM ₁₀ as of 2012)	150 µg/m ³	24-hour	Full Attainment
Particle pollution (PM _{2.5} as of 2012)	12.0 µg/m ³	Annual	Full Attainment
	35 µg/m ³	24-hour	Full Attainment
Ozone (as of 2008)	0.075 ppm	8-hour	Full Attainment
Sulfur Dioxide (as of 2010)	75 ppb	1-hour	Full Attainment

*Status obtained from the USEPA Green Book
(<https://www3.epa.gov/airquality/greenbook/qbstateb.html>)

3.1.4 Climate

The climate in the project area is temperate and humid, with an appreciable seasonal variation in temperature. It is geographically in a region of variable frontal activity, being subjected to alternate polar and tropical air-mass invasion. The prevailing wind direction is from the west or has a westerly component. Summer precipitation is usually associated with thunderstorms resulting from convective activity, and is generally confined to small areas, with short durations and high intensities. In the late fall, winter, and early spring months, precipitation is

usually the result of the passage of low-pressure system over the basin. Occasional stagnation and stationary development produce prolonged precipitation. Snowmelt is frequently a contributing factor to winter and early spring flood runoff. A study of floods indicates a possibility of serious flooding during any season of the year. The frequency of flooding however is highest for the late winter-early spring season.

The future effects of anticipated climate change on water resources are of increasing concern. It is considered highly likely that the region will continue to warm throughout the 21st century, with temperature increases projected to occur relatively evenly throughout the year. Such change may impact interconnected hydrologic aspects, including: precipitation, snowpack, runoff, soil moisture & drought, evapotranspiration, groundwater, stream temps, floods and water quality.

Generally, it is possible that the region's climate will become warmer and more extreme in the future, with longer dry periods and precipitation events of greater intensity. The most significant effects predicted for stream and wetland communities are increased water temperature and increased variability of the water environment. The latter may be reflected in changing seasonal patterns of water levels, reduced stream flows during dry periods, larger floods and longer droughts.

3.1.5 Geology, Topography and Soils

See MP section 2.2 for information.

3.1.6 Noise

The area surrounding Woodcock Creek Lake is mainly rural and there are no apparent intrusive noise sources from around the lakes. At the lakes themselves, noise sources include watercraft motors, vehicular traffic, and human voices at areas of concentrated use (e.g., day use areas, campgrounds). Noises along the creek vary as a function of proximity to human noise sources as sections by more populated areas or transportation corridors can have substantial noise from those sources.

3.1.7 Hazardous Materials

The EPA's Envirofacts website lists no specific sites within close proximity to Woodcock Creek Lake as of July 2018. As there are no specific plans to develop federal lands and adjacent properties are undeveloped, the potential for discovery of hazardous materials is remote. In the event that any developments on Corps property are proposed, however, Federal law requires site-specific due diligence on a case-by-case basis before development can occur. Hazardous materials are regulated by the Resource Conservation and Recovery Act, the Comprehensive Environmental Response, Compensation, and Liability Act, Oil Pollution Act, Toxic Substances Control Act, and related guidelines established by the Corps and Pennsylvania. Any change in the storage or use of hazardous materials must comply with these regulations.

3.2 Biological Environment

3.2.1 Fish and Wildlife

See MP section 2.3.1 for information.

3.2.2 Terrestrial Vegetation and Land Cover

Lands at Woodcock Creek Lake are predominately vegetated by deciduous forest. The following table lists the vegetation type and amount of acres at the project.

Table EA- 2. Terrestrial Vegetation Types

Predominant Vegetation Type	Acres
Herbaceous	465
Deciduous Forest	17,648
Shrub/Scrub	155
Evergreen Forest	962
Hay/Pasture	4,736
Mixed Forest	786

Land Cover within the watershed consists of a variety of forested, agricultural, and developed areas. A land cover map is located in Appendix B, Plate 9. Land cover acreage encompasses area outside Federal boundaries and includes the project.

3.2.3 Threatened and Endangered Species

See MP section 2.3.3 and Table 2-1 for information.

3.2.4 Invasive Species

See MP section 2.3.4 for information.

3.2.5 Wetlands

See MP section 2.3.6 for information.

3.3 Community Setting

3.3.1 Cultural Resources

See MP section 2.4 for information.

3.3.2 Socio- Economic Profile

See MP sections 2.5 and 2.6 for information.

3.3.3 Recreation

See MP section 2.7 for information.

3.3.4 Transportation

Located approximately 90 minutes away from downtown Pittsburgh, Woodcock Creek Lake is bounded by several roads including Ravenna-Warren Road, Wayland Road, and Rock Spring Road. Developed roads and parking lots exist on project lands. These roads and parking lots are confined to areas that support developed recreational sites. The undeveloped portions of the project have limited transportation infrastructure. The transportation corridor map is in Appendix B, Plate 2.

4 Environmental Consequences

This section describes and compares effects of the alternatives to existing conditions within each environmental media category. NEPA requires consideration of context, intensity, and duration of adverse and beneficial impacts (direct, indirect, and cumulative) and measures to mitigate for impacts. These elements are considered in the following impact analysis.

Adoption of the proposed MP would help define the approval process for future actions affecting project lands, depending on whether the actions are: 1) specifically included in the MP; 2) not included in the MP, but consistent with the Plan; or 3) not included and not consistent with the recommendations, objectives, and policies stated in Corps regulation. For actions that are identified in the MP, the approval process would still require adequate NEPA consideration (whether categorically excluded or requiring an additional tiered EA) and compliance with other environmental laws and regulations, prior to initiating construction.

The following table (Table EA-3) presents a summary of potential impacts, described in detail by environmental media category:

Table EA- 3. Summary of Impact Analysis for Alternatives

Resource	No-Action Alternative	Preferred Alternative	Hi-Density Rec Alternative
<i>Physical Environment</i>			
Hydrology & Flood Plains	No Impact	No Impact	No Impact
Water Quality	Potential long-term degradation from outdated planning	Beneficial Impact	Additional stormwater runoff from increased impervious surfaces
Air Quality	No Impact	No Impact	Minor impacts from increased traffic
Climate	No Impact	No Impact	No Impact
Geology, Topography, & Soils	No Impact	No Impact	No Impact
Noise	No Impact	No Impact	Temporary impacts from construction, potential increases during usage
Hazardous Materials	No Impact	No Impact	No Impact
<i>Biological Environment</i>			
Fish & Wildlife	Potential long-term degradation from outdated planning	Beneficial Impact	Beneficial Impact
Terrestrial Vegetation & Land Cover	Potential long-term degradation from outdated planning	Beneficial Impact	Minor impacts from clearing and earth moving
Threatened & Endangered Species	No Impact	No Impact	No Impact
Invasive Species	No Impact	Beneficial Impact	Beneficial Impact
Wetlands	No Impact	No Impact	No Impact
<i>Community Setting</i>			
Cultural Resources	No Impact	Beneficial Impact	No Impact
Socioeconomic Profile	Potential long-term degradation from outdated planning	Beneficial impacts to local economy	Beneficial impacts to local economy
Transportation	No Impact	No Impact	Potential traffic increases on local roads
Recreation	Minimal Adverse Impact	Beneficial Impact	Beneficial Impact

4.1 Physical Environmental Impacts

4.1.1 Hydrology and Floodplains

No-Action, Preferred Alternative/High-Density Recreation. None of the alternatives would have a significant impact to hydrology or floodplains. In order to meet the missions of the Corps and the other management partners, many developed sites and facilities are located within the

floodplain. Most of these structures have been designed to withstand and not interfere with the conveyance of floodwaters. This is important, as periodically it becomes necessary for these lands to be flooded to achieve the Corps' flood risk management purpose. All actions occurring within floodplains must be consistent with EO 11988, Floodplain Management, and related Corps policy. Any construction activities would not impede the flood storage capacity of the Project. This would include improvements to existing recreation facilities, addition of buildings/facilities to previously disturbed areas, addition or improvement to boat launches, and maintenance dredging and disposal of sediment.

4.1.2 Water Quality

No-Action. No significant impact to water quality would occur. The Corps would continue to operate the Project, but without the benefit of an updated MP as guidance for management decisions. Without an updated MP, it is possible that Project-wide consideration of individual actions may be lost, leading to an overall degradation of water resources over time.

Preferred Alternative. There is a beneficial impact. The updated MP provides a framework to address water quality issues in conjunction with other activities, thereby preventing or addressing potential adverse effects.

High-Density Recreation. There is a potential for temporary minor impacts from earth disturbance during construction of facility areas. The creation of additional impervious surfaces, such as access roads or parking areas, would create additional stormwater runoff, thereby necessitating a stormwater management plan. Construction impacts would have to be mitigated through approved erosion and sedimentation plans, as needed.

4.1.3 Air Quality

No-Action, Preferred Alternative. Air quality within the project boundary can be influenced by exhaust from motor vehicles and boats, the use of grills and fire pits. The large open area that is created by the reservoir allows for strong breezes to blow through the project area. These breezes can rapidly reduce and/or eliminate any localized air quality concerns caused by these pollutants. Neither the No-Action Alternative nor the Preferred Alternative/Recreation alternatives would have significant adverse impacts to air quality.

High-Density Recreation. There is a potential for additional exhaust pertaining to traffic, dependent upon the time of year and activities.

4.1.4 Climate

No-Action, Preferred Alternative/High-Density Recreation. None of the alternatives will be significantly impacted by current or future expected climate conditions.

4.1.5 Geology, Topography and Soils

No-Action, Preferred Alternative/High-Density Recreation. No impacts will occur to geology, topography or soils from either alternative.

4.1.6 Noise

No-Action, Preferred Alternative. Neither of the alternatives would have a significant impact on existing noise levels.

High-Density Recreation. Construction activities and habitat maintenance activities could have local, temporary impacts. Activities at these newly created facilities could add to the ambient noise level. Avoidance of any known sensitive areas, such as nesting sites, would mitigate impacts.

4.1.7 Hazardous Materials

No-Action, Preferred Alternative/High-Density Recreation. No impacts are expected to hazardous materials from any alternative. As needed, further site-specific reviews of any development site would be conducted for compliance with the Comprehensive Environmental Response, Compensation and Liability Act and Corps real estate requirements (Environmental Condition of Property/Preliminary Assessment Screening).

Additionally, thoughtful preparation and planning for the projected increase in non-recreational requests (e.g., natural gas transmission lines) will protect the Project resources from any negative impacts. Designation of ESAs and FWSs will protect the most sensitive sites on Project lands.

4.2 Biological Environmental Impacts

4.2.1 Fish and Wildlife

No-Action. No significant impact to fish and wildlife would occur. The Corps would continue to operate the Project but without the benefit of an updated MP as guidance for management decisions. Without an updated MP, it is possible that Project-wide consideration of individual actions may be lost, leading to an overall degradation of the land and water resources over time.

Preferred Alternative/High-Density Recreation. These alternatives would have an overall beneficial impact on fish and wildlife resources through a systematic approach to management of Project land and water resources. The monitoring, adaptive management and habitat improvement efforts will all have beneficial impacts. Protection and management of sensitive areas through the designation of ESAs and FWSs will also be beneficial. Additionally, increased outreach and public education regarding fish and wildlife resources can increase awareness and sensitivity, as well as community feelings of responsibility, ownership, and protection of the resource.

Construction activities associated with the planned projects would have short duration negative impacts due to increased noise and human disturbance. Also the development of new trails into new areas of the Project could disturb individual animals. Prior to any clearing of trees or construction activities, surveys for nesting birds or protected species would be conducted as necessary to ensure compliance. By avoiding sensitive areas and sensitive seasons (nesting, bat roosting, etc.) and using adaptive management as needed to correct any unforeseen impacts, no significant impact to fish and wildlife is expected.

4.2.2 Terrestrial Vegetation and Land Cover

No-Action. No significant impact to vegetation and land cover would occur. The Corps would continue to operate the Project but without the benefit of an updated MP as guidance for management decisions. Without an updated MP, Project-wide consideration of individual actions may be lost, leading to an overall degradation of the land and water resources over time.

Preferred Alternative. High-Density Recreation. Vegetation would be surveyed and a management plan implemented under these alternatives. Removal of invasive species and

addition of environmentally sensitive areas would improve native terrestrial vegetation within the area. Additionally, increased outreach and public education can increase awareness and sensitivity, as well as community feelings of responsibility, ownership, and protection of the resource.

Proposed construction and maintenance activities could have local impacts to vegetation, however in the context of the overall size of the natural areas within the Project, these impacts would not be significant.

High-Density Recreation. There would be potential temporary impact from soil disturbance during construction. Erosion and sediment control plans would be used, as required, to limit adverse effects.

4.2.3 Threatened and Endangered Species

No-Action, Preferred Alternative/High-Density Recreation. None of the alternatives would have any effect on threatened or endangered species. Best management practices, to include seasonal restrictions on vegetation removal, would insure that no impact would occur. Any recommended development actions that may impact protected species would require consultation with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service under Section 7 of the Endangered Species Act once site specific details are available.

4.2.4 Invasive Species

No-Action. The original MP does not address invasive species, and is out of date and non-compliant with current laws and regulations. However, under the No Action alternative the District would continue to implement best management practices with regards to invasive species management.

Preferred Alternative/High-Density Recreation. The Preferred Alternative would address invasive species issues and will follow current District policy by using adaptive and best management practices in prevention, education, early detection, rapid response, and containment to try to control and manage invasive species. Overall a positive effect with regard to reducing the prevalence of invasive species is anticipated as a result of the preferred alternative.

4.2.5 Wetlands

No-Action, Preferred Alternative/High-Density Recreation. None of the alternatives would impact wetlands. Wetlands are regulated under Section(s) 401 and 404 of the Clean Water Act. Section 401 Water Quality Certification ensures compliance with water quality standards. Section 404 regulates activities within Waters of the U.S., which includes Woodcock Creek Lake and their surrounding tributaries. Further direction is provided by EO11990: Protection of Wetlands and related Corps regulations. Recommendations included within the Preferred Alternative will need to comply with Clean Water Act regulations and permitting prior to initiation of construction. Any proposed development would avoid impacting wetlands. If wetland impacts could not be avoided, then further analysis and coordination would be needed for that action.

4.3 Community Setting Impacts

4.3.1 Cultural Resources

No-Action. The No-Action Alternative would have “No Effect” on historic or archeological resources.

Preferred Alternative/High-Density Recreation. Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966, as amended, and its implementing regulations 36 CFR Part 800 require Federal agencies to take into account the effect of an undertaking on historic and archeological resources if that Project is under the direct or indirect jurisdiction of the agency or has been licensed or assisted by that agency. The Preferred Alternative would also have a beneficial impact on cultural resources by allowing these locations to be managed accordingly. The High-Density Recreation alternative would require site specific coordination in accordance with the Section 106 process. No significant impact to cultural resources would be expected

4.3.2 Socio- Economic Profile

No-Action. No significant impact to socioeconomics would occur. The Corps would continue to operate the Project but without the benefit of an updated MP as guidance for management decisions. Without an updated MP, it is possible that Project-wide consideration of individual actions may be lost, leading to an overall degradation of the land and water resources over time. Degradation of the resources could potentially reduce the recreation opportunities and, therefore, recreation related business opportunities.

Preferred Alternative/High-Density Recreation. The Preferred Alternative would not adversely impact regional socioeconomics, minority populations, low-income populations or children. Future plans could enhance concessions in the area with a likely small positive impact to the local economy.

4.3.3 Transportation

No-Action, Preferred Alternative/ Neither alternative would impact transportation. Recommendations for improvements and construction projects could have short-term adverse impact on transportation within the region from traffic diversions during construction; however, no significant long-term adverse impacts are anticipated.

High-Density Recreation. There is a potential for additional traffic in the area, dependent upon time of year and activities.

4.3.4 Recreation

No-Action. Although maintenance of current recreational facilities would continue under the No-Action Alternative, continued use of the existing MP would not accurately reflect the current status of facilities or existing and future recreational needs which would impact the recreation activities within the project area. . The Corps would continue to operate the Project but without the benefit of an updated MP as guidance for management decisions. Without an updated MP, it is possible that Project-wide consideration of individual actions may be lost, leading to an overall degradation of the land and water resources over time.

Preferred Alternative. The recreational needs of the public would be best accommodated through the implementation of the Preferred Alternative. Potential beneficial impacts include

modernizing and upgrading existing facilities and increased management of natural resources through some of the Resource Plan recommendations.

High-Density Recreation. There would be some benefits through construction of modern facilities and upgrading existing ones; however, additional considerations would have to be made and mitigative measures implemented on a project-by-project basis to balance conservation needs and to limit adverse effects.

4.4 Cumulative Impacts

The CEQ regulations that implement NEPA require assessment of cumulative impacts in the decision-making process for Federal projects. Cumulative impacts are defined as impacts which result when the impact of the preferred alternative is added to the impacts of other present and reasonably foreseeable future actions, regardless of what agency (Federal or non-Federal) or person undertakes such other actions (40 CFR 1508.7).

Past, present, and reasonably foreseeable future actions have and continue to contribute to the cumulative impacts of activities in and around Woodcock Creek Lake. Past actions include the construction and operation of the reservoir and the construction of recreation areas. Concurrent regional development included construction of residential, commercial, and industrial facilities in surrounding counties. All of these developments have had varying levels of adverse impacts on the physical and natural resources in the region. Many of these developments, however, have had beneficial impacts on the region's socioeconomic resources.

The development of the dam and reservoir created new natural and physical conditions, and altered French Creek's hydrology, which, through careful management by the District and other management partners, have created new and successful habitats and other natural resource conditions. The District and the other management partners have also brought a wide variety of high-quality recreational opportunities to the reservoir.

Existing and future actions also contribute to the cumulative impacts in and around the reservoirs. Existing and future actions include the operation of project facilities, upgrades and maintenance of recreation sites, as well as residential, commercial, and industrial development throughout the region.

Under the No-Action Alternative (baseline conditions), project operations would continue, somewhat inefficiently, using out-of-date guidance. Consequently, threats such as invasive species could become established prior to detection and remediation, potentially harming local ecosystems. Existing recreational activities would continue, but no new types would be generated. Modernized emergency response systems would not be implemented, thus leaving safety degraded. No new visitors, who would otherwise benefit the local economy, would be attracted.

Under the Preferred Alternative, ongoing project operations would be enhanced by new processes for efficient management of environmental resources and integrating any future recreational activities in a manner with minimal adverse impacts. Such a system would be responsive to both changes in the environment and recreational demands. The emphasis on conservation will preserve the region's aesthetics, maintain thriving ecosystems and habitats, and enhance recreation activities. The planned approach will continue to attract visitors and

potentially bring in new ones, benefitting the local economy. The programmatic approach to project management, included in this EA and attached MP, would allow for future development plans and mitigation responses to be adapted to address any unanticipated adverse actions. This would allow the District and other management partners to continue to reduce the negative contribution of its activities to regional cumulative impacts through proactive actions and adaptive resource management strategies.

Under the High-Density Recreation Alternative, project management would be improved and attract visitors, but at the expense of resource conservation in favor of additional development. While there would be potential economic benefits to the region, enactment of this alternative would require additional coordination and mitigation on a project-by-project basis.

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4.5 Compliance with Environmental Statutes

Federal Policy	Compliance Status
Archaeological and Historic Preservation Act, 16 U.S.C. 469, et seq.	Full Compliance
Bald and Golden Eagle Protection Act, 16 U.S.C. 668-668c	Full Compliance
Clean Air Act, as amended, 42 U.S.C. 1857h-7, et seq.	Full Compliance
Clean Water Act, 33 U.S.C. 1857h-7, et seq.	Full Compliance
Comprehensive Environmental Response, Compensation, and Liability Act 42 U.S.C. 9601 et seq.	Full Compliance
Endangered Species Act, 16 U.S.C. 1531, et seq.	Full Compliance*
Federal Water Project Recreation Act, 16 U.S.C. 460-1(12), et seq.	Full Compliance
Fish and Wildlife Coordination Act, 16 U.S.C. 601, et seq.	Full Compliance*
Land and Water Conservation Fund Act, 16 U.S.C. 460/-460/-11, et seq.	Full Compliance
Migratory Bird Treaty Act 16 U.S.C. 703-712	Full Compliance
National Environmental Policy Act, 42 U.S.C. 4321, et seq.	Full Compliance**
National Historic Preservation Act, 16 U.S.C. 470a, et seq.	Full Compliance*
River and Harbors Act, 33 U.S.C. 403, et seq.	Full Compliance
Watershed Protection and Flood Prevention Act, 16 U.S.C. 1001, et seq.	Not Applicable
Wild and Scenic Rivers Act, 16 U.S.C. 1271, et seq.	Full Compliance
Flood Plain Management (EO11988)	Full Compliance
Protection of Wetlands (EO11990)	Full Compliance*
Environmental Justice in Minority Populations and Low-Income Populations (EO12898)	Full Compliance
Invasive Species (EO13112)	Full Compliance

*Having met all requirements for this stage of planning, but future recommendations contained within this EA may require additional action for compliance.

**Full compliance anticipated after public review and District Commander signs FONSI.

5 Coordination and Public Involvement

Agency and public involvement was initiated in 2017, when the District published notices announcing its intention to revise the MP. This notice was followed by public comment periods, agency meetings, and additional public open houses. These public involvement activities and comments are described in detail in Chapter 7 of the MP and Appendix B, Agency and Public Coordination.

The Woodcock Creek Lake MP, Environmental Assessment, and draft Finding of No Significant Impact will be circulated for a 30-day public review period.

6 Conclusion

The Preferred Alternative meets currently foreseeable recreation and environmental stewardship needs and addresses environmental issues, with no significant environmental impacts anticipated. The recommended alternative also brings the MP into compliance with current Corps regulations. An Environmental Impact Statement is not required and a FONSI will be prepared.

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