

Finding of No Significant Impact

Latrobe-Unity Parks and Recreation Commission Real Estate Lease for the Development Of Cardinal Park Loyalhanna Lake Project

1. Project Background:

The Latrobe-Unity Parks and Recreation Commission is seeking a real estate lease from the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, Pittsburgh District to construct a recreation park, to be known as Cardinal Park, on nine level acres of federally owned land that is part of the Loyalhanna Lake Flood Control Project. The nine acre parcel lies directly adjacent to Loyalhanna Creek and within the city limits of Latrobe, Westmoreland County, Pennsylvania. This nine acre parcel was formerly leased to the Pennsylvania National Guard who used it to store vehicles. Prior to its use by the National Guard, the parcel was used as a disposal area for the Latrobe Local Flood Protection Project that was constructed in two phases in the 1940's and 1960's. Consequently, the surface of the site is a rock/soil mixture. The land is currently vacant and supports sparse old field type vegetation consisting of various forbs and grasses.

2. Purpose and Need for the Action

In 2005, the Latrobe-Unity Parks and Recreation Commission completed a comprehensive recreation and open space study. This study identified Cardinal Park as a key objective to obtain much needed open air recreational opportunities for Latrobe's urban residents. Construction of the proposed park would be an appropriate use of this federally owned parcel that will provide a significant recreation resource that could provide a safe place for a variety of pursuits including baseball, basketball, football, soccer, field hockey, lacrosse, walking, birding, jogging and a host of other outdoor activities. The park will also provide the opportunity for disabled persons confined to non-motorized and motorized wheelchairs to enjoy healthful benefits that level park land can provide. A boat launch into Loyalhanna Creek for small non-motorized craft such as canoes and kayaks is also planned for the park. In addition to the obvious recreational benefits to the community, the proposed action could potentially help local businesses by increasing pedestrian traffic in the vicinity of the park.

3. Alternative Solutions

An Environmental Assessment (EA) was prepared for the Latrobe-Unity Parks and Recreation Commission by a graduate student in the Environmental Science and Management Department of Duquesne University. The EA evaluated the environmental effects of the proposed plan and the alternative of "No Action". The "No Action" alternative was rejected because it would deprive local residents of a highly desirable recreational resource that could be used by all age groups as well as the physically disabled. In addition, "No Action" would result in the loss of a source of potential business revenue that pedestrian traffic, normally expected near a large park, could provide.

4. Recommended Plan

The proposed park development plan would occur in three phases. The first phase would include grubbing, grading and top soil placement as needed to prepare the surface for seeding. Phase two would include seeding for one regulation sized soccer field plus four smaller soccer fields, constructing a permeable-surfaced parking area to reduce surface water runoff, constructing

restroom facilities, a pavilion, and a playground. Phase two will also include tree and shrub planting to create a buffer between the park and heavily travelled East First Avenue that borders a portion of the park and the construction of a stone walking trail around the park's perimeter. Phase three will complete the park through construction of a basketball court, an overlook garden bordering Loyalhanna Creek, a small canoe/kayak boat launch, and possibly bocce courts and a small putting green. Appropriate signage will be installed and park benches and tables will be placed at various locations to provide for picnicking and resting. The Latrobe-Unity Parks and Recreation Commission is fully responsible for the cost of park construction and its operation and maintenance.

5. Purpose of the Environmental Assessment

The EA was prepared to meet the reporting requirements of the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) and to consider the effects of park construction on natural and cultural resources. A copy of the EA is on file with the Pittsburgh District Office. The EA describes the present environmental conditions and assesses potential impacts to water quality, wetlands, terrestrial habitat, fish and wildlife, endangered and threatened species, floodplains, recreation, soils, scenic rivers, cultural resources, and local utility lines.

6. Coordination

Coordination with federal and state agencies was conducted to fulfill requirements of Section 7 of the Endangered Species Act and Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act. Copies of responses from these agencies are attached to this Finding of No Significant Impact. Other agencies contacted included the Pennsylvania Game Commission, Pennsylvania Department of Conservation and Natural Resources and the Pennsylvania Fish and Boat Commission.

7. Impacts

Minor land disturbance activities required to construct the park include grubbing, some grading and the placement of topsoil in various locations to prepare the surface of the nine acre parcel for seeding. The impacts of these actions upon terrestrial wildlife would be minimal considering that the site is within the midst of an urban area surrounded by heavy development and is a formerly used disposal site. Good engineering practices will be followed during construction to minimize soil erosion and sedimentation. Consequently, the District expects no significant adverse impacts to water or air quality, fish and wildlife populations, or cultural resources.

8. Availability.

According to the requirements set forth in Engineering Regulation 200-2-2, § 11 and 40 CFR § 1501.4(e)(1), the District will mail a notice of availability of the Finding Of No Significant Impact to agencies, organizations, and the general public that may be interested in this small project. In addition, this Finding of No Significant Impact will be placed on the District's internet site at www.lrp.usace.army.mil.

9. Conclusions

After having carefully reviewed the action proposed in the environmental assessment, I have reasonably concluded that the proposed project would not constitute a major federal action significantly affecting the quality of the human environment because, in accordance with 40 C.F.R. § 1508.13 there will be no significant impacts to land use, air quality, fish and wildlife resources, endangered or threatened species, vegetation, flood plains, cultural resources, transportation, or socio-economic resources. Therefore, I have determined that the preparation

of an environmental impact statement under NEPA is not warranted. The public interest will be best served by the implementation of the proposed action. Further, the proposed work complies with all applicable federal, state, and local laws and regulations. This Finding of No Significant Impact precedes the Corps of Engineers' final decision on the proposed action.

29 Feb 08

Date

Michael P. Crall

Michael P. Crall
Colonel, Corps of Engineers
District Engineer