

The purpose of and need for this proposed action is simply to comply with the Congressional mandate of transferring the lands to the SDGFP. Although NEPA documents normally assist the decision maker, this document is only prepared for the purpose of public disclosure of the environmental impacts of the land transfer, since there is no Federal decision to be made.

The State of South Dakota has provided to the Corps its plans for development and management at the recreation areas to be transferred. These plans have been used to evaluate potential environmental, cultural, and socioeconomic impacts that would be expected to occur as a result of the transfer. In addition, the legislation provides funds to the State and two Tribes for the implementation of plans for terrestrial wildlife habitat restoration. The Corps will consult with the State of South Dakota and affected Indian Tribes to develop annual budget to carry out this title. The State's plan includes habitat development on Oahe/Sharpe project lands, on Federal lands and on selected State lands. Total habitat development proposed is 25,620 acres.

Amendments contained in the WRDA 2000 also stated that within 10 years the Secretary shall clean up open dumps and hazardous waste sites located on lands transferred and leased, inventory and stabilize each cultural and historical site within transferred or leased lands, and establish a Cultural Resources Advisory Commission (CRAC) composed of 1 member each from the State of South Dakota, Cheyenne River Sioux Tribe, and the Lower Brule Sioux Tribe.

The no-action alternative traditionally describes what would happen if the proposed action were *not* to occur. Although the no-action alternative is not a reasonable alternative because Congress has mandated the transfer of these properties, it is being addressed in the EIS as required by CEQ regulations (40 CFR 1502.14) and to provide a baseline against which to measure the impacts of the State's proposed development on the lands to be transferred.

Public Meetings

Public meetings to obtain comments on the Draft EIS will be held August 13–August 23, 2001. Corps representatives will be available to answer questions at an informal “open house” beginning at 5 p.m. The formal meetings begin at 7 p.m. at the following locations:

- Monday, August 13, 2001; Best Western Kelly Inn, 1607 East Highway 50, Yankton, SD 57078.

- Tuesday, August 14, 2001; Lower Brule Convention Center, 321 Sitting Bull Street, Lower Brule, SD 57548.
- Wednesday, August 15, 2001; Crow Creek Reservation Com. Center, Fort Thompson, SD 57339.
- Thursday, August 16, 2001; National Guard Armory, 610 East Hwy 50, Wagner, SD 57380.
- Monday, August 20, 2001; Prairie Nights Casino, 7932 Highway 24, Fort Yates, ND.
- Tuesday, August 21, 2001; Wrangler Motor Inn, 800 West Grand Crossing, Mobridge, SD 57601.
- Wednesday, August 22, 2001; King's Inn, 220 South Pierre Street, Pierre, SD 57501.
- Thursday, August 23, 2001; Rushmore Plaza Holiday Inn, 505 North 5th Street, Rapid City, SD 57701.

Luz D. Ortiz,

Army Federal Register Liaison Officer.

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DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE

Department of the Army; Corps of Engineers

Intent to Prepare an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) on Drought Water Management Operations of the Central and Southern Florida (C&SF) Project During 2002

AGENCY: U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, DoD.

ACTION: Notice.

SUMMARY: There is currently a severe water shortage and regional drought within the Central and Southern Florida (C&SF) Project area in south Florida that is forecast to extend into 2002. As a result of this, the South Florida Water Management District (SFWMD), the local sponsor of the project, has requested that the Jacksonville District of the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (Corps) authorize temporary deviation from the normal regulation schedules for the Water Conservation Areas (WCA's), set forth in the Water Control Plan for the 2001/2002 dry season to provide greater flexibility in balancing the environmental and water supply purposes of the project. The current water management operational plan for the C&SF Project includes drought contingency plans. The magnitude and severity of this water shortage and drought pose an unprecedented threat to drinking water supplies, economic and social resources and environmental resources, primarily due to the extremely low water levels in Lake

Okeechobee, the normal backup water supply for the region. Based on current water levels and projections for continued low lake levels, the potential for saltwater intrusion into the Lower East Coast water supplies if backup water supplies are not available and the potential for environmental impacts in the regional system, require evaluation of the temporary deviation from the minimum floor elevations in the WCA's.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, P.O. Box 4970, Jacksonville, Florida 32232; Attn: Ms. Barbara Cintron, 904/232–1682.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION:

1. The action requested by the SFWMD consists of temporary deviations to the water regulation schedules for WCA 1 (ARM Loxahatchee National Wildlife Refuge), WCA 2A, and WCA 3A from November 1, 2001 through October 31, 2002.

2. Alternatives to be discussed involve sequencing the deviations for the several WCAs, and variations in the magnitude and timing of the deviations.

3. A Scoping letter will be used to invite comments on alternatives and issues from Federal, State, and local agencies, affected Indian tribes, and other interested private organizations and individuals.

4. The Draft EIS will analyze issues related to fire frequency, wading bird and snail kite nesting success, invasion of exotic vegetation, saltwater intrusion into municipal drinking water wells, the benefits of and need for municipal and industrial water-use restrictions, and economic and social impacts on agriculture and other water supply dependent business, including recreation, navigation, and tourism.

5. The alternative plans will be reviewed under provisions of appropriate laws and regulations, including the Endangered Species Act, Fish and Wildlife Coordination Act, and Farmland Protection Policy Act.

6. The Draft EIS is expected to be available for public review in the 3rd quarter CY 2001.

Dated: July 19, 2001.

George M. Strain,

Acting Chief, Planning Division.

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