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**Department of Veterans Affairs  
National Cemetery Administration**

**Report to Congress on the Establishment of Additional  
National Cemeteries**

**Annual Status Report**

As Required by the Veterans Millennium Health Care and  
Benefits Act, Public Law 106-117 and the National  
Cemetery Expansion Act of 2003, Public Law 108-109

May 2008

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**Status of New Cemetery Development**  
**Veterans Millennium Health Care and Benefits Act, Public Law 106-117**

Establishment of a national cemetery includes these major processes:

<b>Major Process</b>	<b>Atlanta/ Georgia National Cemetery</b>	<b>Detroit/ Great Lakes National Cemetery</b>	<b>Miami/ South Florida VA National Cemetery</b>	<b>Oklahoma/ Ft. Sill National Cemetery</b>	<b>Pittsburgh/ National Cemetery of the Alleghenies</b>	<b>Sacramento/ Sacramento Valley VA National Cemetery</b>
Potential Sites Identified (within the primary 75- mile service radius)	<b>Completed Mar 2000</b>	<b>Completed Mar 2001</b>	<b>Completed Apr 2000</b>	<b>Completed Apr 1996</b>	<b>Completed Oct 2000</b>	<b>Completed Oct 2000</b>
National Environmental Policy Act Compliance	<b>Completed Dec 2000</b>	<b>Completed Jan 2002</b>	<b>Completed Feb 2002</b>	<b>Completed Sep 1996</b>	<b>Completed Sep 2001</b>	<b>Completed Sep 2002</b>
Final Site Selected	<b>Completed Dec 2000</b>	<b>Completed Apr 2002</b>	<b>Completed Apr 2002</b>	<b>Completed Feb 1997</b>	<b>Completed Mar 2002</b>	<b>Completed Oct 2002</b>
Land Acquisition	<b>Completed Apr 2001</b>	<b>Completed Sep 2002</b>	<b>Completed Aug 2002</b>	<b>Completed May 1998</b>	<b>Completed Mar 2003</b>	<b>Completed July 2004</b>
Master Planning & Design Development Contract Award	<b>Completed Mar 2002</b>	<b>Completed Nov 2002</b>	<b>Completed July 2003</b>	<b>Completed Oct 2000</b>	<b>Completed May 2002</b>	<b>Completed Oct 2004</b>
Phase 1 Construction Documents Preparation Contract Award	<b>Completed Mar 2003</b>	<b>Completed Nov 2003</b>	<b>Completed Nov 2004</b>	<b>Completed July 2001</b>	<b>Completed Aug 2004</b>	<b>Completed Sep 2005</b>
Phase 1 Construction Contract Award	<b>Completed Dec 2004</b>	<b>Completed Sep 2004</b>	<b>Completed Jun 2006</b>	<b>Completed Mar 2002</b>	<b>Completed Oct 2004</b>	<b>Completed Feb 2006</b>
First Interment	<b>Apr 2006</b>	<b>Oct 2005</b>	<b>Apr 2007</b>	<b>Sep 2001</b>	<b>Aug 2005</b>	<b>Oct 2006</b>
Phase 1 Construction Completion	<b>Completed Oct 2007</b>	<b>Completed Dec 2006</b>	Estimate June 2010	<b>Completed May 2004</b>	Estimate Aug 2008	Estimate June 2010

Note: Letters in **BOLD** indicate that the major process has been completed.

**Status of New Cemetery Development  
Veterans Millennium Health Care and Benefits Act, Public Law 106-117**

**Georgia National Cemetery (Atlanta, GA)**

**PAST ACTIVITY:** In July 2000, the Acting Under Secretary for Memorial Affairs toured the top 4 of 12 recommended sites and a Cherokee County location was identified as the preferred site. Mr. Scott Hudgens, a World War II veteran, offered to donate approximately 775 acres. The environmental assessment (EA) final report concluded with a "Finding of No Significant Impact." On April 3, 2001, members of Congress, members of the Hudgens family, and the Secretary of Veterans Affairs attended a ceremony to mark the Hudgens family's land donation to the Department of Veterans Affairs. Award of a contract for Master Planning was made on March 27, 2002. The master plan concept for the layout of the cemetery was completed in March 2003. Cherokee County constructed an access road to the new cemetery site with VA contributing \$1.4 million towards road construction. On March 1, 2004, the Secretary of Veterans Affairs announced that the name of the Atlanta area cemetery would be Georgia National Cemetery. Construction Documents for Phase 1 have been developed and the construction contract was awarded in December 2004. The cemetery opened for burials on April 24, 2006.

**CURRENT ACTIVITY:** All construction was completed in October 2007.

**NEXT STEPS:** NA

**BUDGET:** The FY 2000 VA appropriation included \$125,000 for the site selection and EA processes.

The FY 2001 VA appropriation included \$3 million for advance planning and design development of a new national cemetery.

The FY 2002 VA appropriation included \$28.2 million for construction.

**SIGNIFICANT ISSUES:** None

## **Great Lakes National Cemetery (Detroit, MI)**

**PAST ACTIVITY:** Representatives of the National Cemetery Administration (NCA) actively worked with the Michigan Veterans Affairs Directorate, area real estate agents, and the Veterans Benefits Administration's (VBA) Loan Guaranty officials at the VA regional office in Detroit in 2001 to identify eight potential sites suitable for a new national cemetery. Evaluation of the sites resulted in the selection of four "best sites." The preferred site was selected and the EA completed in December 2001. The Secretary of Veterans Affairs approved selection of a 554-acre site in Oakland County, Michigan, on April 23, 2002. A purchase price of \$6,156,000 was negotiated with the owners and the land acquisition was completed on September 13, 2002. The Architect-Engineering firm URS Corporation of Farmington Hills, MI, was awarded the contract for the Master Plan and Design Development on November 21, 2002. The Design Documents were completed and the Construction Document contract was awarded on November 17, 2003. On March 1, 2004, the Secretary of Veterans Affairs announced that the Detroit area cemetery would be named Great Lakes National Cemetery. The Construction Contract was awarded in September 2004.

**CURRENT ACTIVITY:** All construction was completed in July 2007.

**NEXT STEPS:** Congress appropriated \$16.9M in FY 2007 for Phase 1B. Construction is projected for completion in August 2010.

**BUDGET:** In FY 2000, the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) made \$125,000 available for the site selection and EA processes.

The FY 2001 VA appropriation included \$500,000 for advance planning of a new national cemetery.

The FY 2002 VA appropriation included \$18 million for the purchase of land for new cemeteries in the vicinity of Detroit, Michigan; Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania; and Sacramento, California.

The FY 2003 VA appropriation included \$1.7 million for design of a new national cemetery and preparation of construction documents.

The FY 2004 VA appropriation included \$8.7 million for construction.

The FY 2006 VA appropriation included \$1,750 million for design and construction documents.

**SIGNIFICANT ISSUES:** None

## **South Florida VA National Cemetery (Miami, FL)**

**PAST ACTIVITY:** Representatives of NCA and the Florida Department of Veterans Affairs visited 11 prospective sites in South Florida and developed a recommendation of “top sites” for further consideration. The Acting Under Secretary for Memorial Affairs and the Director, Florida Department of Veterans Affairs, visited the top three sites in August 2000. Two top sites in Palm Beach County were selected. In October 2000, the firm of URS, Greiner, Woodward, and Clyde began the EA on each of the sites to assess the impact of developing the land for use as a cemetery. Subsequently, the owner of one site removed it from consideration. The EA continued with the remaining location. The EA consultant identified two factors that required further investigation. Realizing the negative potential of these findings, NCA directed the EA consultant to expand their review to two additional sites that had been identified during initial site evaluation visits.

The EA was completed and the period for public comment closed in mid-January 2002. Following the Secretary's selection of the preferred site in Palm Beach County, a purchase price of \$11,250,000 was negotiated with the owners and acquisition of the 313-acre property was completed on August 6, 2002. The architect-engineering firm, Miller Legg & Associates of Pembroke Pines, FL, was hired in July 2003 to perform the master plan and design work. This included preparation of a design for a Fast Track development. On March 14, 2006, the Secretary of Veterans Affairs announced that the Miami area cemetery would be named South Florida VA National Cemetery. The cemetery opened for interments on April 16, 2007.

**CURRENT ACTIVITY:** May 2008 – Planned award of Phase 1B construction contract. Construction is scheduled to begin in June 2008 and completed by June 2010.

**NEXT STEPS:** NA

**BUDGET:** The FY 2000 VA appropriation included \$125,000 for the site selection and EA processes.

The FY 2001 VA appropriation included \$500,000 for advance planning of a new national cemetery and \$15 million for land acquisition.

The FY 2002 VA appropriation included \$2 million for design of a new national cemetery.

The FY 2003 VA appropriation included \$23.1 million for construction of a new national cemetery.

**SIGNIFICANT ISSUES:** April 16, 2007 – The cemetery opened for interments.

## **Ft. Sill National Cemetery (Oklahoma City, OK)**

**PAST ACTIVITY:** Four hundred acres were acquired from the Department of Army. The Master Plan was completed in October 2000 and construction documents in July 2001. A "Fast Track" burial section for interments prior to completion of all construction activities at the new Ft. Sill National Cemetery was completed and a Dedication Ceremony was held in November 2001. The Phase 1 construction contract was awarded on March 13, 2002. The Phase 1 construction contract was completed on May 18, 2004.

**CURRENT ACTIVITY:** NA

**NEXT STEPS:** NA

**BUDGET:** The FY 2001 VA appropriation included \$12 million for construction. All Phase I development costs are fully funded.

**SIGNIFICANT ISSUES:** None

## **National Cemetery of the Alleghenies (Pittsburgh, PA)**

**PAST ACTIVITY:** The Pennsylvania State Legislature established a Cemetery Site Selection Committee to serve as a primary evaluation mechanism for locating sites and scheduling site visits. NCA staff visited Pittsburgh during June 2000 to meet with the State's Cemetery Site Selection Committee. NCA staff toured 11 proposed sites.

In October 2000, the Under Secretary for Memorial Affairs toured the three top sites. Based upon these visits, the Under Secretary identified the Morgan Farms site, 15 miles southwest of Pittsburgh, as the most desirable and feasible location. The Morgan Farms location was also the preferred site named in the Cemetery Site Selection Committee's report that was submitted to the Pennsylvania House of Representatives. A contract for an EA of the Morgan Farms site was awarded in December 2000 and the final report was completed in September 2001. A contract for master planning was awarded in May 2002. Purchase of the first of two parcels was completed in December 2002, for \$2,310,000. The purchase of the second parcel was completed in March 2003 for \$1,761,700. The combined acreage of both properties is 275 acres. Marshall-Tyler-Rausch of Pittsburgh completed the cemetery master plan and design documents.

In April 2005, NCA was informed that Washington County tax officials had sold the northern 139 acres for delinquent taxes. To complete the land acquisition, VA retained the services of Chicago Title Insurance Company to conduct the closing and provide title insurance policy. At closing, taxes due to Washington County were identified and the amount was deducted from the seller's proceeds. Chicago Title submitted payment by check to the County to satisfy taxes due. The required property transfer form along with the deed was filed with the County when the deed was recorded. This form included the VA contact for all property issues.

The checks were never cashed by the County and taxes were considered delinquent and penalty charges applied. In July 2004, the Washington County Tax Claim Bureau notified VA via return receipt mail of their intention to sell the property for delinquent taxes. The two notices sent never reached an NCA office. Contrary to Pennsylvania law, the County failed to address the notices to the designated VA contact. In addition, the County allegedly posted a notice on the property; no such notice was ever found by NCA or their contractor. No attempt was made by Washington County officials to otherwise contact VA/NCA about this serious matter. In August 2004, a legal notice regarding delinquent taxes, listing the VA property was published in the local newspaper. The legal notice was never brought to VA's attention.

On September 23, 2004, Washington County sold the property at a tax sale to Jambeth Investments LLC of Marco Island, FL, for \$40,000.

VA contacted the Washington County Solicitor as well as the U.S. Attorney for the region for assistance. The federal district court judgment in the matter supported the opinion that VA is the legal owner of the property. The issue has been resolved in VA's favor.

On November 29, 2004, the Secretary of Veterans Affairs announced that the Pittsburgh area cemetery would be named the National Cemetery of the Alleghenies. Fast Track construction was completed and burials began on August 15, 2005.

**CURRENT ACTIVITY:** August 2008 – Projected completion of all construction.

**NEXT STEPS:** NA

**BUDGET:** The FY 2000 VA appropriation included \$125,000 for the site selection and EA processes.

The FY 2001 VA appropriation included \$1 million for advance planning of a new national cemetery.

The FY 2002 VA appropriation included \$18 million to be available for the purchase of land for new cemeteries in the vicinity of Detroit, Michigan; Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania; and Sacramento, California.

The FY 2003 VA appropriation included \$16.3 million for construction of a new national cemetery.

**SIGNIFICANT ISSUES:** None



## **Sacramento Valley VA National Cemetery (Sacramento, CA)**

**PAST ACTIVITY:** NCA officials worked closely with representatives of the California Department of Veterans Affairs and local realtors to identify suitable locations for consideration as a new national cemetery. A joint VA/State site evaluation team visited nine sites in the Sacramento area during October 2000. Several potential cemetery sites were identified and the best three were chosen for evaluation in the EA. A 1,133-acre tract in Solano County, known as the Hayman site, was designated as the preferred alternative. The EA was completed and resulted in "A Finding of No Significant Impact." The EA was made available to the public on August 16, 2002, and the 30-day public comment period ended on September 16, 2002. Comments received were overwhelmingly in favor of the cemetery. NCA and the Hayman site property owner obtained independent appraisals and negotiated terms for the sale of the property. A boundary survey delineated 561 acres for purchase. Acquisition of the property was completed in July 2004. Master planning and the documents for construction of the Fast Track development were completed in September 2005. The Fast Track construction contract was awarded in February 2006 (\$3,439,195 including compensation and pension) and completed September 27, 2006. The cemetery opened for interments on October 16, 2006.

**CURRENT ACTIVITY:** May 2008 – Planned award of Phase 1B construction contract. Construction is scheduled to begin in June 2008 and completed by June 2010.

**NEXT STEPS:** NA

**BUDGET:** The FY 2000 VA appropriation included \$125,000 for the site selection and EA processes.

The FY 2001 VA appropriation included \$500,000 for advance planning of a new national cemetery.

The FY 2002 VA appropriation included \$18 million to be available for the purchase of land for new cemeteries in the vicinity of Detroit, Michigan; Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania; and Sacramento, California.

The FY 2003 VA appropriation included \$1.7 million for design of a new national cemetery and preparation of construction documents.

The FY 2005 VA appropriation included \$21.4 million for construction of a new national cemetery.

**SIGNIFICANT ISSUES:** None

**Status of New Cemetery Development  
National Cemetery Expansion Act of 2003, Public Law 108-109**

Establishment of a national cemetery includes these major processes:

Major Process	Bakersfield	Birmingham	Columbia/ Greenville	Jacksonville	Southeastern Pennsylvania	Sarasota
<b>Potential Sites Identified</b> (within primary 75-mile service radius)	<b>Completed Dec 2004</b>	<b>Completed Dec 2004</b>	<b>Completed Jan 2005</b>	<b>Completed Mar 2005</b>	<b>Completed Apr 2004</b>	<b>Completed Dec 2004</b>
<b>National Environmental Policy Act Compliance</b>	<b>Completed Mar 2006</b>	<b>Completed July 2006</b>	<b>Completed Mar 2006</b>	<b>Completed Feb 2006</b>	<b>Completed Nov 2005</b>	<b>Completed Dec 2005</b>
<b>Land Acquisition</b>	Estimated June 2008	<b>Completed July 2007</b>	Estimated Sep 2008	Estimated June 2008	<b>Completed Apr 2008</b>	<b>Completed April 2007</b>
<b>Master Planning &amp; Design Development Contract Award</b>	<b>Completed Oct 2007</b>	<b>Completed Sep 2007</b>	<b>Completed July 2007</b>	<b>Completed Aug 2007</b>	Estimated May 2008	<b>Completed July 2007</b>
<b>Phase 1 Construction Documents Preparation Contract Award</b>	Estimated July 2008	Estimated Aug 2008	Estimated June 2008	Estimated June 2008	Estimated Nov 2009	Estimated May 2008
<b>Phase 1 Construction Contract Award</b>	Estimated July 2008	Estimated July 2008	Estimated June 2008	Estimated June 2008	Estimated Apr 2009	Estimated June 2008
<b>Begin Interments</b>	Estimated Jan 2009	Estimated Jan 2009	Estimated Dec 2008	Estimated Dec 2008	Estimated Oct 2009	Estimated Dec 2008
<b>Phase 1 Construction Completion</b>	Estimated May 2011	Estimated May 2011	Estimated April 2011	Estimated May 2011	Estimated Sep 2011	Estimated April 2011

Note: Letters in **BOLD** indicate that the major process has been completed.

**Status of New Cemetery Development  
National Cemetery Expansion Act of 2003, Public Law 108-109**

**BACKGROUND:** Public Law 108-109 - Not later than four years after the date of the enactment of this Act, the Secretary of Veterans Affairs, in accordance with chapter 24 of title 38, United States Code, shall establish six new national cemeteries. The new cemeteries shall be located in the following locations (those locations having been determined by the Secretary of Veterans Affairs to be the most appropriate locations for new national cemeteries):

- (1) Southeastern Pennsylvania
- (2) The Birmingham, Alabama area
- (3) The Jacksonville, Florida area
- (4) The Bakersfield, California area
- (5) The Greenville/Columbia, South Carolina area
- (6) The Sarasota County, Florida area

## **Bakersfield VA National Cemetery (Bakersfield, CA)**

**PAST ACTIVITY:** NCA initiated contact with respective State, local representatives, and veterans' groups in a December 2003 letter acquainting them with this initiative and soliciting possible cemetery site locations. Only one site has been offered as a potential site for the national cemetery, a 500-acre tract just east of Bakersfield. The Tejon Ranch Company has identified 2,000 acres of their land for consideration. The Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) will accept the best 500 acres, out of the 2,000 offered. VA has identified the two best, 500-acre parcels for environmental assessment (EA). The URS Group, Inc. was retained to prepare the EA, which was published in March 2006; the 30-day public comment period concluded April 15, 2006. NCA awarded a master plan contract in November 2007 to the A-E firm, *Huitt-Zollars, Inc.*, that will master plan the entire 500-acre site.

On March 26, 2008, the Secretary of Veterans Affairs announced that the name of the Bakersfield area cemetery would be named Bakersfield VA National Cemetery.

**CURRENT ACTIVITY:** A recent water study of the sites concluded that water will be an issue in developing the sites and irrigation of the burial sites may not be an option. Currently, NCA is pursuing site acquisition (donation) of the northern 500-acre parcel.

**NEXT STEPS:** June 2008 - Complete site acquisition.

September 2008 – Completion of the cemetery master plan and initial design development.

July 2008 – Phase 1A (Fast Track) burial section is expected to begin construction with a cemetery opening planned for January 2009.

July 2008 – Award the Phase 1B Construction Document contract for a planned summer 2009 construction contract award.

**BUDGET:** The FY 2005 VA appropriation included approximately \$150,000 in the Major Construction, Advanced Planning Fund for site selection activities and preparation of an EA.

The FY 2006 VA appropriation included \$41 million for the purchase of land for the six new cemeteries.

The FY 2007 VA appropriation included \$2 million for master planning and design development.

The FY 2008 VA appropriation included \$19.5 million for construction documents and construction.

**SIGNIFICANT ISSUES:** Due to the unavailability of sufficient water for entire cemetery irrigation, NCA will pursue minimal irrigation and utilize water-wise landscaping for the Phase 1 development (10-year build out).

## **Alabama VA National Cemetery (Birmingham, AL)**

**PAST ACTIVITY:** NCA initiated contact with respective State, local representatives, and veterans' groups in a December 2003 letter acquainting them with this initiative and soliciting possible cemetery site locations. Four sites, adjacent to the American Village complex in Montevallo, AL, were offered for VA consideration. A NCA representative met with Representative Spencer Bachus (R-AL, 6<sup>th</sup> District) and local officials at American Village in May 2004.

A contract to prepare the EA of the optimum site(s) was awarded in December 2004; completed April 26, 2006, followed by the conclusion of the 30-day public comment period, which concluded on July 28, 2006. NCA selected a combination of four properties to make up the acquisition site; however, two of the properties were no longer available. NCA then chose a single 495-acre parcel for acquisition, appraised at \$8 million, which NCA acquired on July 27, 2007, for \$8,056,674.

On March 31, 2008, the Secretary of Veterans Affairs announced that the name of the Birmingham area cemetery would be named Alabama VA National Cemetery.

**CURRENT ACTIVITY:** A master plan/design development contract was awarded in September 2007 to *Civil Consultants, Inc. of Birmingham, AL*, with a 10-month estimated completion. NCA completed a mid-point review of the design on January 25, 2008, and authorized the A-E to proceed with Phase 1A construction documents.

Annexation of the site into the town of Montevallo, AL, is underway. Annexation from the county would provide benefits of available water and environmental requirements that would save approximately \$1.5 million for construction.

**NEXT STEPS:** July 2008 – Completion of the cemetery master plan and initial design development.

July 2008 – Phase 1A (Fast Track) burial section is expected to begin construction with a cemetery opening in January 2009.

August 2008 – Award the Phase 1B Construction Document contract for a planned summer 2009 construction contract award.

**BUDGET:** The FY 2005 VA appropriation included approximately \$150,000 in the Major Construction, Advanced Planning Fund for site selection activities and preparation of an EA.

The FY 2006 VA appropriation included \$41 million for the purchase of land for the six new cemeteries.

The FY 2007 VA appropriation included \$2 million for master planning and design development.

The FY 2008 VA appropriation included \$18.5 million for construction documents and construction.

**SIGNIFICANT ISSUES:** None

## **Columbia/Greenville, South Carolina Area**

**PAST ACTIVITY:** NCA initiated contact with respective State, local representatives, and veterans' groups in a December 2003 letter soliciting possible cemetery site locations. A total of four sites have been offered for consideration in Union, Newberry and Richland Counties. An EA conducted from January 2005 through March 2006 determined the Richland County 600-acre tract within Fort Jackson in the city of Columbia is the best site for development. This site is available for transfer from the Department of Army at no cost. The 600-acre land transfer is provided for in the National Defense Authorization Act for FY 2007. DOD Army (Ft Jackson) and VA have finalized the Memorandum of Agreement (MOA) for the land transfer, which NCA signed on January 24, 2008; Ft. Jackson signed the MOA on February 19, 2008.

**CURRENT ACTIVITY:** Land acquisition - September 2008 projected completion.

Master plan/design development - December 2008 projected completion.

**NEXT STEPS:** NCA was prepared to recommend to the Secretary the name "Fort Jackson VA National Cemetery" as the official name; however, that action has been placed on hold pending possible congressional legislation to name the cemetery "Floyd D. Spence National Memorial Cemetery at Fort Jackson."

June 2008 – Phase 1A (Fast Track) burial section is expected to begin construction with a cemetery opening by December 2008.

June 2008 – Award the Phase 1B Construction Document contract for a planned summer 2009 construction contract award.

**BUDGET:** The FY 2005 VA appropriation included approximately \$150,000 in the Major Construction, Advanced Planning Fund for site selection activities and preparation of an EA.

The FY 2006 VA appropriation included \$41 million for the purchase of land for the six new cemeteries.

The FY 2007 VA appropriation included \$2 million for master planning and design development.

The FY 2008 VA appropriation included \$19.2 million for construction documents and construction.

**SIGNIFICANT ISSUES:** It is unlikely the land transfer from DOD/Fort Jackson to VA/NCA will be completed prior to the Phase 1A construction award. The Army is preparing a "Permit" to allow VA access to the land for 12 months while the transfer action continues.



## **Jacksonville VA National Cemetery (Jacksonville, FL)**

**PAST ACTIVITY:** NCA initiated contact with respective State, local representatives, and veterans' groups in a December 2003 letter acquainting them with this initiative and soliciting possible cemetery site locations. On January 23, 2004, NCA representatives met with the Mayor, City Hall, Representative Ander Crenshaw (R-FL, 4<sup>th</sup> District) and Representative Cliff Stearns (R-FL, 6<sup>th</sup> District) to discuss the process of establishing a national cemetery, as well as a question and answer session. On the following day, NCA representatives participated in a Veterans Forum hosted by Representative John Mica (R-FL, 7<sup>th</sup> District).

Site visits in July 2004 and January 2005 identified a total of 14 potential sites. Two sites in Duval County, near the airport have been determined to be the best suited for the national cemetery for which both of these sites were evaluated in an EA from March 2005 – December 2005, and the public comment period concluded April 7, 2006. Based upon the results of the EA, NCA selected a 568-acre site owned by the city of Jacksonville as the preferred site for acquisition.

On April 1, 2008, the Secretary of Veterans Affairs announced that the name of the Jacksonville area cemetery would be named Jacksonville VA National Cemetery.

**CURRENT ACTIVITY:** NCA and the city of Jacksonville are in agreement on the wording of the offer-to-sell. The city of Jacksonville is processing the offer-to-sell through its legislative requirements with a 6-8 week estimated completion. Site acquisition is planned for June 2008.

NCA awarded a master plan/design development contract in August 2007. NCA completed a mid-point review of the design in January 2008 and authorized the A-E to proceed with Phase 1A construction documents on January 24, 2008.

**NEXT STEPS:** June 2008 - Complete site acquisition.

June 2008 – Complete cemetery master plan and design development contract.

June 2008 – Phase 1A (Fast Track) burial section is expected to begin construction with a cemetery opening in December 2008.

June 2008 – Award the Phase 1B Construction Document contract for a planned summer 2009 construction contract award.

**BUDGET:** The FY 2005 VA appropriation included approximately \$150,000 in the Major Construction, Advanced Planning Fund for site selection activities and preparation of an EA.

The FY 2006 VA appropriation included \$41 million for the purchase of land for the six new cemeteries.

The FY 2007 VA appropriation included \$2 million for master planning and design development.

The FY 2008 VA appropriation included \$22.4 million for construction documents and construction.

**SIGNIFICANT ISSUES:** None

## **Washington Crossing VA National Cemetery (Bucks County, PA)**

**PAST ACTIVITY:** On March 31, 2003, Representative Jim Gerlach (R-PA, 6<sup>th</sup> District) introduced H.R. 1516 directing the establishment of a national cemetery for veterans in southeastern Pennsylvania. On September 23, 2003, NCA officials hosted a “Town Hall” meeting with southeastern Pennsylvania veteran leaders and representatives at the VA regional office in Philadelphia to discuss the alternative sites. Through general consensus of the group, the Pennhurst and Graterford sites were endorsed for further consideration. The sites are both owned by the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania.

NCA representatives have considered 12 possible alternative sites. Sites were evaluated in the vicinities of Norristown, Valley Forge, Embreeville, Pennhurst, Graterford, and Bucks County.

NCA’s environmental consultant completed a preliminary assessment of the Pennhurst site, a former mental hospital containing 35 buildings. They found that significant environmental clean-up, asbestos abatement, and building demolition would be required to make the site useable for a national cemetery. Pre-construction costs for this remediation were estimated at \$14 million to \$24 million.

A tract in northern Bucks County at Riegelsville, owned by the Catholic Church, was offered for consideration. Toll Brothers Corporation also offered a 200-acre tract at Dollington in southern Bucks County at Upper Makefield Township for consideration. Sale of the Dollington site to VA was conditioned on the ability of Toll Brothers to obtain zoning variances to allow higher density residential construction on their other properties in the vicinity.

An EA was completed in November 2005, addressing the three sites: Pennhurst, Riegelsville, and the Toll Brothers property. The public comment period concluded in late December 2005 and VA selected the Toll Brothers site as the preferred alternative.

Acquisition of the Dollington site was stalled by zoning issues and possible litigation on linked properties in a Toll Brothers transaction. NCA met with Toll Brothers representatives in August 2007 successfully de-linking the Dollington site with a sales price of \$10.5 million (\$2.2 million under the 2006 appraised value). NCA received the signed offer-to-sell from Toll Brothers on October 2007 and NCA signed accepting the offer-to sell on November 2007.

On March 27, 2008, the Secretary of Veterans Affairs announced that the name of the Southeastern Pennsylvania area cemetery would be named Washington Crossing VA National Cemetery.

**CURRENT ACTIVITY:** April 2008 - completed land acquisition.

**NEXT STEPS:** May 2008 – Award of the master plan 4 and design development.

April 2009 – Phase 1A (Fast Track) burial section is expected to begin construction with a planned cemetery opening in October 2009.

**BUDGET:** The FY 2005 VA appropriation included approximately \$150,000 in the Major Construction, Advanced Planning Fund for site selection activities and preparation of an EA.

The FY 2006 VA appropriation included \$41 million for the purchase of land for the six new cemeteries.

The FY 2007 VA appropriation included \$2 million for master planning and design development.

The FY 2008 VA appropriation included \$29.6 million for construction documents and construction.

**SIGNIFICANT ISSUES:** None

## **Sarasota VA National Cemetery (Sarasota, FL)**

**PAST ACTIVITY:** NCA initiated contact with respective State, local representatives, and veterans' groups in a December 2003 letter acquainting them with this initiative and soliciting possible cemetery site locations. On January 30, 2004, NCA representatives met with members of the SW Florida National Cemetery Advisory Committee to discuss the process of establishing a national cemetery, as well as a question and answer session. Subsequently, with the Committees help, a total of 23 sites were identified for consideration. Three sites were selected as suitable for cemetery development.

A contract to prepare the EA of these three sites was awarded in December 2004 and completed in December 2005 with the 30-day public comment period concluding in January 2006. Based upon the EA, a portion of the Hawkins Ranch was selected as the preferred site for acquisition. NCA received a signed offer-to-sell on January 2007 on the 295-acre property for \$15 million. NCA acquired the 295-acre property on April 24, 2007, at a purchase price of \$14 million.

On October 19, 2007, the Secretary of Veterans Affairs announced that the name of the Sarasota County Florida area would be named Sarasota VA National Cemetery.

**CURRENT ACTIVITY:** NCA awarded a master plan/design development contract in July 2007.

NCA completed a mid-point review of the design in December 2007 and authorized the A-E to proceed with the Phase 1A construction documents.

**NEXT STEPS:** May 2008 – Complete the contract for the cemetery master plan and design development.

May 2008 - Award the Phase 1B Construction Document contract for a planned summer 2009 construction contract award.

June 2008 – Phase 1A (Fast Track) burial section is expected to begin construction with a cemetery opening in December 2008.

**BUDGET:** The FY 2005 VA appropriation included approximately \$150,000 in the Major Construction, Advanced Planning Fund for site selection activities and preparation of an EA.

The FY 2006 VA appropriation included \$41 million for the purchase of land for the six new cemeteries.

The FY 2007 VA appropriation included \$2 million for master planning and design development.

The FY 2008 VA appropriation included \$27.8 million for construction documents and construction.

**SIGNIFICANT ISSUES:** None