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**WESTERN AREA  
MASTER PLAN**

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**APPENDIX C  
ENVIRONMENTAL  
ASSESSMENT**

**Minnesota, South Dakota**

**2021**



**US Army Corps  
of Engineers®**

St. Paul District

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**WESTERN AREA  
MASTER PLAN**

**MINNESOTA, SOUTH DAKOTA**

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**APPENDIX A**

**ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT**

**COVER SHEET**

**Proposed Actions (Project)**      *Western Area Master Plan* - Adopt and implement the revised Master Plan, which includes reclassification of U.S. Army Corps of Engineers-managed lands.

**Type of Statement:**      Environmental Assessment

**Lead Agency**                      U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, St. Paul District

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## **Abstract**

This Environmental Assessment (EA) seeks to evaluate resources in the project area for potential effects that may be caused by the adoption and implementation of the proposed Master Plan. Implementing the revised Master Plan will provide a vital tool for the responsible stewardship of resources at the Western Area projects to benefit present and future generations.

The following factors were considerations for alternatives evaluated in the environmental analysis: 1) meeting project purposes; 2) minimizing adverse environmental impacts; 3) considering stakeholder and public interests; and 4) complying with relevant laws and regulations. This EA determined that there would be no significant impacts and that no mitigating actions or permits would be required by adoption and implementation of the Master Plan. However, implementation of any specific project that meets Master Plan guidance will require a Finding of No Significant Impact, Environmental Assessment, or Environmental Impact Statement depending on the specifics of said project.

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## **1.0 BACKGROUND**

The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, St. Paul District (Corps or District), has prepared this Environmental Assessment (EA) of the effects to the environment for a proposed update to the Western Area Master Plan (Master Plan). This assessment was carried out to satisfy requirements of the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) of 1969, Council on Environmental Quality (CEQ) regulations (40 CFR 1500-1508), and Corps of Engineers Procedures for Implementing NEPA (33 CFR 230).

This EA provides information to the District Commander on the potential environmental effects of the proposed action and various alternatives on the natural, cultural, and human environment for determining the need for an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) or a Finding of No Significant Impact (FONSI). This assessment references the information provided in the main report and associated appendices on objectives, baseline conditions, coordination results, and other data. This assessment includes the following:

1. A discussion of future conditions.
2. Identification of alternatives, including the Proposed Alternative.
3. An assessment of the environmental impacts of alternatives.
4. A discussion of compliance with environmental regulations and executive orders.

## **2.0 PURPOSE AND NEED FOR ACTION**

The District is directed to periodically revise and update its master plans, including that for the Western Area Master Plan. All actions by the Corps on Corps lands and individuals granted leases to the Corps lands must be consistent with master plans. Therefore, this Master Plan must be kept current to provide effective guidance for Corps decision-making. The Master Plan's primary goal is to incorporate and consider the most recent conditions and information to prescribe an overall land use management plan, resource objectives, and associated design and management concepts. The Master Plan will provide responsible stewardship of the Western Area to benefit present and future generations. The Master Plan and will supersede the 1997 Master Plan and will apply changes to land classifications in accordance with Corps' regulations.

### **2.1 Location**

The Western Area Projects are located in western Minnesota and eastern South Dakota (Figure 1). The Lake Orwell and Lake Traverse Projects lie within the Upper Red River watershed and the Highway 75 and Lac qui Parle Projects lie within the Minnesota River watershed (Figure 1).

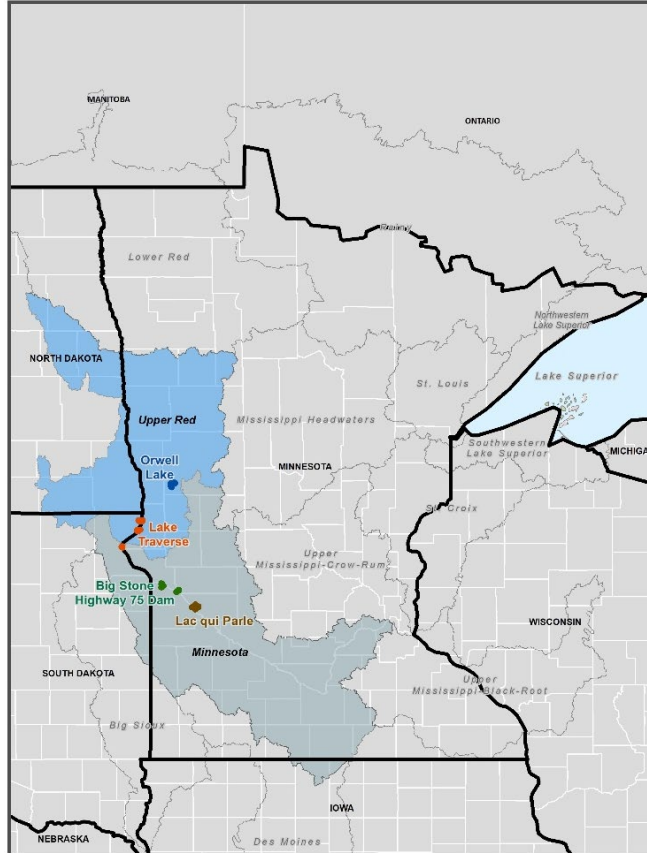


Figure 1. Location of each project within watersheds.

## 2.2 Authority

Master plans are authorized by Engineering Regulation (ER) 1130-2-550, Recreation, Operations, and Maintenance Guidance and Procedures. Chapter 3, Project Master Plans and Operational Management Plans, 30 January 2013. This ER also provides policy and guidance for the preparation of master plans. It is the policy of USACE that master plans be developed and kept current for all Civil Works projects for which USACE has administrative responsibility. The master plan is the basic document guiding USACE obligations. A current, approved master plan is necessary before any action can be taken which may restrict the range of future operations. Furthermore, all actions by USACE and out grantees must be consistent with the master plan.

## 2.3 Proposed Action Objectives

Resource objectives for the proposed Master Plan are intended to guide the future management of the Western Area. These objectives are described in Section 1.9 of the main report.

## 2.4 Related National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) Documentation

The following NEPA documents are related to the proposed action:

- Final Environmental Impact Statement, Big Stone Lake – Whetstone River, Big Stone and Lac qui Parle Counties, Minnesota and Grant County, South Dakota, December 1971.

- Final Supplement, Environmental Impact Statement, Modification Project, Big Stone Lake – Whetstone River, July 1980.
- Operation Plan Evaluation and Environmental Assessment, Lake Traverse, Bois de Sioux River and Orwell Reservoir, April 1994.
- Environmental Assessment, Modification to Lac qui Parle Reservoir Regulation Plan, Minnesota River, December 1994.
- Western District Flood Control Projects Master Plan, June 1997.
- Feasibility Report and Environmental Assessment, Marsh Lake Ecosystem Restoration Project, Minnesota River, Big Stone, Lac qui Parle, and Swift Counties, Minnesota, November 2011.

### **3.0 ALTERNATIVES**

This section of the EA describes the reasonable alternatives for revising the Master Plan. The Corps only considered feasible and reasonable alternatives. In this case, two alternatives are identified: the Proposed Alternative of adopting the proposed revised Master Plan and a No Action Alternative in which the 1997 Master Plan would remain the management guidance document. Additional details on these alternatives are provided below.

#### **3.1 No Action Alternative**

Inclusion of the No Action Alternative serves as the benchmark against which Federal actions are to be evaluated.

Under the No Action Alternative, the District would not approve the adoption or implementation of a revised Western Area Projects' Master Plan. Instead, the 1997 Master Plan would continue to provide comprehensive management guidance and philosophy for the Western Area. Resource management activities would continue to be directed towards providing continued enjoyment and maximum sustained use by the public of lands, waters, forests, and associated recreational resources under the jurisdiction of the Corps. However, the 1997 Master Plan would provide the only source of comprehensive management guidance and philosophy.

Under this alternative, the existing Land Classification identified in the 1997 Master Plan and its associated management practices would continue to be in place (ER 1120-2-400). The No Action Alternative would not meet the Corps' current regulations or project purposes as described above. Information provided in the 1997 plan is out of date and no longer adequately addresses the needs of the District, other management partners, or users of the Western Area. Furthermore, the 1997 Master Plan does not include the revised Land Classifications. Future major developments or resource management policies would require approval on a case-by-case basis without the benefit of evaluation in the context of a Master Plan.

#### **3.2 Balanced Alternative (Proposed)**

Under the Balanced Alternative, the District would replace the 1997 Master Plan with a revision that modifies the land classification with greater emphasis on balancing recreation and natural resources needs. Additional details on the changes to land classes associated with this alternative are provided in the following sections of the main report:

- Lake Traverse – Section 4
- Lake Orwell – Section 7
- Lac qui Parle – Section 10
- Highway 75 – Section 13



Under this alternative, an updated land classification system would replace the existing system, recognizing five applicable classes (EP 1130-2-550). For purposes of comparing alternatives, each of these classes is associated (i.e., cross-walked) with its counterpart under the No Action Alternative as shown in Table 3-1. Lands designated as “Environmentally Sensitive Area” (ESA) may overlap other land classes. This alternative would also involve adjustments to the land class boundaries.

This alternative would provide a management framework describing these resources which is up to date with current regional and local needs, resource capability and suitability, public interests consistent with authorized project purposes, and regulations. Moreover, this alternative would meet the Corps’ current regulations and goals of regularly updating Master Plans. The information provided in this alternative is up to date and addresses the needs of the District, other management partners, or users of the Western Area Projects. This alternative is the District’s proposed alternative that emphasizes the most recent public desires, legislative authority, regional and project-specific resource requirements, and suitability.

### **3.3 Other Alternatives Considered**

Early in the process, the District considered two additional alternatives as follows:

- **Natural Resource Focus Alternative.** The District would approve a master plan with a natural resource focus. This alternative would provide management with an up-to-date document focused on environmental protection and conservation by classifying most of the Western Area Projects’ managed lands as environmentally sensitive and vegetation/wildlife management. Future management recommendations would de-emphasize recreation activities in the Western Area Projects.
- **Recreation Focus Alternative.** The District would approve a master plan with emphasis on recreation. This alternative would provide management with an up-to-date document which is focused on recreation by classifying most of the Western Area Projects’ managed lands as either high-density or low-density recreation. This alternative would open more lands for intensive use which would have higher impacts to natural resources. Areas considered environmentally sensitive and some of the current wildlife management areas would be de-emphasized and could be opened for development.

Section 1.9 of the Master Plan lists objectives focused on recreation and environmental stewardship resources. The District has determined that the Natural Resource Focus and Recreation Focus alternatives do not meet the project objectives and overall purpose of providing a balanced management plan that provides both natural resource protection and quality outdoor recreational experiences. For this reason, these alternatives were eliminated from further consideration in this EA.

Table 3-1. Crosswalk of Applicable Land Classes between the No Action Alternative and Proposed Alternative. A description of each land classification can be found in the Master Plan.

Land Classification	Project	No-Action Alternative (acres)	Proposed Alternative (acres)
Project Operations	Traverse	506.9	576.1
	Orwell	19.7	495.2
	Lac qui Parle	167.1	350.9
	Highway 75	0	231.2
High Density Recreation <sup>1</sup>	Traverse	11.4	12.4
	Orwell	11.1	13.2
	Lac qui Parle	11.4	12.9
	Highway 75	101.1	7.9
Environmentally Sensitive Areas	Traverse	0	0
	Orwell	0	0
	Lac qui Parle	0	18.7
	Highway 75	0	0
<u>Multi-Resource Management</u>			
- Wildlife Management	Traverse	747.7	653.8
	Orwell	0	726.8
	Lac qui Parle	121.3	122.0
	Highway 75	0	0
- Low Density Recreation <sup>1</sup>	Traverse	0	0
	Orwell	0	0
	Lac qui Parle	0	0
	Highway 75	0	0
- Vegetation Management	Traverse	0	0
	Orwell	0	0
	Lac qui Parle	0	51.8
	Highway 75	0	44.6
- Future/Inactive Recreation	Traverse	0	0
	Orwell	0	0
	Lac qui Parle	0	0
	Highway 75	0	0
- Water Surface Zoning	Traverse	0	11,039.6
	Orwell	0	887.9
	Lac qui Parle	0	4,461.7
	Highway 75	0	1,237.0

<sup>1</sup> Previous guidance classified lands as “recreation” – current guidance breaks recreation down into high and low density.

Table 3-2. Summary of Alternatives Considered as Part of the Master Plan.

<b>Alternative:</b>	<b>No Action</b>	<b>Natural Resource Focus</b>	<b>Recreation Focus</b>	<b>Balanced</b>
<b>Land Uses Emphasized:</b>				
Project Operations	X	X	X	X
High Recreation Use	X		X	X
Vegetation Management		X		X
Wildlife Management	X	X		X
Natural / Ecologically Sensitive Area		X		X

## **4.0 AFFECTED ENVIRONMENT**

The main report describes current conditions for the affected environment within the project area, including resources that may be affected by the revised Master Plan. This section focuses on generally describing the anticipated future conditions which will be the basis for evaluating alternatives in Section 5 of this EA.

For purposes of this EA, the District considered all environmental factors potentially influenced by the proposed Master Plan and has focused this environmental review on specific resources.

### **4.1 Socioeconomic Resources**

#### **4.1.1 Aesthetic Values**

The aesthetic value of the Western Area Project area is primarily a function of the recreation areas. The areas offer a wide variety of natural habitats ranging from forested areas to wetlands. These components will continue to be important for preserving the natural beauty of the project area. No major developments or activities are anticipated that would diminish the future aesthetic appeal of this area. Future park improvements are considered to provide opportunities for the public to experience and enjoy aesthetic values associated with the project area.

#### **4.1.2 Recreational Opportunities**

A description of existing conditions associated with recreational use in the Western Area Project can be found in the main report. The study area will retain much of its pristine beauty, thus continuing to appeal to outdoor enthusiasts. The Western Area Project will continue to provide opportunities for water-related recreation as well as provide access to hiking, picnicking, hunting and other outdoor recreation opportunities.

#### **4.1.3 Transportation**

Access to specific locations within the study area is provided by a network of state and local roads. Within the project boundaries, a mix of paved and unpaved roads, parking lots, and trails provide access to different sites. Roads and parking lots support Project operations areas developed recreational sites and some resource sites. The undeveloped portions of the Project have limited transportation infrastructure.

The transportation services described above are anticipated to continue to exist.

#### **4.1.4 Public Health and Safety**

The District, the State of Minnesota, the State of South Dakota, and other management partners work to ensure a safe and enjoyable experience for all visitors in the Western Area Projects. Safety in the Western Area is maintained through a variety of different mechanisms. The District's Project Safety Plan defines programs and guidelines relative to employee and visitor safety together with procedures to follow in the event of accidents. Safety conditions will continue to be important for the Western Area Projects.

#### **4.1.5 Community Growth and Development**

Section 1.6.5 of the main report provides a description of baseline conditions associated with community growth and development. Areas surrounding the Western Area Project sites have seen an overall decline in population between 2010 and 2019.

#### **4.1.6 Existing / Potential Land Use**

Refer to the main report for a description of baseline conditions associated with existing land use. These conditions are anticipated to continue.

#### **4.1.7 Property Values / Tax Revenue**

Property values and tax revenue in the area surrounding the project area are anticipated to remain stable.

#### **4.1.8 Public Facilities and Services**

See the main report for a description of baseline conditions associated with public facilities and services. These conditions are anticipated to continue.

#### **4.1.9 Employment / Business Activity**

See the main report for a description of economics and business activities in the area, which are projected to continue. Recreation, tourism, and agriculture are major industries that will continue to be important to the economy in the Western Area Project area.

#### **4.1.10 Environmental Justice**

See Section 1.6.5 of the main report for a description of population demographics. Environmental Justice is institutionally significant because of Executive Order 12898 (E.O. 12898) and the Department of Defense's Strategy on Environmental Justice of 1995, which direct federal agencies to identify and address any disproportionately high adverse human health or environmental effects of federal actions on minority and low-income populations.

The master plan planning approach considered all participants' input during the planning process. No special treatment was considered or provided to anyone.

### **4.2 Natural Resources**

#### **4.2.1 Terrestrial Habitat**

Terrestrial habitat in the Project area is described in the main report. For the most part, the future conditions for terrestrial habitat in the Project area are anticipated to remain similar as they are today.

#### **4.2.2 Wetlands**

Wetlands in the Project area are described the main report. Future conditions for wetlands are anticipated to remain similar to existing conditions.

#### **4.2.3 Aquatic Habitat**

Aquatic habitat is discussed in the main report. Future conditions for aquatic habitat are

anticipated to remain unchanged.

#### **4.2.4 Habitat Diversity and Interspersion / Biological Productivity**

A description of factors related to habitat diversity and biological productivity is provided throughout the main report. The Project area will continue to have lakes, streams, forests, wetlands and open spaces that support wildlife diversity. Habitat in the Western Area Project will continue to support an abundance of fish and wildlife.

#### **4.2.5 Surface Water Quality**

Surface water quality is described in the main report. No change in surface water quality is anticipated.

#### **4.2.6 Threatened or Endangered Species**

Federally listed threatened or endangered species are described in the main report. A review of the FWS Information for Planning and Conservation (IPaC) website conducted on July 2, 2021 to determine whether any federally listed threatened and endangered species may occur within or near the project area. The IPaC database search indicated the potential occurrence of five federal-listed species: northern long-eared bat (*Myotis septentrionalis*), red knot (*Calidris canutus rufa*), Dakota skipper (*Hesperia dacotae*), Poweshiek skipperling (*Oarisma poweshiek*), and western prairie fringed orchid (*Platanthera praeclara*). It is anticipated that each of these species would continue to be federally listed until populations have recovered.

State listed species (including species of special concern) are also identified in the main report. These species are expected to occur in the study area and are also anticipated to remain on the state-listed species list until populations have recovered.

#### **4.2.7 Invasive Species**

Invasive species found in the Western Area Projects are identified in Section 1.6.2 of the main report.

Exotic and invasive species are a part of the existing ecosystem within the Project area. These invasive species can rapidly disrupt land and water resources if not aggressively managed. Over time, native species can be replaced, and the ecology detrimentally altered. Additionally, the interdependence and connectivity between the flora and fauna will be out of balance, and the fauna may relocate to find habitat required for preferred food, shelter, or habitat structure.

Invasive species not only have tremendous consequences on ecosystem compositions but also come with economic consequences. Labor, materials, and equipment to control invasive species are expensive and become more expensive if these species are allowed to propagate, redirecting Project funds from other beneficial pursuits.

### **4.3 Cultural Resources**

Cultural resources in the Project area are described in the main report. Cultural resources and historic properties will continue to be recognized as significant resources and protected in the Project areas.

### **4.4 Climate Change**

Climate change is discussed in Section 1.6.1 of the main report. Climate change has become an area of concern due to the potential for effects on numerous aspects of the environment, especially those related to water resources.

Although there is still uncertainty on regional variations in climate change impact, it is likely that the following direct effects to natural and socioeconomic resources in the Western Area Projects area will occur:

- Temperatures and precipitation changes will vary regionally but will lead to changes in the water cycle that may impact both aquatic and terrestrial species.
- With increasing temperatures, flora and fauna will migrate northward to escape warming conditions.
- Temperature increases will alter seasons and may result in earlier spring and later fall. This may result in migration pattern shifts of birds and migratory insects, which may cause misalignment of food availability.
- Reduced snowpack and increased temperatures in streams, rivers, and lakes may contribute to decreased populations of freshwater fish, such as trout, and altered flooding regimes may affect spawning and rearing habitat for many aquatic species.
- Increases in air temperature along with extended heat waves in the summer months and the increased frequency of extreme storm events may decrease the number of visitors to Western Area Projects' recreational facilities.
- Periods of extreme high heat pose human health concerns and higher water temperatures can result in algal blooms and other water quality issues which may cause health risks for those involved in aquatic activities.

There will be different levels of wildlife response to climate change. For example, some wildlife and fish species may benefit from a changing climate and could expand their range or increase in abundance. In addition, the movement of species will create new communities of species for which there will be no previous examples and will require new management regimes. Wildlife management plans will need to reflect these changes and will likely need to be updated on a more frequent basis.

Climate change is a large and growing threat to wildlife and natural systems, but it will also exacerbate many existing threats. Efforts to address climate change should not diminish the immediate need to combat threats that are independent of climate change, such as habitat loss, invasive species spread, pollution and wildlife diseases. Resource management goals should be to sustain ecosystems and viable wildlife populations regardless of the threat (Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies 2009).

If these predicted effects occur in the Western Area Projects' area, there will be need for more active management of natural resources as well as recreational services. Therefore, consideration of future climate change and its effects would not contradict the need for the proposed action.

## **5.0 ENVIRONMENTAL CONSEQUENCES**

This section describes the environmental consequences associated with the alternatives presented in Section 3.0 of this appendix. In general, the No Action Alternative would not consider the current status of facilities and most up-to date information regarding, among others, management principles and objectives, public use patterns, and Corps' policy.

Use of the updated Master Plan would help define the approval process for future actions affecting project lands, depending on whether the actions are 1) specifically included in the Master Plan, 2) not included in the Master Plan, but consistent with the Plan, or 3) not included and not consistent with the recommendations, objectives and policies stated in Corps regulations. For specific actions that are identified in the Master Plan, the approval process may still require adequate NEPA consideration prior to initiating construction.

The updated Master Plan will consist of land classifications, resource objectives, and other specifically stated policies considered for analyzing environmental effects. However, this EA does not assess the impacts of specific recommended future management actions and opportunities. These recommendations will be part of the Operational Management Plan (OMP) and identified as tasks which will be reviewed and completed at a later date. Because of the wide variety of possible future management recommendations or tasks that could be proposed, an additional evaluation to determine consistency with the stated site objectives and further NEPA consideration would be required as these tasks are undertaken.

The implementation of the Master Plan would not result in any irreversible environmental conditions. The Master Plan is a land-use planning document intended to benefit productivity of the Western Area's lands in the long term. While any future maintenance and construction activities may temporarily disrupt wildlife and human use in project areas, negative long-term impacts are expected to be minimal or non-existent on all ecosystems associated with this Master Plan.

Environmental impacts of the No Action and Proposed Alternative (adopt and implement Master Plan) are displayed in Table 5 - 1. Only resources that have either a beneficial or possible adverse impact will be discussed further in the remainder of this section.

Table 5 - 1. Environmental Assessment Matrix.

Alternative	No Action <sup>a</sup>			Recommended Alternative <sup>b</sup>		
	Beneficial	No Impact	Adverse	Beneficial	No Impact	Adverse
<b>A. SOCIAL EFFECTS</b>						
1. Noise Levels		X			X	
2. Aesthetic Values		X			X	
3. Recreational Opportunities		X			X	
4. Transportation		X			X	
5. Public Health and Safety		X			X	
6. Community Cohesion (Sense of Unity)		X			X	
7. Community Growth & Development		X			X	
8. Business and Home Relocations		X			X	
9. Existing/Potential Land Use		X		X		
10. Controversy		X			X	
<b>B. ECONOMIC EFFECTS</b>						
1. Property Values		X			X	
2. Tax Revenue		X			X	
3. Public Facilities and Services		X		X		
4. Regional Growth		X			X	
5. Employment		X			X	
6. Business Activity		X			X	
7. Farmland/Food Supply		X			X	
8. Commercial Navigation		X			X	
9. Flooding Effects		X			X	
10. Energy Needs and Resources		X			X	
<b>C. NATURAL RESOURCE EFFECTS</b>						
1. Air Quality		X			X	
2. Terrestrial Habitat		X		X		
3. Wetlands		X			X	
4. Aquatic Habitat		X		X		
5. Habitat Diversity and Interspersion		X			X	
6. Biological Productivity		X			X	
7. Surface Water Quality		X			X	
8. Water Supply		X			X	
9. Groundwater		X			X	
10. Soils		X			X	
11. Threatened or Endangered Species		X			X	
<b>D. CULTURAL RESOURCE EFFECTS</b>						
1. Historic Architectural Values		X			X	
2. Pre- & Historic Archeological Values		X			X	

<sup>c</sup> 'X' = minor effects.

<sup>a</sup> Effects as compared to existing conditions.

<sup>b</sup> Effects as compared to the No Action Alternative.

## 5.1 Socio-Economic Effects

### 5.1.1 Existing / Potential Land Use

Under the No Action Alternative, existing and potential land use would not experience measurable effects compared to the existing conditions. Under the Proposed Alternative, the revised land classes, along with updated information on use, would drive better decisions on land use. Minor benefits are anticipated.

### 5.1.8 Public Facilities and Services

Future public facilities and services are not anticipated to be affected under the No Action Alternative when compared to the existing conditions. Overall, the implementation of the Proposed Alternative is anticipated to have minor positive effects to public facilities and services by guiding the enhancement of outdoor recreational opportunities.



### **5.1.10 Environmental Justice**

Environmental Justice is institutionally significant because of Executive Order 12898 of 1994 (E.O. 12898) and Department of Defense's Strategy on Environmental Justice of 1995, which directs federal agencies to identify and address any disproportionately high adverse human health or environmental effects of federal actions to minority and/or low-income populations. Within the project areas, minorities account for 7-22 percent of the population and low-income populations account for 28-35 percent.

No adverse economic or social effects would be anticipated under the Proposed Alternative or the No Action Alternative. Neither alternative would disproportionately impact any individuals of a particular social or economic status.

## **5.2 Natural Resource Effects**

### **5.2.1 Terrestrial Habitat**

Existing land classes closely associated with terrestrial habitat under the No Action Alternative would be Multiple Resource Management (MRM) areas, which is comprised of 869 acres. Although management of terrestrial habitat would continue under the No Action Alternative, the 1997 Master Plan no longer accurately reflects the status of these resources in the study area. In the future, minor adverse effects to terrestrial habitat are anticipated compared to the existing conditions because of the disconnect between management and use.

Updated land classifications closely associated with terrestrial habitat under the Proposed Alternative would include MRM Wildlife Management and MRM Vegetation Management, which would comprise 1,599 acres of project lands. The Proposed Alternative would thus result in minor beneficial effects.

### **5.2.2 Wetlands**

The No Action and Proposed Alternative would have no effect on wetlands.

### **5.2.3 Aquatic Habitat**

The No Action Alternative would have no effect on aquatic habitat. Although the Master Plan is focused on managing lands, the Proposed Alternative would have minor localized beneficial effects to aquatic habitat. These localized benefits are due to increased acreages and location of acreages designated as Environmentally Sensitive Areas in the updated land class allocation.

## **5.3 Cultural Resource Effects**

Both the No Action and Proposed Alternatives are anticipated to have "no effect" on historic properties. No specific management activities are identified, and specific effects cannot be identified. Historic properties are located throughout the Western Area Project. Prior to implementing any action, effects to historic properties would be reviewed in accordance with Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended.

## 5.6 Compliance with Environmental Regulations and Guidelines

The compliance of the Proposed Action with environmental quality statutes is shown in Table 5-2.

Table 5- 2. Compliance with Environmental Protection Statutes and Other Environmental Requirements

<b>Federal Policy</b>	<b>Compliance</b>
Archaeological and Historic Preservation Act, 16 U.S.C. 469, et seq.	Full
Clean Air Act, as amended, 42 U.S.C. 1857h-7, et seq.	Full
Clean Water Act, 33 USC 1251 et seq..	Full
Endangered Species Act, 16 U.S.C. 1531, et seq.	Full
Federal Water Project Recreation Act, 16 U.S.C. 460-1(12), et seq.	Full
Fish and Wildlife Coordination Act, 16 U.S.C. 601, et seq.	Full
Land and Water Conservation Fund Act, 16 U.S.C. 460/-460/-11, et seq.	NA
National Environmental Policy Act, 42 U.S.C. 4321, et seq.	Full
National Historic Preservation Act, 16 U.S.C. 470a, et seq.	Full
Watershed Protection and Flood Prevention Act, 16 U.S.C. 1001, et seq.	NA
Protection of Wetlands (EO11990)	Full
Corps of Engineers Planning Guidance Handbook (ER 1105-2-100)	Full
EO13112 Invasive Species	Full

This document addresses only a change in the program and would not suffice to comply with NEPA for the individual projects proposed. Each project plan would need to have a separate NEPA document upon its proposal for implementation. Site-specific impacts would be addressed in those documents and would be in greater detail than is presented in this Master Plan EA. In addition, compliance with all applicable environmental statutes would be necessary, as well as the necessary coordination (i.e., 404(b)(1), FWCA, ESA, SHPO) for each project.

## 6.0 COORDINATION

Section 15 of the main report provides information on the District's efforts to coordinate with stakeholders, including the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Minnesota Department of Natural Resources, South Dakota Game, Fish and Parks and the Native American tribes.

The general public was also engaged as part of an open house. The formal comment period for the scoping and development of the draft report and EA was from (fill in dates). [\(text will be added after the release of the draft report for public and agency comment\).](#)

During the scoping phase, comments received were considered in the decision-making process. Section 15.2.2 of the main report provides a summary of the comments received and Appendix B provides the full comments received. This section summarizes the major issues raised during the scoping process.

The following list<sup>1</sup> are issues or concerns identified during the scoping process:

### Lac qui Parle

- Have the parking area on the west end of the Marsh Lake Dam open to the public as much as possible for fishing access. Include toilets and an ADA-compliant fishing platform at this location.

- Provide canoe access to the Pomme de Terre river.
- MN DNR would like to add the Louisberg Grade Road culverts that were in the authorized plan for Marsh Lake improvements.
- Improve wayfinding (i.e., signage) that is inclusive of non-English-speaking people who live in the Montevideo area and use the Corps and DNR recreation areas.
- Provide a new day-use area that would be less prone to flooding and accommodate groups as large as 50 people.

#### Highway 75

- Add chinking stone to the class IV riprap in the vicinity of the structure to allow anglers easier access to the shoreline for fishing. It would also be beneficial to add an ADA shore fishing platform.

#### Lake Traverse

- Mark the Minnesota State line in the pool (primarily on Mud Lake, where DNR has restrictions on surface water use).
- Add markers in Lake Traverse where there are dangerous rocks (near certain islands).
- Add more fishing platforms on the South Dakota side of the USACE day-use areas.
- Keep federal land open for public use.
- Provide facilities that comply with the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA).

#### Lake Orwell

- Provide more day use facilities at the boat ramp and dock provided by DNR, i.e., toilets, trash, signage, etc.
- Conduct boundary surveys and add monumentation of the federal property.

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<sup>1</sup> The list is not in order of importance.

## 8.0 REFERENCES

Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies. 2009. Voluntary Guidance for States to Incorporate Climate Change into State Wildlife Action Plans and Other Management Plans. [http://www.fishwildlife.org/files/AFWA-Voluntary-Guidance-Incorporating-Climate-Change\\_SWAP.pdf](http://www.fishwildlife.org/files/AFWA-Voluntary-Guidance-Incorporating-Climate-Change_SWAP.pdf).

U.S. Army Corps of Engineers. 2013. *Engineering Regulation 1130-2-550, Recreation Operations and Maintenance Policies*. Project Master Plans and Operational Management Plans. Washington, DC.

**WESTERN AREA PROJECT  
MASTER PLAN**

**MINNESOTA AND SOUTH DAKOTA**

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**ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT**

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**FINDING OF NO SIGNIFICANT IMPACT**

## **DRAFT FINDING OF NO SIGNIFICANT IMPACT**

### **WESTERN AREA PROJECTS MASTER PLAN**

The Master Plan lays out future recommendations for management of both recreation and natural resources within the Western Area Projects area. The Master Plan is a vital tool for the responsible stewardship of resources at the Western Area Projects to benefit present and future generations. The Master Plan provides guidance and includes direction for appropriate management, use, development, enhancement, protection, and conservation of the natural, historic, and man-made resources. The Master Plan supersedes the 1997 Master Plans and provides a balanced, up-to-date management plan that follows current Federal laws and regulations while sustaining natural resources and providing outdoor recreational experiences.

I have reviewed the information provided in the accompanying Environmental Assessment, along with data obtained from cooperating federal, state, and local agencies and from the interested public. Minor benefits are anticipated with the environmental, social, economic, and recreational parameters.

For the reasons above, the proposed action does not constitute a major federal action significantly affecting the quality of the human environment. Therefore, an environmental impact statement will not be prepared. Supplemental NEPA documentation may be required for the implementation of individual projects. The District will reevaluate this determination on a case-by-case basis for implementation of individual projects.

Karl Jansen  
Colonel, Corps of Engineers  
District Commander