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**EAU GALLE PROJECT  
MASTER PLAN**

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**APPENDIX A  
ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT**

**SPRING VALLEY, WISCONSIN**

**August 2019**



**US Army Corps  
of Engineers®**  
St. Paul District



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**EAU GALLE PROJECT  
MASTER PLAN**

**SPRING VALLEY, WISCONSIN**

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**APPENDIX A**

**ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT**

**COVER SHEET**

<b>Proposed Actions (Project)</b>	<i>Eau Galle Project Master Plan</i> – Adopt and implement the revised Master Plan, which includes reclassification of U.S. Army Corps of Engineers-managed lands.
<b>Type of Statement:</b>	Environmental Assessment
<b>Lead Agency</b>	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 Eau Galle Project Master Plan. Implementing the revised Master Plan will provide a vital tool for the responsible stewardship of resources at the Eau Galle Project area 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) taking into account stakeholder and public interests; and (4) complying with relevant laws and regulations. It has been 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 may require a separate environmental review, possibly leading to 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, District), has prepared this Environmental Assessment (EA) of the effects to the environment for a proposed update to the Eau Galle Project 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.

The typical focus of NEPA compliance consists of environmental impact assessments for individual projects rather than for long-range plans like this Master Plan. However, application of NEPA to earlier and more strategic decisions not only meets the CEQ implementing regulations (Council on Environmental Quality, 2005) and Corps' regulations for implementing NEPA (U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, 1988) but also allows the Corps to begin considering the environmental consequences of its actions long before any specific physical activity is planned. Effective and early NEPA integration with the master planning process can significantly increase the usefulness of the Master Plan to the decision maker. If such utility can be realized, organizational outcomes can be improved, such as support for the project mission and NEPA compliance.

Multiple benefits can be derived from early consideration of general plans. Environmental documents prepared concurrently with the Master Plan can influence and modify strategic land use decisions whereas environmental documents prepared afterwards would have little influence on strategic decisions already made. The Master Plan intends to develop land classifications that will guide the sustainable development of resources within the Eau Galle Project. It is not feasible to define the exact nature of potential impacts for all potential actions prior to receiving specific project proposals. Therefore, environmental consequences may be less than or may exceed what is described in this EA. To ensure future environmental consequences are identified and documented as accurately as possible, additional appropriate NEPA coordination will be conducted for future projects resulting from this proposed Master Plan.

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

The District is directed to periodically revise and update its master plans, including that for the Eau Galle Project. 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 in order 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 in order to prescribe an overall land use management plan, resource objectives, and associated design and management concepts (U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, 2013). The Master Plan will provide responsible stewardship of the Eau Galle Project to benefit present and future generations. The proposed Master Plan will supersede the 1964 Master Plan, the updated Master Plan from 1990, and the supplement to the 1990 Master Plan completed in 1999 and will apply changes to land classifications in accordance with Corps' regulations.

### **2.1 Location**

The Eau Galle Project is in midwestern Wisconsin on the Eau Galle River, approximately 50 miles east of St. Paul, Minnesota, 40 miles west of Eau Claire, Wisconsin, and just north of Spring Valley, Wisconsin (Figure 1). Project lands lie in both Pierce and St Croix counties.

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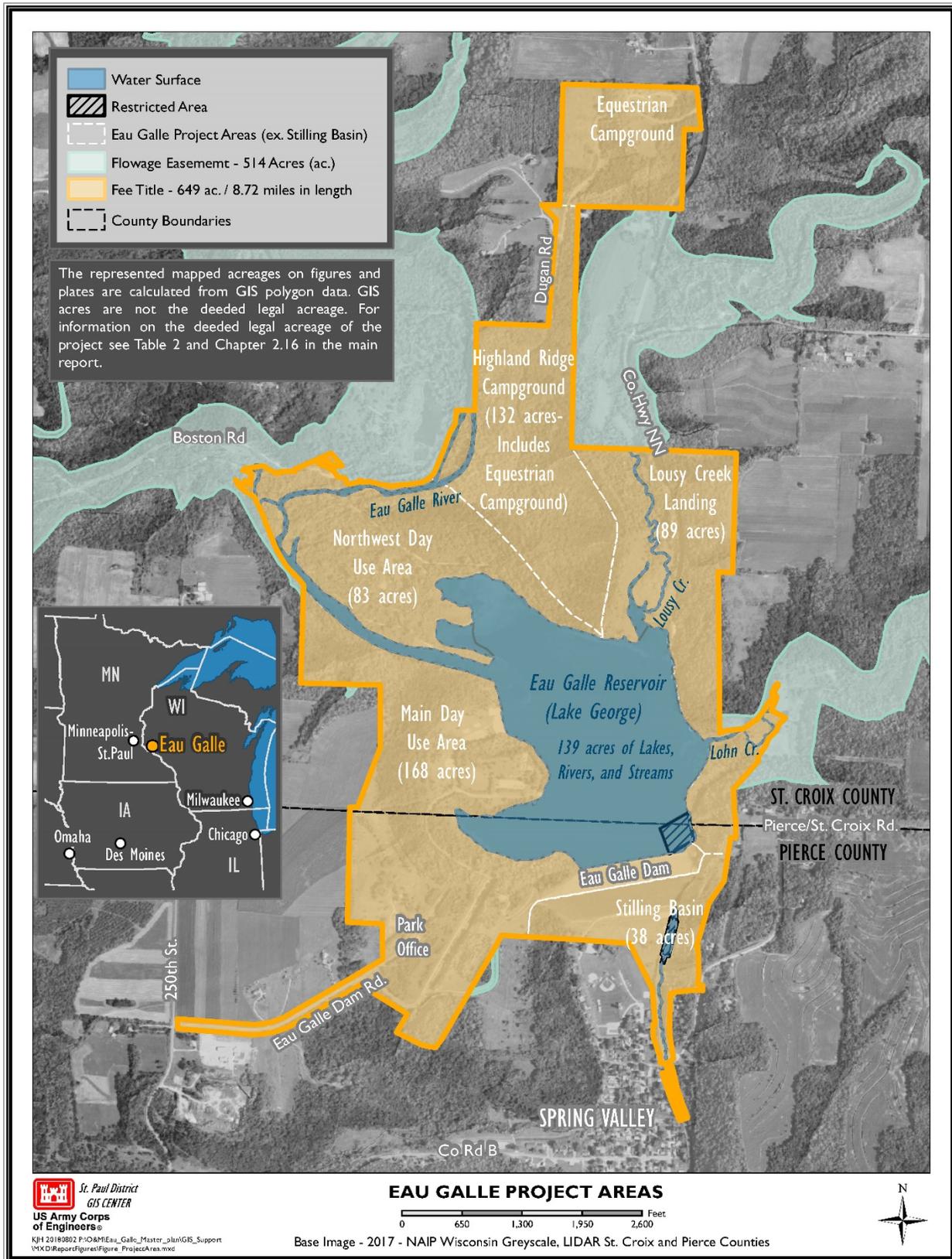


Figure 1. Eau Galle Project areas.

## **2.2 Authority**

The Flood Control Act of 1958 (Public Law 85–500) authorized the construction of Eau Galle Project and its associated recreation areas and downstream channel improvements.

## **2.3 Proposed Action Objectives**

Resource objectives for the proposed Master Plan are intended to guide the future management of the Eau Galle Project. These objectives are described in Section 3 of the main report.

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

Several NEPA documents were prepared for projects at the Eau Galle Project; not all are listed below. The following NEPA documents are directly related to the proposed action:

*Environmental Assessment – Eau Galle Recreation area Master Plan Update for Public Use Development and Resource Management Spring Valley, Wisconsin* (U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, 1990). This document addressed impacts of the 1990 Master Plan.

*Environmental Assessment – Construction of an Equestrian Camping Facility Eau Galle Reservoir, Spring Valley, Wisconsin* (US Army Corps of Engineers, 1999). This document addressed impacts of various measures to construct an equestrian camping facility at the Eau Galle Project in connection with the supplement to the 1990 Master Plan.

### **3.0 ALTERNATIVES**

This section of the EA describes the reasonable alternatives for revising the Master Plan. Only feasible and reasonable alternatives were considered. 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 1990 Master Plan and 1999 Supplement 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 is prescribed by the Council of Environmental Quality (CEQ) regulations and 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 Eau Galle Projects' Master Plan. Instead, the 1990 Master Plan and 1999 Supplement would continue to provide comprehensive management guidance and philosophy for the Eau Galle Project. 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 1990 Master Plan and 1999 Supplement would provide the only source of comprehensive management guidance and philosophy.

Under this alternative, the existing land classification identified in the 1990 Master Plan and its associated management practices would continue to be in place. The land classes identified in the 1990 Master Plan are provided in Figure 2.

The No Action Alternative would not meet the Corps' current regulations or project purposes as described above. Information provided in these plans is out of date and no longer adequately addresses the needs of the District, other management partners, or users of the Eau Galle Project. Furthermore, the 1990 Master Plan and 1999 Supplement do 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 1990 Master Plan and 1999 Supplement with a revised Master Plan 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 sections 3 through 5 of the main report.

Under this alternative, an updated land classification system would replace the existing system, recognizing six applicable classes (see Section 4.2 of the main report) (Engineer Pamphlet (EP) 1130-2-550. Project Operations – Recreation Operations and Maintenance Guidance and Procedures). For purposes of comparing alternatives, each of these classes is associated (i.e., crosswalked) 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. For example, areas designated as "Recreation" under the No Action Alternative are now designated with the associated class "Recreation – High Density" under the Proposed Alternative. The land classes proposed as part of the proposed alternative are depicted in Figure 3 and detailed in Table 3-1.

This alternative would provide a management framework describing these resources and 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 Eau Galle Project. 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 Eau Galle Project's managed lands as environmentally sensitive and vegetation/wildlife management (Table 3-2). Future management recommendations would de-emphasize recreation activities in the Eau Galle Project.
- **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 Eau Galle Project's managed lands as either high density or low density recreation. This alternative would open up 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 3 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.

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Table 3-1. Crosswalk of applicable land classes between the No Action Alternative and Proposed Alternative.

NO ACTION ALTERNATIVE		PROPOSED ALTERNATIVE	
Land Classification <sup>1</sup>	Description	Land Classification <sup>1</sup>	Description
Project Operations  (29 acres)	Lands acquired and allocated to provide for safe, efficient operation of the project for those authorized purposes other than recreation and fish and wildlife. In all cases, this will include, but is not limited to, the land on which project operational structures are located. Agricultural use of these lands will be permitted on an interim basis when not in conflict with use for authorized purposes, recreation use or wildlife habitat.	Project Operations  (42 acres)	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 Eau Galle Project. When compatible with operational requirements, project operations lands may be used for wildlife habitat management or recreational use. Licenses, permits, easements, or other outgrants are issued only for uses that do not conflict with operational requirements.
Recreation  (46 acres)	Lands acquired for project operations and allocated for intensive recreational activities of concentrated public use, such as campgrounds, boat launches, picnic areas, and swimming beaches. These areas generally require extensive facility development and maintenance. No agricultural uses are permitted on these lands except on an interim basis for terrain adaptable for maintenance of open space and/or scenic values.	High Density Recreation  (56 acres)	Lands 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.
Multiple Resource Management: <i>Recreation Low-Density, Wildlife Management, Vegetative Management, Inactive and/or Future Recreation Areas</i>  (423 acres)	Lands acquired for project operations and allocated for low density recreation activities are for non-intensive recreation use. Low-density or dispersed recreation occurs generally throughout a large area and is not confined to a specific place. Wildlife management are lands allocated for fish and wildlife management and provide opportunities for wildlife/wildlands-related recreation. The primary emphasis is protection and enhancement of wildlife habitat values. Vegetative management is allocated for activities for the protection and development of forest and vegetative cover. Inactive and/or future recreation areas are classified as multiple resource management but planned for future development or temporary closures.	Multiple Resource Managed Lands: <i>Low Density Recreation</i>  (3 acres)	Lands 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 like 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. Man-made 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

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			these activities are not in conflict with the safety of visitors and project personnel.
N/A		Multiple Resource Managed Lands: <i>Wildlife Management</i>  (352 acres)	Management activities in these areas focus on the stewardship of fish and wildlife resources. Compatible uses may also occur on these lands.
N/A		Multiple Resource Managed Lands: <i>Vegetation Management</i>  (48 acres)	Management activities in these areas focus on the protection and development of forest resources and vegetative cover. Compatible uses may also occur on these lands.
N/A		Multiple Resource Managed Lands: <i>Future or Inactive Recreation Areas</i>  (9 acres)	Areas with site characteristics compatible with potential future recreational development or recreation areas that are closed. Until there is an opportunity to develop or reopen these areas, they will be managed for multiple resources.
Environmentally Sensitive Areas  (60 acres)	Environmentally sensitive areas are allocated to preserve scientific, ecological, cultural, or aesthetic features. This category insures that archaeological sites, floodplain nesting habitat, erodible slopes, and rare vegetative species are protected. Normally, limited or no development of public use is recommended. No agricultural or grazing uses are permitted.	Environmentally Sensitive Areas  (80 acres)	This special class may overlap with other designated classes This classification consists of areas where scientific, ecological, cultural, or aesthetic features have been identified. Development of public use on lands within this classification is normally prohibited to ensure that these sensitive areas are not adversely impacted. Agricultural or grazing uses are not permitted on lands with this classification.
Water  (138 acres)	Eau Galle utilizes water surface areas for operation and management needs.	Water Surface <i>Open Recreation</i>  (132 acres)	Eau Galle utilizes water surface areas for operation and management needs.
N/A		Water Surface <i>Restricted</i>	The purpose of restricted water surface areas is to prohibit public access and ensure the security of the structures and public safety.

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		(3 acres)	
N/A		Water Surface <i>Fish &amp; Wildlife Sanctuary</i>	The purpose of sanctuary areas is for conservation zoning and fish and wildlife management. Compatible uses may also occur within this area.
		(4 acres)	

<sup>1</sup>The calculated acreages for land classifications are based on geographic information system (GIS) polygon data which is not a legal survey. Though GIS technology has improved, there are inherent errors in the calculations.

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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
Low Recreation Use	X		X	X
Vegetation Management		X		X
Wildlife Management		X		X
Natural / Ecologically Sensitive Area	X	X		X

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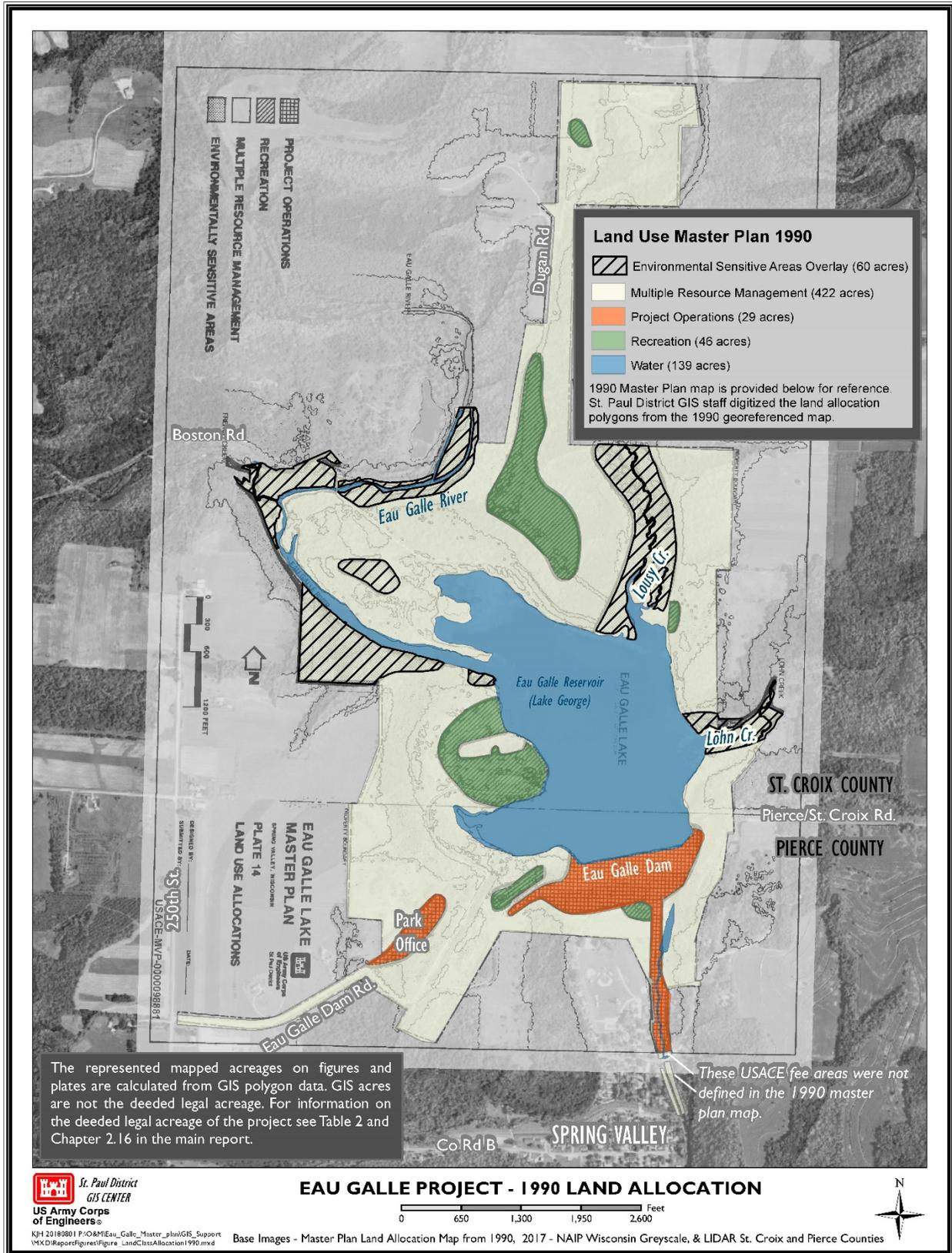


Figure 2. 1990 Master Plan land allocation.

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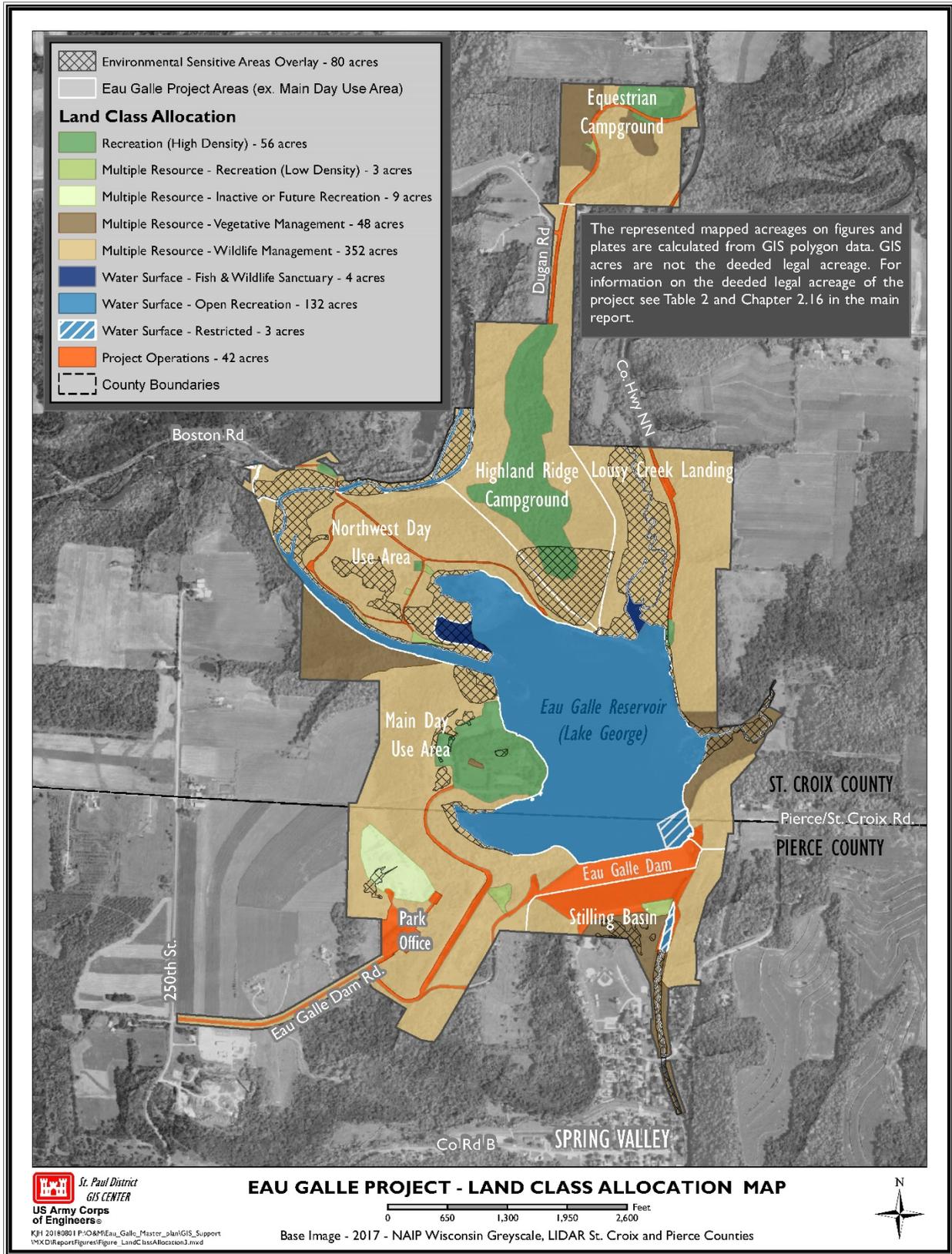


Figure 3. Proposed balance alternative land allocation.

## **4.0 AFFECTED ENVIRONMENT**

Section 2 of 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. Many of the unaffected resources were eliminated from further consideration including climate, geology, topography, soils, air quality, water supply, farmland, and groundwater.

### **4.1 Socio-Economic**

#### **4.1.1 Aesthetic Values**

The aesthetic value of the Eau Galle Project area is primarily a function of the recreation area, which includes the lake itself and associated trails and campgrounds. The area offers 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**

See Section 1.6.4 of the main report for a description of existing conditions associated with recreational use in the Eau Galle Project.

Population growth in the surrounding areas is anticipated to continue to increase slowly. The study area will retain much of its pristine beauty and good water quality, thus continuing to appeal to equestrians, bird-watchers, hikers, hunters, anglers, campers, skiers, and other outdoor enthusiasts. The Eau Galle Project will continue to provide opportunities for water-related recreation such as non-motorized boating, kayaking, paddle boarding, fishing, and swimming. The Eau Galle Project will also continue to provide access to hiking, geocaching, snowshoeing, walking, biking, picnicking, camping, equestrian trail riding, equestrian camping 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 and trails. Within the project boundary, 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. Pedestrian and equestrian trails also provide access to the interior of the Project.

The transportation services described above (roadways and trails) are anticipated to continue to exist, and additional transportation opportunities could be added in the future.

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

The District, the state of Wisconsin, and other management partners work to ensure a safe and enjoyable experience for all visitors at the Eau Galle Project. Safety at the Eau Galle Project is maintained through a variety of different mechanisms. Eau Galle'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 Eau Galle Project.

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

See Section 2.14.1 of the main report for a description of baseline conditions associated with community growth and development. The village of Spring Valley is anticipated to continue as an integral community center for the Eau Galle Project. Population growth in the project area is anticipated to continue to increase slowly.

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

Refer to Section 2 of 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 Section 2.14 of 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 Section 2.13 of the main report for a description of economics and business activities in the area, which are projected to continue. Recreation, tourism, agriculture, and mining are major industries that will continue to be important to the economy in the Eau Galle Project area.

#### **4.1.10 Environmental Justice**

Environmental Justice is institutionally significant because of Executive Order 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**

A Level One natural resource inventory was completed in accordance with EP-1130-2-540, Project Operations – Environmental Stewardship and Maintenance Guidance and Procedures using information that was collected at the project. This information provides an inventory of vegetation and is discussed in Section 2.7.2 of the main report. Information used for this effort includes a forest inventory study that was completed in 2005 and includes a detailed forest inventory on the dominant tree species, dominant understory tree and shrub species, dominant plant species, and any notable vegetation species located within the parks boundaries. Information from this effort can be made available to the public upon request.

An additional wetland survey and delineation was conducted in 2018 to focus on the wetlands that can be found within the project area. This survey is described in the main report (Section 2.7.6) as well as in Appendix D.

The vegetation inventory completed in 2005 and the wetland survey completed in 2018, were combined with a general survey conducted in 2018 that identified other areas that weren't captured to formulate the Level 1 Vegetation Inventory (Figure 4).

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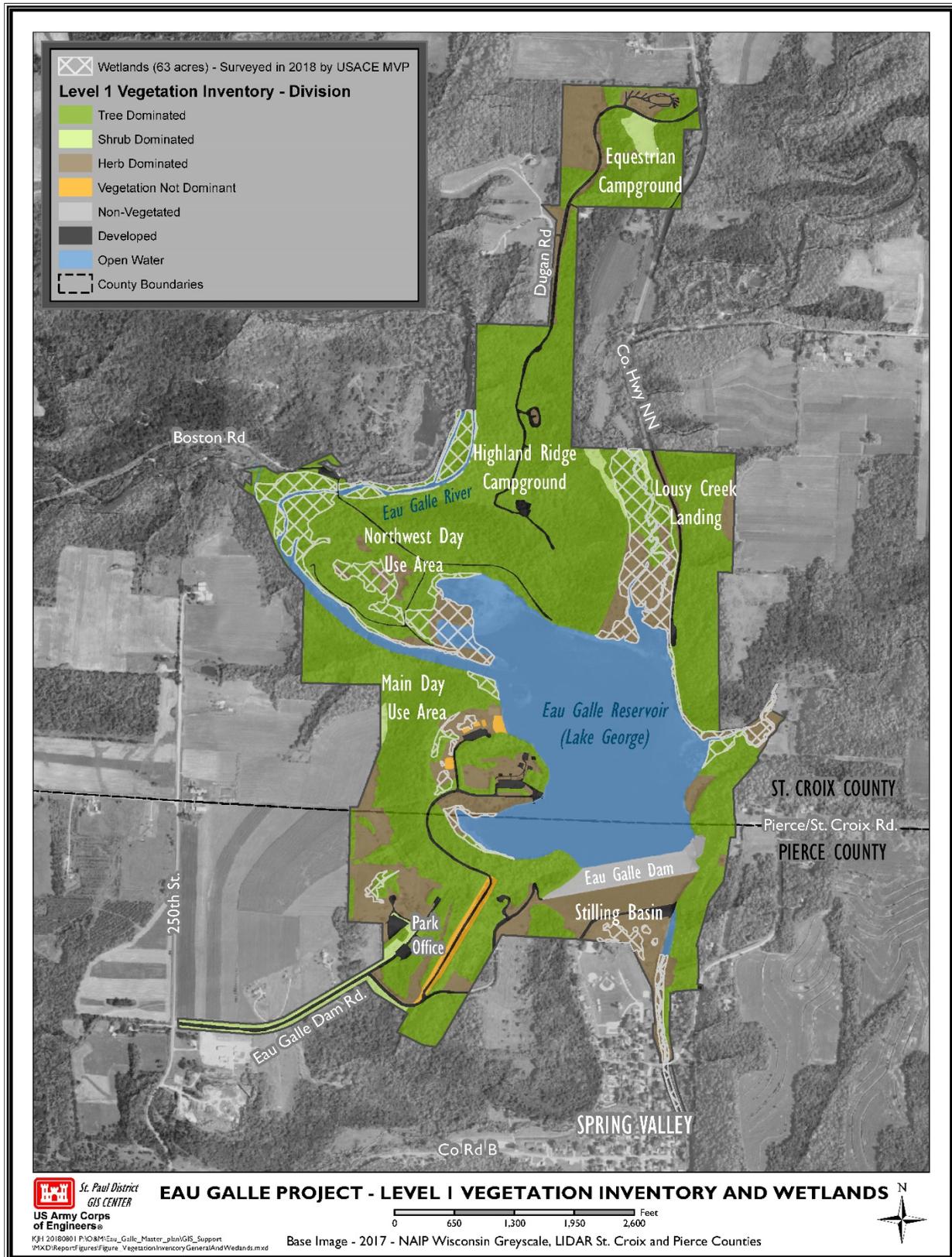


Figure 4. Eau Galle Project Level 1 Vegetation Inventory and Wetlands.

#### **4.2.1 Terrestrial Habitat**

Terrestrial habitat in the Project area is described in Section 2.7 of 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 in Section 2.7.6 and in Appendix D of 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 Section 2.7 of the main report. Future conditions for aquatic habitat are anticipated to remain unchanged or slightly improve based on future efforts to improve habitat in the lake as well as downstream of the dam in the river.

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

A description of factors related to habitat diversity and biological productivity is provided throughout Section 2 of the main report. The Project area will continue to have Lake George, also known as Spring Valley Reservoir, streams, forests and open spaces that support wildlife diversity.

Habitat in the Eau Galle Project will continue to support an abundance of fish and wildlife. The forests, marshes and wetlands adjacent to Lake George will continue to provide habitat for many species of migratory waterfowl and game fish. Wetlands, lowland forests, upland forests, and open upland will continue as dominant habitat types in the project area. Mammal species such as white-tailed deer, bear, fox, raccoon, weasel, mink, woodchuck, squirrel, chipmunk, beaver, porcupine, and skunk will persist. Reptile and amphibian species will also continue to utilize existing habitat. The Eau Galle Project will also continue to be used by the 143+ species of avifauna in the region, either as residents or transient migrants.

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

Surface water quality is described in Section 2.4 of the main report. Lake George is classified as a eutrophic lake by the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources (WDNR). Since Lake George has high phosphorus levels it has Impaired Water status. Algal blooms are common in the summer. These conditions are anticipated to continue. Lake George would remain vulnerable to cultural-induced eutrophication from point and non-point sources.

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

Federally-listed threatened or endangered species are described in Section 2.7.3 of the main report. A review of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) Information for Planning and Conservation (IPaC) website (US Fish and Wildlife Service, n.d.) was conducted on July 10, 2018 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 four federal-listed species: the gray wolf (*Canis lupus*) endangered, the northern long-eared bat (*Myotis septentrionalis*) threatened, the Karner blue butterfly (*Lycaeides Melissa samuelis*) endangered, and the prairie bush clover (*Lespedeza leptosfachya*) threatened. In addition, IPaC database search indicated the occurrence of the bobolink (*Dolichonyx oryzivorus*) and the wood thrush (*Hylocichla mustelina*), USFWS Birds of Conservation Concern (BCC). 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 Section 2.7.3 and table 8 of 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 Eau Galle Project are identified in Section 2.7.4 of the main report.

Exotic and invasive species are a part of the existing ecosystem within the Project area. These invasive species have the ability to 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 Section 2.10 of the main report. Cultural resources and historic properties will continue to be recognized as significant resources and protected in the Project area.

#### **4.4 Climate Change**

Climate change is discussed in Section 2.5.1 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 Eau Galle Project 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 Eau Galle Project's 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

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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 Eau Galle Project 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. 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.

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. Under the 1990 Master Plan and the 1999 Supplement, some of the anticipated benefits for the parameters listed in Table 5-1 are likely to be lessened or nullified by unintended adverse effects. For example, campgrounds may be modernized without consideration of the importance of internet access to users or alternative energy resources that could be used to power facilities. Thus, many of these parameters are depicted as having no impact or minor benefits.

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 (U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, 2009). For specific actions that are identified in the Master Plan, the approval process may still require additional NEPA review 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 and identified as tasks that 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 review would be required as these tasks are undertaken. An example of this would be if it was decided that a bridge would be constructed to connect the Main Day Use Area with the campground.

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 Eau Galle Project'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.

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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		X
3. Recreational Opportunities			X	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	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	X	
2. Pre- & Historic Archeological Values		X		X	X	

'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 Aesthetic Values**

The No Action Alternative would result in minor adverse effects to the aesthetic values compared to existing conditions. Areas designated under the Multiple Resource Management (MRM) classification would continue to be protected for aesthetic value. However, lands used for recreation would not consider the changing and growing needs of users, which likely will lead to degraded aesthetic appeal.

The Proposed Alternative would result in adverse and beneficial minor effects when compared to the No Action Alternative. Updated amenities that reflect current user needs will likely lead to increased recreational use in the Project area that may reduce aesthetic qualities, especially within the High Density Recreation areas. For example, amenities such as campgrounds, picnic areas, and beaches that are equipped to service larger recreational vehicles may diminish aesthetic appeal to those who prefer amenities that blend into the natural environment. However, land classes with high aesthetic value (i.e., Environmentally Sensitive Area, MRM-Low Density Recreation, and MRM-Vegetation Management) would likely benefit from improved management and increased protection measures.

### **5.1.2 Recreational Opportunities**

Land classes designated for recreation under the No Action Alternative would remain in place and would comprise 46 acres. Although maintenance of current recreational facilities would continue under the No Action Alternative, it would not accurately reflect the current status of facilities or the higher use trends. Thus, the No Action Alternative would result in minor adverse effects in the future compared to existing conditions.

Implementation of the Proposed Alternative would result in mixed, minor effects. New land classes set aside for recreation (i.e., High Density Recreation, MRM-Low Density Recreation, and MRM-Future) would comprise 68 acres<sup>1</sup> of project lands, 33 percent more than the No Action Alternative. Furthermore, management of recreational facilities would be based on updated and projected use, including enhancing the camping experience with modern, upgraded facilities and improving accessibility. These upgrades are reflected in the recreation resource objectives that aim to enhance day use and campground facilities, improve opportunities for passive recreation, expand interpretive services, and improve accessibility for people of all ages and abilities, which in turn increases visitors. Passive recreational opportunities focused on natural resources (e.g., hiking, bird-watching) would also benefit through improved management of these resources.

### **5.1.3 Transportation**

Enhancing transportation services would continue under the No Action Alternative; however, this enhancement may not reflect current needs. As recreation demands change with time, the quality of transportation services would diminish.

Under the Proposed Alternative, transportation would likely have minor benefits, primarily associated with recreational facilities. Benefits would be gained locally with the extension or development of various trails (pedestrian, horse, water) that consider the latest user needs and allow visitors to travel between recreation sites in the study area. Based on comments heard during a public meeting it is clear that there is also a desire to have more connectivity to Spring Valley to allow residents easier access to the area and its amenities.

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<sup>1</sup> Recreation opportunities where these lands overlap with the Environmentally Sensitive Area class would be limited.

#### **5.1.4 Public Health and Safety**

Future public health and safety would continue to be a priority in the Project area under the No Action Alternative. It is anticipated there would be no measureable effects to public health and safety compared to the existing conditions.

Implementation of the Proposed Alternative will have minor benefits enhancing public health and safety. A stated objective of the revised Master Plan is to foster public and employee safety through education and training, research, and proactive visitor assistance activities. In addition, a carrying capacity analysis for all activities would help improve safety. Use of updated information in the Master Plan would advance public safety and health.

#### **5.1.5 Community Growth and Development**

Under the No Action Alternative, future community growth and development would not experience measureable effects compared to the existing conditions.

The Proposed Alternative would provide quality recreation opportunities for the surrounding community and for the region at large. By considering the most recent conditions, implementation of the proposed Master Plan would result in minor beneficial effects to the community's growth and development.

#### **5.1.6 Existing / Potential Land Use**

Under the No Action Alternative, existing and potential land use would not experience measureable 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.

#### **5.1.7 Property Values / Tax Revenue**

Future property values and tax revenue are not anticipated to be affected under the No Action Alternative when compared to the existing conditions.

Implementation of the proposed Master Plan is anticipated to have minor benefits on future property values or tax revenues when compared to the No Action Alternative. Up-to-date recommendations for recreation would likely increase recreational visitors to the area and result in more dollars spent in the local economy, resulting in an increase in tax revenues for the surrounding communities. Specifically, by connecting the trail system from the park to town, folks will have more opportunity to go into town to spend money. The Eau Galle Project plays a large role in the current tourism spending in the Pierce and Saint Croix counties and will continue to do so, especially if an increase in visitors occurs due to the effects of implementing the Master Plan. Additionally, the environmental resources and recreation opportunities guided by the Master Plan will likely enhance the value of adjacent properties.

#### **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.

#### **5.1.9 Employment / Business Activity**

Future employment and business activities are not anticipated to be affected under the No Action Alternative when compared to the existing conditions.

The Proposed Alternative will have minor positive effects on employment. Some minor benefits may occur

due to employment or business activity through increased recreational opportunities, which is based on current user needs.

#### **5.1.10 Environmental Justice**

No adverse economic or social effects would be anticipated under the Proposed Alternative or the No Action Alternative. Neither alternative would disproportionately impact one group over another.

## **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 areas, which comprises 433 acres of project lands. Although management of terrestrial habitat would continue under the No Action Alternative, the 1990 Master Plan and 1999 Supplement no longer accurately reflect the current status of these resources in the study area. In the future, minor adverse effects to terrestrial habitat are anticipated compared to the existing conditions as a result of the disconnect between management and use. The increased usage would adversely affect terrestrial resources in some areas.

New land classes closely associated with terrestrial habitat under the Proposed Alternative would be MRM-Low Density Recreation, MRM Wildlife Management, and MRM-Vegetation Management, which would comprise 403 acres of project lands. Furthermore, there will be some overlap of land class allocations where there still will be some terrestrial habitat. These resources would be better accommodated by analyzing current conditions, resource suitability, and wildlife trends. The Proposed Alternative would thus result in minor beneficial effects.

### **5.2.2 Wetlands**

Under the No Action Alternative, there are no anticipated effects to wetlands. Wetlands would be associated with the Natural Area class.

The Proposed Alternative would recognize changes to wetlands and include these as part of the vegetative management or wildlife management land classes, which would provide additional management protections. A wetland analysis and delineation was completed in 2018, which will help provide the information necessary for more specific management activities to not only protect existing wetlands but also manage to maximize wetland opportunities. Specific information on existing wetlands can be found in Appendix D and Section 2.7.6 of the main report.

### **5.2.3 Aquatic Habitat**

Under the No Action Alternative, aquatic habitat may experience minor adverse effects associated with future increased use of surrounding terrestrial areas when compared to existing conditions.

Although the Master Plan is focused on managing lands, the Proposed Alternative would have minor localized benefits 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.

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

As identified above, habitat (primarily terrestrial) would likely experience minor adverse effects under the No Action Alternative compared to existing conditions, which would translate to congruent effects on biological productivity and habitat diversity and interspersion.

Under the Proposed Alternative, the management and addition of lands designated as Environmentally Sensitive Area would enhance habitat diversity and interspersion and biological productivity. As discussed

earlier, the percent of lands designated as Environmentally Sensitive Area and vegetative management would increase substantially compared to the No Action Alternative.

#### **5.2.5 Surface Water Quality**

Under the No Action Alternative, there are no anticipated effects on surface water quality when compared to existing conditions.

Compared to the No Action Alternative, the Proposed Alternative is anticipated to result in improved water quality within the Eau Galle Project. This improvement is attributed to improved land management and recreational facilities. Lands designated as Environmentally Sensitive Area, especially close to surface waters, would reduce the potential adverse effects associated with storm water runoff. A potential measure to improve water quality includes a storm water pond that would capture run off from the parking lot near the Main Day Use Area.

#### **5.2.6 Threatened or Endangered Species**

Both the No Action and the Proposed Alternatives are anticipated to have “no effect” on any federally-listed or threatened or endangered species listed in this EA, because there are no specific management actions identified.

Prior to implementing any future actions, effects to listed species would be analyzed on a case-by-case basis. At this time the District would take actions, in compliance with federal and state regulations, to avoid and minimize adverse effects to any threatened and endangered species or any critical habitat that may have been established in or near areas potentially affected by the proposed undertakings.

Compared to the No Action Alternative, the Proposed Alternative is anticipated to result in beneficial effects to state listed species due to updated management actions and having more lands set aside under the Environmentally Sensitive Area class.

#### **5.2.7 Invasive Species**

The existing Master Plan has little information pertaining to invasive species. Future adverse effects from invasive species are anticipated when compared to baseline conditions.

The Proposed Alternative addresses invasive species. The District will implement best management practices with regards to invasive species management within the project area. Following District policy and using adaptive and best management practices in prevention, education, early detection, rapid response, and containment in trying to control invasive species will aid in cost effective and environmentally sound invasive species management. All plantings that occur within the boundaries of the park will be using native plant species. All equipment for any work being done in the park will be inspected for invasive species before being allowed to conduct work within the park boundaries.

### **5.3 Cultural Resource Effects**

Both the No Action and Proposed Alternatives are anticipated to have “no effect” on historic properties, because there are no specific management actions identified to be implemented in this plan. Historic properties are located throughout the Eau Galle 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.

The Proposed Alternative would recognize cultural and historic areas as part of the new Environmentally Sensitive Area land class, which would provide additional management protections.

#### **5.4 Climate Change and Greenhouse Gas Emissions**

As discussed in Section 4.4 of this EA, implementation of the Proposed Alternative is anticipated to have environmental benefits (especially for terrestrial habitat); however, the benefits are difficult to quantify. Such an assessment would be more meaningful at the scale of individual projects instead of a conceptual plan encompassing a large geographic area. Ongoing research by the Corps' Institute for Water Resources on carbon sequestration potential of Corps-owned land and water demonstrates a potential to capture and store greenhouse gases in vegetation and in reservoir sinks. This research generally indicates that the Proposed Alternative would not have a negative effect on climate.

The District recognizes the CEQ's revised draft NEPA guidance for consideration of the effects of climate change and greenhouse gas emissions (U.S. Government, n.d.) and its responsibility to identify the potential emissions from project-specific alternatives as part of the decision-making process.

#### **5.5 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 that result when the impact of the Proposed Alternative is added to the impacts of other past, present, and reasonably foreseeable future actions, regardless of what agency (federal or non-federal) or person undertakes such other actions (40 CFR 1508.7). The cumulative impacts associated with the Proposed Alternative and the No Action Alternative are described below.

Past, present, and reasonably foreseeable future actions have and continue to contribute to the cumulative impacts of activities in and around the study area. Past actions include the construction and operation of reservoirs, the recreation sites surrounding reservoirs, as well as residential, commercial, and industrial facilities throughout the region. 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. In addition, many of the previous impacts have been offset throughout the years by the resource stewardship efforts of the District, WIDNR, and other management partners.

The most significant past action was the construction and development of the Eau Galle Project. This change created new natural and physical conditions under management by the District, WIDNR, and other management partners. The construction of the project also had an impact on historic properties by flooding terrestrial areas. Impacts to historic properties were coordinated with the Wisconsin State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO). This coordination included appropriate research and documentation of cultural resources. Since that time, the District has worked to preserve, protect, and document historic properties within the project boundary.

Existing and future actions also contribute to the cumulative impacts in the study area. 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. Continued project operations would result in the sustained maintenance and development of recreational facilities. These facilities would enhance the recreational offerings made by the District and other management partners. Such improvements would result in varying levels of impacts to the surrounding resources. Similarly, surrounding residential, commercial, and industrial development could result in varying levels of adverse impacts to many resources. Within the project boundary, adverse impacts would be offset through resource stewardship efforts. The programmatic approach to project management, included in this EA and attached Master Plan, would allow for future development plans and mitigation responses to be adapted to address any adverse actions. This adaptation would allow the District and other management partners to continue to reduce the contribution of its activities to regional cumulative impacts through

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proactive actions and adaptive resource management strategies.

The Proposed Alternative would contribute minor increments to the overall impacts that past, present, and future projects have on the region, mainly through the implementation of updated land classifications and resource objectives outlined in the proposed Master Plan.

## 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 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
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.	Not Applicable
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
Watershed Protection and Flood Prevention Act, 16 U.S.C. 1001, et seq.	Not Applicable
Protection of Wetlands (EO11990)	Full compliance
Corps of Engineers Planning Guidance Handbook (ER 1105-2-100)	Full compliance
EO13112 Invasive Species	Full compliance

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 review upon its proposal for implementation. Site-specific impacts would be addressed in greater detail during those reviews than is presented in this Master Plan EA. In addition, compliance with all applicable environmental federal statutes would be necessary, as well as the necessary coordination (i.e., 404(b)(1), Fish and Wildlife Coordination Act, ESA, SHPO) for each project.

## **6.0 COORDINATION**

Section 7 of the main report provides information on the District's efforts to coordinate with stakeholders, including the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Environmental Protection Agency, Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources, and the Native American tribes.

The general public was also engaged as part of an open house and information posted on the St. Paul District Website <https://www.mvp.usace.army.mil/EauGalleMasterPlan/>. The formal comment period for the scoping and development of the draft Master Plan and EA was from April – September 2018.

During the scoping phase, comments received were considered in the decision-making process. Section 7 of the main report provides a summary of the comments received, and Appendix C provides the full comments received. This section summarizes the major issues raised during the scoping process.

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

- **Trail system:** Proper maintenance of trails, additional multi-use trails, additional connectivity.
- **Throughout the Project/Miscellaneous:** Make entire Project area smoke-free, offer additional programs by park rangers, provide additional trash cans, add a disc golf course, add primitive camping near the creek, add a dog park or designated dog area, build a waterslide down the dam, restroom upgrades, offer GPS programs, improve access throughout the Project (e.g., bridge from Northwest Day Use Area to Main Day Use Area), provide additional viewing platforms.
- **Highland Ridge Campground:** Make improvements (e.g. turning area, improved fire pits).
- **Equestrian Campground Loop:** Make improvements (e.g., electricity, showers, potable water, additional parking, pens for horses).
- **Environment/Natural Resources:** Add fish cribs, provide invasive species control on land for plants (buckthorn, Tatarian honeysuckle, burdock, garlic mustard, Himalayan blackberry, creeping Charlie, and white sweet clover), and invertebrate animals (earthworms) and in the lake for fish (common carp), include storm water ponds, and balance recreation needs with the natural environment.
- **Northwest Day Use Area:** Offer kayak and canoes rentals; add small boat launches, a fish cleaning station, a swimming platform, concessions, a disc golf course, and new and upgraded playground equipment; improve the volleyball court; and build a basketball court.
- **Lousy Creek Landing:** Add a dock.

The Draft Master Plan and Environmental Assessment was released for 30-day public review and comment (April 15 – May 17, 2019). The plan was posted on the Corps public website and a hard copy was available at the Spring Valley Public Library. One comment from the public was received on the draft report and can be found in Appendix C.

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<sup>1</sup> The list is not in order of importance. The list is also not exhaustive but focuses on the issues that were mentioned the most during scoping and/or were specifically addressed in the Master Plan and this EA.

## **7.0 REFERENCES**

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**ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT**

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**FINDING OF NO SIGNIFICANT IMPACT**