

FINDING OF NO SIGNIFICANT IMPACT
FOR

The Outgranting Of Federally-Owned Park Land To
A Non-federal Entity For The Development Of Bethel Park
Lake Sidney Lanier, Forsyth County, Georgia

1. PROPOSED ACTION: The proposed action is the outgranting of Bethel Park to a non-federal entity such as a governmental agency, non-profit organization, or for-profit organization. The purpose of such a lease to a non-federal entity would be to obtain recreational facilities at the park at little or no cost to the government and to develop, operate and maintain the leased property for the benefit of the United States and the general public. The U. S. Army Corps of Engineer (Corps) has currently received outgrant applications with proposed development of Bethel Park from two different parties; however, this would not preclude other potential applicants from making application and providing development plans for the park that could be considered by the appropriate Corps element for final approval. Such development may include fees or restrictions on locations and types of activities allowed or organized by the lessee.

Summaries of the two proposed development plans that have currently been submitted are presented below.

Forsyth County Board of Commissioners Plan:

Construct a campground containing approximately 75 campsites for recreational vehicles and tent campers. Sites would have electrical service available.

Construct comfort stations, wash houses and shelters for campers.

Construct trails to connect to a day-use area.

Construct a day use area with boat launch, 90-space parking lot, group shelters, beach and picnic areas.

Construct an education center, offices and amphitheater.

Construct walking trails.

Developed area would include approximately 894,000 square feet.

Metropolitan Atlanta YMCA Plan:

Construct a YMCA camp for children.

Camp would include construction of various buildings and structures including dormitory structures for campers, staff residences, dining hall, open air gymnasium, assembly area, marina, administrative building, infirmary and first aid station, restrooms, chapel and other related structures.

Construct outdoor athletic facilities such as baseball/softball fields and ropes courses.

Construct a beach and outdoor pool.

- Construct walking trails.
- Construct a wooden privacy and entrance gate.
- Construct parking lots for approximately 200 cars.
- Developed area would include approximately 934,000 square feet.

A complete description of both proposed developments and conceptual plan drawings are included in the attached Environmental Assessment. The plans demonstrate the types of development that could result from leasing the property to a non-federal entity. This document does not provide a preference for either of the proposed development plans.

2. ALTERNATIVES CONSIDERED: Alternatives to the proposed action which were considered in detail include:

No Action Alternative. “No action” represents continuing the current low level of management for Bethel Park. The park is currently partially developed as a park available for public access. There is a boat ramp, pedestrian trails, and parking areas that are utilized by visitors. The existing facilities including parking areas and the boat launch area would continue as they have been in the recent past, natural areas would remain undeveloped and current use of the park for hiking, fishing, boating and picnicking would continue.

Implementation of the Corps 1987 Master Plan. This plan previously described and approved by the Corps 1987 Master Plan would include 45 acres of usable land suitable for moderately intense development on all four peninsulas. It includes rehabilitation of Bethel Park with 220 overnight RV campsites with a sanitary disposal station, swimming beaches, boat launching facilities, bathhouses, and additional roads throughout the three peninsulas. The 1987 Master Plan has not been implemented and likely will not be implemented in the foreseeable future. However, the Corps has determined that the degree of recreation-related development described in the 1987 Master Plan is consistent with the project purposes and remains a long-term possibility, and viable alternative action.

3. FACTORS CONSIDERED IN DETERMINING THAT NO ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT STATEMENT IS REQUIRED:

The recommended action would result in no significant adverse environmental impacts. This action will allow the lease of Bethel Park land to a non-federal entity which would develop the area for outdoor recreational use. Such leases may be considered when they develop, operate and maintain the property for the benefit of the United States and the general public. The Corps 1987 Master Plan for Bethel Park was developed to identify, develop or enhance quality recreational facilities, manage natural resources and the property in a cost efficient manner. The proposed outgrant to a non-federal entity is determined to meet that objective.

Of the adverse impacts, only loss of wildlife habitat is at a moderate level; all other adverse impacts are considered minor. Although such habitat loss would occur, it is in an area previously designated for moderately intensive development of recreational facilities and adequate protected habitat remains located on federally-owned property around Lake Lanier. Adverse impacts which would occur as a result of an outgrant to a non-federal entity, such as loss of wildlife

habitat, water quality degradation, increased automobile traffic and land use, among others, would occur under any development plan including that described in the Corps 1987 Master Plan. None of the action alternatives would cause significant adverse impacts to the following resource areas: water quality, fisheries, wildlife, wetlands, threatened and endangered species, cultural resources, land use, recreation, prime or unique farmland, socioeconomic resources, traffic, noise, air quality, water supply, public safety, hazardous and toxic materials, environmental justice, protection of children, aesthetics, or cumulative impacts. In addition to minor adverse impacts, several minor beneficial impacts would result from the action, including enhanced recreational facilities and minor enhancements to the local economy.

4. CONCLUSION: An evaluation by the attached Environmental Assessment describing the proposed outgrant of Bethel Park shows that the proposed actions would have no significant impact on the human environment and preparation of an Environmental Impact Statement is not required.

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