

# Arlington National Cemetery Millennium Project

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## **DRAFT Finding of No Significant Impact Millennium Project, Arlington National Cemetery Arlington, Virginia**

An Environmental Assessment (EA) was prepared to assess the potential impacts of the Millennium Project. The Millennium Site will be developed to increase burial space at ANC. Building and site element construction shall be suitable for the environmental setting and complementary to the architectural theme and historical considerations of ANC. ANC is the lead agency for this National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) document and the U.S. National Park Service (NPS) is a cooperating agency.

### **Proposed Action**

The proposed action includes construction of casket burial sections, in-ground sites for ashes, and both columbarium niche courts and a niche wall. The site would include two assembly areas for service participants including committal service shelters. Building and site element construction shall be suitable for the environmental setting and complement the architectural theme and historic and cultural considerations of Arlington National Cemetery. Supporting facilities would include restrooms, storage areas, water fountains, waterlines, sanitary sewer, storm drainage, underground electrical and communications/information systems, stream restoration, landscaping, retaining walls, perimeter fencing, vehicle and pedestrian access roads and walks, and security systems. In addition, stormwater management improvements to include underground stormwater storage and a Modified Regenerative Stormwater Conveyance system, partially on NPS property, would be implemented near the Chaffee Place parking lot.

### **Alternatives Evaluated**

The alternatives evaluated in detail for this project are the Proposed Action, as described above, and the No-Action Alternative. Five additional action alternatives were considered and eliminated from detailed evaluation. Those alternatives were eliminated based on the criteria outlined in Section 3.9 of the EA, including an inability to fully meet the operational intent of the Cemetery or an inability to meet the regulatory requirements. The No-Action Alternative would result in no construction of an expansion project on the Millennium Site. Under this scenario, even with other proposed expansion projects at ANC, the longevity of ANC as an active Cemetery would be shortened compared with the Proposed Action.

### **Analysis**

The EA systematically reviewed the nature of the Proposed Action and associated risks, issues, and potential adverse effects on the area evaluated. All feasible measures were incorporated to minimize and avoid impacts to cultural and natural resources. The EA was posted electronically

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from 6 December 12 to 21 January 13 and was available to the public for review. Comments were received from various concerned citizens, local organizations, Arlington County, the Commonwealth of Virginia and EPA. Those comments did not change the outcomes of the analyses of potential impacts contained within the EA posted on 6 December 12; however, the comments resulted in the collection of additional data, as discussed below, that facilitated the implementation of measures to conserve natural resources to the maximum extent possible. All comments as well as responses to those comments are found in Appendix F of the Mar 13 Final EA.

Short-term impacts associated with the Proposed Action include land use, topography, drainage, and surface water impacts, disturbance of soil and removal of vegetation, air and noise emissions, increased construction traffic, temporary closures or interruptions in the jogging path on Joint Base Myer-Henderson Hall near the construction site, and altered aesthetics from the presence of a construction site. Short-term impacts to utilities such as water and electric service may also be encountered during construction. Short-term impacts would cease with the completion of construction. Long-term impacts to land use, soils, topography and drainage, surface water, vegetation, wildlife, and aesthetics would be expected as a result of the Proposed Action. The project would result in both positive and negative impacts; however the negative impacts have been avoided, minimized and mitigated to the maximum extent practicable. Due to this process, and based on the defined threshold of significance for each resource area, no significant impacts are anticipated.

In addition to the short and long-term impacts to each resource area, the EA considered the total impacts to the project area from a holistic project perspective and a broader cumulative impacts perspective. Impacts to the natural, cultural and historic resources both on the project site and associated with the project site were reviewed and considered. The impacts of this project in association with other projects both internal to ANC and on a regional scale were considered as part of the cumulative impacts analysis. This review led to a conclusion that the cumulative impacts of the project would not be significant.

As part of the project, the existing stream channels, which are currently severely degraded in some areas, would be restored and integrated into the overall project as a natural landscape amenity. Natural Channel Design (NCD) techniques would be utilized to restore the existing channels. By establishing stable channel geometry and reestablishing a floodplain connection, excessive bank and bed erosion can be arrested, in-stream habitat improved, and the downstream transport of pollutants reduced. Although ~882 trees would be removed, this impact was minimized during planning and an additional 600 trees and 500 shrubs will be planted to partially offset this impact.

## Public Process

Early agency coordination (mid-2000s) served to inform the concepts and design of this project. Comments included a desire to protect the forested areas and the stream as well as the need to maintain the architectural theme and historical considerations of ANC. In August of 2012, a scoping update meeting was held at ANC and federal, State, and local organizations were again

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notified. A draft EA was prepared and released for public and agency review on 6 December 2012. The 45-day public comment period ended on 21 January 2013. Approximately 30 individuals and organizations submitted comments on the draft EA. The primary concern raised was the impacts to the forested area on the Millennium Site. The “Arlington Woods,” listed on the Virginia Native Plant Society Registry, is an ecologically significant stand containing particularly high-value trees estimated at up to 235 years old. The Arlington Woods is situated exclusively within the confines of the NPS property. Only minor impacts are anticipated to NPS property from the stream restoration and MRSC portions of the project. Accordingly, the Arlington Woods, inclusive of a contiguous buffer, will not be significantly impacted as a result of this project.

Trees that will be removed are all in areas that were clear cut during the Civil War. These trees are a maximum of 145 years old. As a result of comments received, the team has implemented additional measures to maximize the number of trees that will not be impacted by the project. As a result of the iterative design process, approximately 882 trees, 90 of which are invasive and 60 of which are dead, would be removed for construction. Approximately 503 trees would be removed from the area of trees in the northern portion of the project site which is approximately 105 years old. Approximately 167 trees would be removed from the portion of the woodland that is approximately 145 years old, and approximately 212 trees would be removed from the former Ft. Myer picnic area which is currently a park-like maintained area with trees primarily between 50-100 years of age but with no trees greater than 145 years old. Based on comments received, a revised EA with additional conservation measures was released in March 2013 for a 30-day public and agency review.

The planning and design of this project have been coordinated with multiple organizations including, but not limited to, the NPS, the U.S. Commission of Fine Arts (CFA), National Capital Planning Commission (NCPC), Joint Base Myer-Henderson Hall (JBMHH), Virginia Department of Historic Resources (VDHR), Virginia Department of Environmental Quality (VDEQ), Virginia Department of Conservation and Recreation (VDCR), Virginia Department of Forestry (VDOT) and Arlington County. A Section 106 consultation was completed pursuant to the National Historic Preservation Act (NHPA) which resolved, through identification of appropriate mitigation measures, any adverse effects, as defined in the NHPA, noted in the planning and review of the project.

## Conclusions

The principal conclusion of this EA is that implementing the Proposed Action would not result in significant adverse impacts. Therefore, an Environmental Impact Statement will not be prepared.

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Date