DRAFT FINDING OF NO SIGNIFICANT IMPACT (FONSI)

NAME OF PROPOSED ACTION: Greer Ferry Lake Master Plan Revision

PURPOSE AND NEED FOR THE PROPOSED ACTION

The revised Master Plan updates Design Memorandum No. 19-5, Updated Master Plan for Development and Management of Greers Ferry Lake approved in 1976. The Master Plan is the strategic land use document that guides the comprehensive management and development of all recreational, natural, and cultural resources throughout the life of the water resource project. It is a vital tool for the efficient and cost-effective stewardship and sustainability of project resources for the benefit of present and future generations.

With the proposed Master Plan revision, an Environmental Assessment (EA) was completed to evaluate existing conditions and potential impacts of proposed alternatives. The EA is prepared pursuant to the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA), CEQ regulations (40 CFR, 1500–1517), and the Corps implementing regulation, Policy and Procedures for Implementing NEPA, ER 200-2-2, 1988.

ALTERNATIVES: A No Action Alternative, an Increased Preservation Alternative, a Current Resource Management Alternative/Increased Conservation (Preferred), and an Increased Development Alternative were evaluated in the Environmental Assessment.

No Action (Alternative 3). The No Action Alternative land classification, which is based on the 1976 master plan, does not accurately reflect the land use activities or resource management of the lake. In addition, this alternative does not address resource management laws, policies, and regulations that were implemented after the 1976 Greers Ferry Lake Master Plan.

Operation and management of Greers Ferry Lake would continue as outlined in the current Master Plan Update, with land use classifications remaining the same and none of the 10,005.9 acres of land around the lake will be reclassified, including 4,531.9 acres of unallocated lands (no land classification). This alternative will continue to allow for increased land and water based impacts within the Low Density Recreation land classification.

Under the Increased Preservation Alternative (Alternative 1) 2,645.2 acres, representing 26% of the shoreline, are classified as High Density Recreation. This represents a 4% reduction from the High Density acreage in the No Action Alternative. The 2,069.7 acres of Low Density Recreation in the No Action Alternative have been reduced by 1,429.2 acres to 640.6 acres, representing 6% of the shoreline. Environmentally Sensitive lands was increased to 4,457.3 acres (45%). Wildlife Management lands are increased from 0 acres in the No Action Alternative to 1,370.3 acres in this alternative (14%). Vegetative Management lands also increased from no classified acreage in the No Action to 515.3 acres (5%) in this alternative. Project Operation lands total 377.3 acres (4%) under this alternative.

Alternative 2, the Current Management Alternative/Increased Conservation (Preferred Alternative), in comparison to Alternative 3 (No Action), the changes include increasing resource protection by classifying 4,531.9 acres of unallocated land, primarily to Wildlife Management and Vegetative Management classifications. Low Density Recreation are reduced to 688.8 acres, representing 7% of available shoreline. High Density Recreation are reduced to 2,645.2 acres 26% of the shoreline. Environmentally Sensitive lands are increased to 487.6 acres (5%), while Wildlife Management lands total 2,080.7 acres, comprising 21% of the shoreline acreage. Project Operation lands total 377.3 acres (4%). Vegetative Management acreage totaled 3,726.3 acres (37%), representing the largest acreage classification under this alternative.

Changes from Alternative 3 (No Action) to Alternative 4, Increased Development, include increasing potential resource impacts by classifying 4,531.9 acres of unallocated land mainly to High and Low Density Recreation classifications. This alternative will continue to allow for increased land and water based impacts within the proposed 4,424.9 acres (44%) of Low Density Recreation classification. There is also a potential increase in lake activity from the increase in High Density Recreation acreage totaling 4,531.7 acres (45%).

ANTICIPATED ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACTS: Consideration of the effects disclosed in the EA, and a finding that they are not significant, are necessary to prepare a FONSI. This determination of no significance is required by 40 CFR 1508.13. Additionally, 40 CFR 1508.27 defines significance as it relates to consideration of environmental effects of a direct, indirect, or cumulative nature.

Criteria that must be considered in making this finding are addressed below, in terms of both context and intensity. The significance of both short and long term effects must be viewed in several contexts: society as a whole (human, national); the affected region; the affected interests; and the locality. The context for this determination is primarily local. The context for this action is not highly significant geographically, nor is it controversial in any significant way. Consideration of intensity refers to the magnitude and intensity of impact, where impacts may be both beneficial and adverse. Within this context, the magnitude and intensity of impacts resulting from this decision are not significant. The determination for each impact topic is listed below.

1. The degree to which the action results in both beneficial and adverse effects. A significant effect may exist even if the Federal agency believes that on balance the effect will be beneficial. The EA indicates that there will be beneficial effects from implementation of the Preferred Alternative to terrestrial and aquatic resources (including threatened and endangered species and archeological and historic resources), air quality, and aesthetics, while potentially having minimal to negligible impacts on socio-economics and recreation resources. The Preferred Alternative would allow for the continued potential development in Low Density Recreation and High Density Recreation land classifications, but also classifying a majority of the unallocated lands to Wildlife Management, Vegetative Management, and Environmentally Sensitive land classifications, yielding a balanced approach.

2. The degree to which the action affects public health or safety. No adverse effects to public health or safety will result from the Preferred Alternative. Possible adverse environmental effects may occur from implementation of the No Action Alternative due to potential increased

development resulting in more people and watercraft on the lake. Possible adverse economic and socioeconomic effects could potentially occur from implementation of Alternative 1, the Increased Preservation Alternative.

3. The degree to which the action affects unique characteristics of the potentially affected area, such as proximity to historic or cultural resources, park lands, prime farmlands, wetlands, wild and scenic rivers, or ecologically critical areas. The Preferred Alternative does not threaten any known cultural resources sites or historic properties. Coordination with Federal, State, and local agencies and Federally Recognized Tribes will be required to avoid, minimize, or mitigate potential unforeseen impacts. Park lands, prime farm lands, wetlands, wild and scenic rivers, or ecologically critical areas will not be impacted by implementation of the Preferred Alternative.

4. The degree to which effects on the quality of the human environment are likely to be highly controversial. The project will benefit the public through a balance of terrestrial and aquatic resource preservation with recreational resource provisions. Therefore the Little Rock District, Corps of Engineers does not regard this activity as controversial.

5. The degree to which the possible effects on the human environment is highly uncertain or involves unique or unknown risks. The uncertainty of the impacts of this action is low since land reclassification around the lake shoreline results in a projection of known and regulated activities as a result of the implementation of the Preferred Alternative.

6. The degree to which the action may establish a precedent for future actions with significant impacts. Because the Selected Alternative involves updating the existing Greers Ferry Lake Master Plan, which provides checks and balances on future shoreline activities, the action should not establish a precedent for significant future impacts.

7. Whether the action is related to other actions with individually insignificant but cumulatively significant impacts. It should be noted that a water reallocation study is currently underway at Greers Ferry Lake for municipal and industrial water supply; impacts to the overall missions of Greers Ferry Lake are considered not significant for a conservation pool reallocation.

8. The degree to which the action may adversely affect items listed or eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places, or other significant scientific, cultural or historic resources. The Preferred Alternative does not impact any known historic properties or other significant scientific, cultural, or historical resources. Coordination with Federal, State, and local agencies and Federally Recognized Tribes will be required to avoid, minimize or mitigate potential unforeseen impacts.

9. The degree to which the action may adversely affect an endangered or threatened species or its critical habitat. The Preferred Alternative should not adversely affect any Threatened & Endangered species, as areas with known T&E species and species habitat are classified as Environmentally Sensitive lands. The listed T & E species in the area include the Gray bat, Northern long-eared bat and Indiana bat, which are cave-hibernating and roosting species; the Yellowcheek darter, found in tributaries of Greers Ferry Lake; and the Pink mucket,

Rabbitsfoot, and Speckled Pocketbook, also found in tributaries of the lake. The land areas containing these species or adjoining the species habitat have been classified as Environmentally Sensitive, allowing for a higher level of protection over other land classifications.

10. Whether the action threatens a violation of Federal, state or local law or requirements imposed for the protection of the environment. No such violations will occur. All applicable Federal, state or local laws and regulations will be complied with during the implementation of the action.

CONCLUSIONS: The impacts identified in the prepared EA have been thoroughly discussed and assessed. No impacts identified in the EA would cause any significant adverse effects to the human environment. Therefore, due to the analysis presented in the EA and comments received from a 30-day public review period that began on 25 January and ended on 25 February 2019, it is my decision that the preparation of an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) as required by the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) is unwarranted and a "Finding of No Significant Impact" (FONSI) is appropriate. The signing of this document indicates the Corps final decision of the proposed action as it relates to NEPA. The EA and FONSI will be held on file in the Environmental Branch, Planning and Environmental Division of the Little Rock District, Corps of Engineers for future reference. Consultation with regulatory agencies will be ongoing to ensure compliance with all federal, state, regional, and local regulations and guidelines.

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Date ROBERT G. DIXON
Colonel, US Army