



**US Army Corps
of Engineers**
Little Rock District

DRAFT
Environmental Assessment

**Master Plan for the Development and
Management of Blue Mountain Lake**

**Arkansas River Watershed
Blue Mountain Lake, Arkansas**

May 2024

For Further Information, Contact:
Planning and Environmental Division, Environmental Branch
U.S. Army Corps of Engineers
Little Rock District

Post Office Box 867
Little Rock, Arkansas 72203-0867
Telephone: (501) 324-5751

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**MASTER PLAN REVISION
BLUE MOUNTAIN LAKE
ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT**

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Acronyms

%	Percent	msl	mean sea level
A&G	Agriculture and Grazing	NAGPRA	Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act
ABB	American Burying Beetle	NAAQS	National Ambient Air Quality Standards
ADEE	Arkansas Department of Energy and Environment	NAVD88	North American Vertical Datum of 1988
AGFC	Arkansas Game and Fish Commission	NEPA	National Environmental Policy Act
ANHC	Arkansas Natural Heritage Commission	NHPA	National Historic Preservation Act
AOI	Area of Interest	NLEB	Northern Long Eared Bat
AR	Arkansas	NO ₂	Nitrogen Dioxide
ARPA	Archaeological Resources Protection Act	NRCS	Natural Resources Conservation Service
CAA	Clean Air Act	NRHP	National Register of Historic Places
CCC	Civilian Conservation Corps	O ₃	Oxygen
CEJST	Climate and Economic Justice Screening Tool	OK	Oklahoma
CEQ	Council on Environmental Quality	OMP	Operational Management Plan
CO	Carbon monoxide	Pb	Lead
CWA	Clean Water Act	PBO	Programmatic Biological Opinion
CWD	Chronic Wasting Disease	P.L.	Public Law
DO	Dissolved oxygen	PM	Particulate Matter
EA	Environmental Assessment	SIP	State Implementation Plan
EJ	Environmental Justice	SO ₂	Sulfur Dioxide
EO	Executive Order	SWL	Little Rock District, USACE
EPA	Environmental Protection Agency	TCB	Tricolored Bat
ER	Engineer Regulation	TCP	Traditional Cultural Properties
ESA	Endangered Species Act	TSI	Timber Stand Improvement
FWCA	Fish and Wildlife Coordination Act	USACE	U.S. Army Corps of Engineers
GTR	Green Tree Reservoir	USDA	U.S. Department of Agriculture
HPMP	Historic Preservation Management Plan	USFWS	U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
IBAT	Indiana Bat	WMA	Wildlife Management Area
IPaC	Information for Planning and Consultation Tool	WPA	Works Progress Administration
		WSI	Wildlife Stand Improvement
		ZOI	Zone of Influence

1. INTRODUCTION

This Environmental Assessment (EA) has been prepared by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE) to evaluate the proposed 2024 Blue Mountain Lake Master Plan. The proposed Master Plan is a programmatic document that is subject to evaluation under the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) of 1969 (Public Law [PL] 91-190). This EA is an assessment of potential impacts that could result from the implementation of Alternative 1 (the No Action Alternative), Alternative 2 (the Preferred Alternative), and Alternative 3 (the Limited Development Alternative), and has been prepared in accordance with NEPA as amended in 2020, the Council on Environmental Quality (CEQ) regulations (40 CFR 1500-1508), and USACE regulations, including Engineer Regulation (ER) 200-2-2: Procedures for Implementing NEPA (1988).

The Master Plan is the strategic land use management document that guides the comprehensive management and development of all project recreational, natural, and cultural resources throughout the life of the water resource project. The Master Plan guides the efficient and cost-effective management, development, and use of project lands. It is a vital tool for the responsible stewardship and sustainability of project resources for the benefit of present and future generations.

The Master Plan guides and articulates USACE responsibilities pursuant to federal laws to preserve, conserve, restore, maintain, manage, and develop project lands, surface waters, and associated resources. The Master Plan is a dynamic operational document projecting what could and should happen over the life of the project and is flexible based upon changing conditions. The Master Plan deals in concepts, not in details, of design and administration. Detailed management and administration functions are addressed in the Operational Management Plan (OMP), which implements the concepts of the Master Plan into operational actions.

The Master Plan is not intended to address the specifics of regional water quality, shoreline management, or water level management; these areas are covered in a project's shoreline management plan or water control manual. There is no shoreline management plan for Blue Mountain Lake. The Water Control Manual addresses how the reservoir is managed for flood risk management, and water supply purposes. The 2024 Master Plan revises Blue Mountain Dam and Lake Design Memorandum No. 1-C (1975 Blue Mountain Lake Master Plan).

1.1 Project Description

The Blue Mountain Dam and Lake project was authorized for construction by the Flood Control Act approved 28 June 1938 (PL 75-761, 75th Congress, 3rd Session) and the Rivers and Harbors Act approved 20 June 1938 (PL 75-685). Blue Mountain Lake is a multiple-purpose flood risk management project and is a major unit in a comprehensive plan for development of the water resources of the Arkansas River Basin in west central Arkansas. An additional authorized purpose is Recreation to the extent that it does not adversely affect flood control. While Fish and Wildlife is not an authorized purpose, environmental stewardship of project lands and waters is an inherent responsibility for USACE and must be taken into consideration with all project management activities. The project encompasses roughly 17,263 acres with approximately 55 miles of shoreline and 2,890 surface acres of water at normal pool elevation (Figure 1-1).

Figure 1-1. Blue Mountain Lake and Surrounding Area

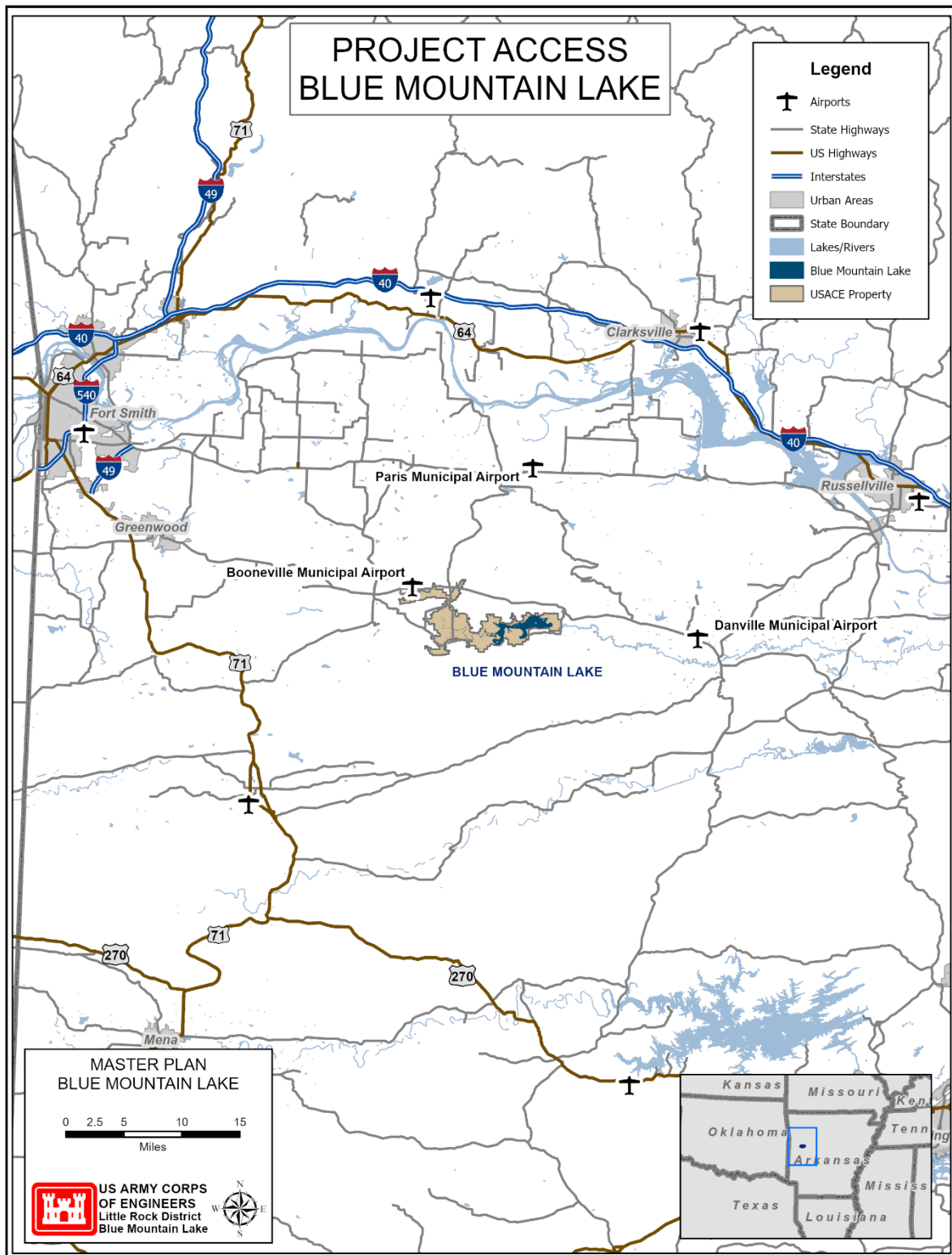


Table 1-1. Pertinent Data of Blue Mountain Dam and Lake

PERTINENT DATA OF THE BLUE MOUNTAIN DAM AND LAKE	
General Information	
Authorized Purpose, Stream, State	Flood Control, Petit Jean River, Arkansas
Drainage area, square miles	488
Average annual rainfall over the drainage area, inches (1978-2022)	50
Dam	
Crest Length in feet	2,800
Top of dam elevation, feet above mean sea level	452.0
Lake	
Nominal top of conservation pool Elevation, feet above mean sea level (msl)	
January 1 – March 1	384
March 1 – March 15	384-387
March 15 – June 15	387
June 15 – October 1	384-387
October 1 – December 31	384
Surface Area, acres	2,890
Length of shoreline, miles (without islands)	55
Nominal top of flood-control pool Elevation, feet above mean sea level	419
Surface Area, acres	10,717
Length of shoreline, miles	142

1.2 Purpose and Need

The purpose of the Master Plan revision is to ensure that the conservation and sustainability of the land, water, and recreation resources at Blue Mountain Lake are in compliance with applicable environmental and management laws and regulations and to maintain quality lands for future public use. The 2024 Master Plan is intended to serve as a comprehensive land and recreation management plan with an effective life of approximately 25 years.

The need for the Master Plan revision is to bring the 1975 Master Plan up to date and to reflect ecological, socio-political, and socio-demographic changes that are currently impacting Blue Mountain Lake, as well as those changes anticipated to occur in the next 25 years. In particular, changes in outdoor recreation trends, regional land use, population, current legislative requirements, and USACE management policy have indicated the need to revise the plan. Additionally, increasing fragmentation of wildlife habitat, national policies related to climate change, growing demand for recreational access, and protection of natural resources are all factors affecting Blue Mountain Lake. In response to these continually evolving trends, USACE determined that a full revision of the 1975 Master Plan would be required.

As part of the master planning process, the project delivery team evaluated public comments and current land uses, determined any necessary changes to land classifications, and formulated proposed alternatives. As a result of public coordination and a public comment period, alternatives were developed, and this EA was initiated.

1.3 Scope of the Action

This EA was prepared to evaluate existing conditions and potential impacts of proposed alternatives associated with the implementation of the 2024 Blue Mountain Lake Master Plan. The alternative considerations were formulated with special attention given to revised land classifications, new resource management objectives, and a conceptual resource plan for each land classification category. The proposed Master Plan is currently available and is incorporated into this EA by reference. This EA was prepared pursuant to NEPA, as amended in 2020. The application of NEPA to more strategic decisions not only meets the CEQ implementing regulations (CEQ 2005) and USACE regulations for implementing NEPA (USACE 1988), but also allows USACE to consider the environmental consequences of its actions long before any physical activity is implemented. Multiple benefits can be derived from such early consideration. Effective and early NEPA integration with the master planning process can significantly increase the usefulness of the proposed Master Plan to the decision maker.

2. PROPOSED ACTION AND ALTERNATIVES

The project need is to revise the 1975 Master Plan so that is compliant with current USACE regulations and guidance, incorporates public needs, and recognizes surrounding land use and recreational trends. As part of this process, which includes public outreach and comment, three alternatives were developed for evaluation, including a No Action Alternative. The alternatives were developed using land classifications that indicate the primary use for which project lands would be managed. USACE regulations outline specific land classifications to be used in Master Plan development, and these are described in Section 2.1 below.

2.1 Land Allocations

The principal purpose of the Master Plan for Blue Mountain Lake is to balance public use and benefits with protection and conservation of natural and cultural resources. The Resource Plan in Chapter 5 of the Master Plan considers these standards in land use classification and in planning for the recreational activities and stewardship of the lands and waters associated with the project. “Land Allocation” is a term used by USACE to describe the purpose for which lands at a project were acquired. The four possible allocations include: Operations, Recreation, Fish and Wildlife and Mitigation. At Blue Mountain Lake, all lands are allocated as Operations lands. No lands were specifically acquired for Recreation, Fish and Wildlife, or Mitigation.

USACE further divides land allocations through a system of land classifications which designates the primary use for which project lands are managed. Project lands are classified for development and resource management consistent with authorized project purposes and the provisions of the NEPA and other Federal laws. Land classifications also consider recreational trends, regionally important natural resources, and cultural resources. The proposed land classifications at Blue Mountain Lake are defined as follows:

1. **Project Operations.** This category includes those lands required for the dam, spillway, switchyard, levees, dikes, offices, maintenance facilities, and other areas that are used solely for the operation of the project.
2. **High Density Recreation.** Lands developed for intensive recreational activities for the visiting public, including day use areas and/or campgrounds. These also include areas for commercial marina concessions, quasi-public development, and comprehensive resorts.
3. **Mitigation.** This classification will only be used for lands with an allocation of Mitigation and that were acquired specifically for the purposes of offsetting losses associated with development of the project.
4. **Environmentally Sensitive Areas.** Areas where scientific, ecological, cultural, or aesthetic features have been identified. Designation of these lands is not limited to just lands that are otherwise protected by laws such as the Endangered Species Act, the National Historic Preservation Act or applicable State statutes. These areas must be considered by management to ensure they are not adversely impacted. Typically, limited or no development of public use is allowed on these lands. No agricultural or grazing uses are permitted on these lands, unless necessary for a specific resource management benefit, such as prairie restoration. These areas are typically distinct parcels located within another, and perhaps, larger, land classification, area.
5. **Multiple Resource Management Lands.** This classification allows for the designation of a predominate use as described below, with the understanding that other compatible uses described below may also occur on these lands (e.g., a trail through an area designated as

Wildlife Management). Land classification maps must reflect the predominant sub-classification, rather than just Multiple Resource Management.

- a. **Low Density Recreation.** Lands with minimal development or infrastructure that support passive public recreational use (e.g., primitive camping, fishing, hunting, trails, wildlife viewing, etc.).
 - b. **Wildlife Management.** Lands designated for stewardship of fish and wildlife resources.
 - c. **Vegetative Management.** Lands designated for stewardship of forest, prairie, and other native vegetative cover.
 - d. **Future/Inactive Recreation Areas.** 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.
6. **Water Surface Classifications.** If the project administers a surface water zoning program, then it should be included in the Master Plan.
 - a. **Restricted.** Water areas restricted for project operations, safety, and security purposes.
 - b. **Designated No-Wake.** To protect environmentally sensitive shoreline areas, recreational water access areas from disturbance, and for public safety.
 - c. **Fish and Wildlife Sanctuary.** Annual or seasonal restrictions on areas to protect fish and wildlife species during periods of migration, resting, feeding, nesting, and/or spawning.
 - d. **Open Recreation.** Those waters available for year-round or seasonal water-based recreational use.

2.2 Alternatives Development

The diverse range of habitats occurring throughout the 14,360-acre, USACE-operated land base adjacent to Blue Mountain Lake require a diversity of management actions to achieve habitat improvement for the benefit of wildlife and environmental sustainability. Additionally, the management and development of existing and potential future recreation areas should reflect historical and evolving recreation trends and demands. The following excerpt from EP 1130-2-550 express the goals for the Blue Mountain Lake Master Plan:

- Goal A: Provide the best management practices to respond to regional needs, resource capabilities and suitability's, and expressed public interests consistent with authorized project purposes.
- Goal B: Protect and manage project natural and cultural resources through sustainable environmental stewardship programs.
- Goal C: Provide public outdoor recreation opportunities that support project purposes and public demands created by the project itself while sustaining project natural resources.
- Goal D: Recognize the particular qualities, characteristics, and potentials of the project.
- Goal E: Provide consistency and compatibility with national objectives and other State and regional goals and programs.

In addition to the above goals, USACE management activities are also guided by USACE-wide Environmental Operating Principles as follows:

- Strive to achieve environmental sustainability. An environment maintained in a healthy, diverse and sustainable condition is necessary to support life.
- Recognize the interdependence of life and the physical environment. Proactively consider environmental consequences of USACE programs and act accordingly in all appropriate circumstances.
- Seek balance and synergy among human development activities and natural systems by designing economic and environmental solutions that support and reinforce one another.
- Continue to accept corporate responsibility and accountability under the law for activities and decisions under our control that impact human health and welfare and the continued viability of natural systems.
- Seek ways and means to assess and mitigate cumulative impacts on the environment; bring systems approaches to the full life cycle of our processes and work.
- Build and share an integrated scientific, economic, and social knowledge base that supports a greater understanding of the environment and impacts of our work.
- Respect the views of individuals and groups interested in USACE activities; listen to them actively, and learn from their perspective in the search to find innovative win-win solutions to the nation's problems that also protect and enhance the environment.

Specific resource objectives to accomplish these goals can be found in Chapter 3 of the 2024 Master Plan.

To meet these management needs, two action alternatives, as well as the No Action Alternative, were developed through the Master Plan revision and will be evaluated in this draft EA. Alternatives evaluated include Alternative 1 – No Action (1975 Plan), Alternative 2 – Preferred, and Alternative 3 – Limited Development. Table 2-1 below depicts the land classification acreages and percentages of total fee land by alternative. Action alternatives are compared to the No Action, and the change in acreage and percentage for each land classification from the No Action is also relayed in Table 2-1. For a more detailed map analysis of the three alternatives evaluated, refer to the complete set of maps located in Appendix C. The land classifications established under each action alternative were developed to reflect historical, current, and future resource management objectives, with emphasis given to recreation and fish and wildlife management objectives. Public comments received and further analyzed in Appendix A were thoroughly considered and integrated as appropriate into the development of the action alternatives.

In this EA development, the action alternatives are compared to the No Action Alternative in order to evaluate potential positive and negative effects on the natural and human environment based on the various fee land acreage classifications determined by each action alternative. All evaluated alternatives will be provided for public review during the draft Master Plan of the draft EA public comment period.

Table 2-1. Change in Land Classification by Alternative, Including No Action Converted to Preferred Alternative

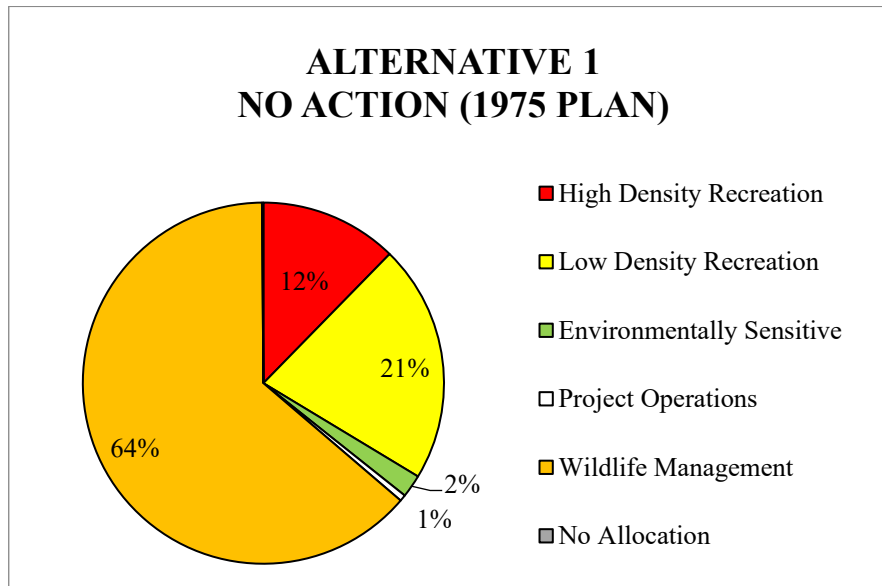
Alternative 1 (No Action)	Acres	% of Land	+/-Acres	% +/- Change
Total land and Water	17,263.2		N/A	
Total Water	3,150.6			
Restricted Water	4.5			
Open Recreation Water	3,146.1			
Land	14,112.6			
High Density Recreation	1,738.4	12%		
Low Density Recreation	3,009.6	21%		
Environmentally Sensitive	288.9	2%		
Project Operations	80.7	1%		
Wildlife Management	8,977.1	64%		
No Allocation	18.0	0.1%		
Alternative 2 (Preferred)	Acres	% of Land	+/-Acres	% +/- Change
Total Land and Water	17,263.2			
Total Water	3,150.6			
Restricted Water	4.5			
Open Recreation Water	3,146.1			
Land	14,112.6			
High Density	403.5	3%	-1,334.9	-9%
Low Density	4,087.8	29%	1,053.7	7%
Environmentally Sensitive	690.1690.1	5%	401.2	3%
Project Operations	201.8	1%	121.1	1%
Wildlife Management	8,729.5	62%	-247.6	-2%
Alternative 3 (Limited Development)	Acres	% of Land	+/-Acres	% +/- Change
Total Land and Water	17,263.2			
Total Water	3,150.6			
Restricted Water	4.5			
Open Recreation Water	3,146.1			
Land	14,112.6			
High Density	188.6	1%	-1,549.8	-11%
Low Density	3,864.2	27%	854.6	6%
Environmentally Sensitive	784.0	6%	519.5	4%
Project Operations	201.8	1%	121.1	1%
Wildlife Management	9,049.6	64%	72.5	1%
Note: Acreages are approximate and are based on GIS data. Totals vary depending on changes in lake levels, sedimentation, and shoreline erosion.				

2.2.1 Alternative 1 – No Action (1975 Plan)

The No Action Alternative serves as a basis for comparison to the anticipated effects of the other action alternatives, and its inclusion in this EA is required by NEPA and CEQ regulations (40 CFR 1502.14[c]). Under the No Action Alternative, the USACE would not approve the adoption or implementation of the 2024 Master Plan revision. Instead, the USACE would continue to manage Blue Mountain Lake’s natural resources as set forth in the 1975 Master Plan. The No Action Alternative does not meet the goals outlined in EP 1130-2-550, the USACE Environmental Operating Principles, or the Master Plan-specific objectives identified for this revision. This alternative does not accurately reflect the current nor anticipated land use activities or resource management practices at the lake, thereby failing to meet Goal A and multiple objectives specified in the revised Master Plan. This alternative does not address resource management laws, policies, and regulations that were implemented after the 1975 Blue Mountain Lake Master Plan. While it does not meet the purpose of, or need for, the Master Plan revision, the No Action Alternative serves as a benchmark of existing conditions against which federal actions can be evaluated.

Operation and management of Blue Mountain Lake would continue as outlined in the current Master Plan, which designates 1,738.4 acres as High Density recreation and 3,009.6 acres as Low Density recreation. There are 288.9 acres classified as Environmentally Sensitive areas, 80.7 acres as Project Operations, 8,977.1 acres as Wildlife Management, and 18.0 acres that currently have no allocation (Figure 2-1).

Figure 2-1. Percentage of Land Classifications for Alternative 1



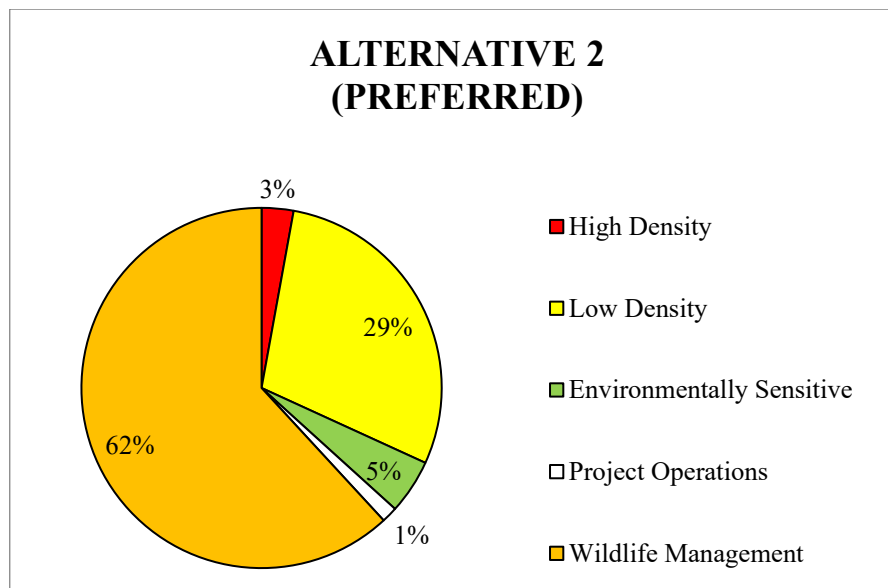
2.2.2 Alternative 2 – Preferred

Under Alternative 2, Blue Mountain Lake land classifications were revised to reflect current management practices including hunting, fishing, timber management, and habitat management, and responses to agency and public comments received (Figure 2-2). Changes included reclassifying some undeveloped High Density and Low Density land classifications (i.e. future/closed USACE parks) to Wildlife Management. Lands that contain shoreline bluffs and narrow bands of isolated areas to were reclassified as Environmentally Sensitive Areas to protect unique habitats from outside disturbance. The seven-acre island located west of Waveland Park is classified as Low Density.

Alternative 2 proposes 403.5 acres in High Density recreation, representing a 1,334.9 acre decrease from the No Action Alternative. All previously classified High Density areas are remaining High Density to some degree to allow for possible future park improvements and facility expansion, however under this alternative these areas are more limited in size. Low Density lands total 4,087.8 acres, representing an increase of 1,078.2 acres from the No Action Alternative. Environmentally Sensitive lands are increased by 401.2 acres, to 690.1 acres, to protect unique and vulnerable areas. Many of these areas classified as Environmentally Sensitive include locations that are inaccessible to the public to prevent outside disturbance and allow for uninterrupted conservation. Wildlife Management is reduced by 247.6 acres to 8,729.5 acres, with the majority of lands reallocated as Environmentally Sensitive, further protecting unique habitats, or Low Density Recreation, largely to include primitive camping areas.

The land reclassifications proposed under the Preferred Alternative would bring the 1975 Master Plan into compliance with resource management laws, policies, and regulations that were implemented after the 1975 Blue Mountain Lake Master Plan as well as local, regional, and national objectives (Goal E). Furthermore, this alternative would reflect the current and anticipated land use activities and natural resource management practices at the lake. The Preferred Alternative would fulfil the goals outlined in EP 1130-2-550, the USACE Environmental Operating Principles, and the Master Plan-specific objectives identified for this revision. Specifically, this alternative would fulfil Goal A by facilitating best management practices, Goal B by enabling more effective natural and cultural resource management, and Goal C by maintaining existing and allowing for future recreation opportunities. All of these benefits also serve to support revision-specific objectives set forth in Section 3.3.2 of the 2024 Master Plan.

Figure 2-2. Percentage of Land Classifications for Alternative 2



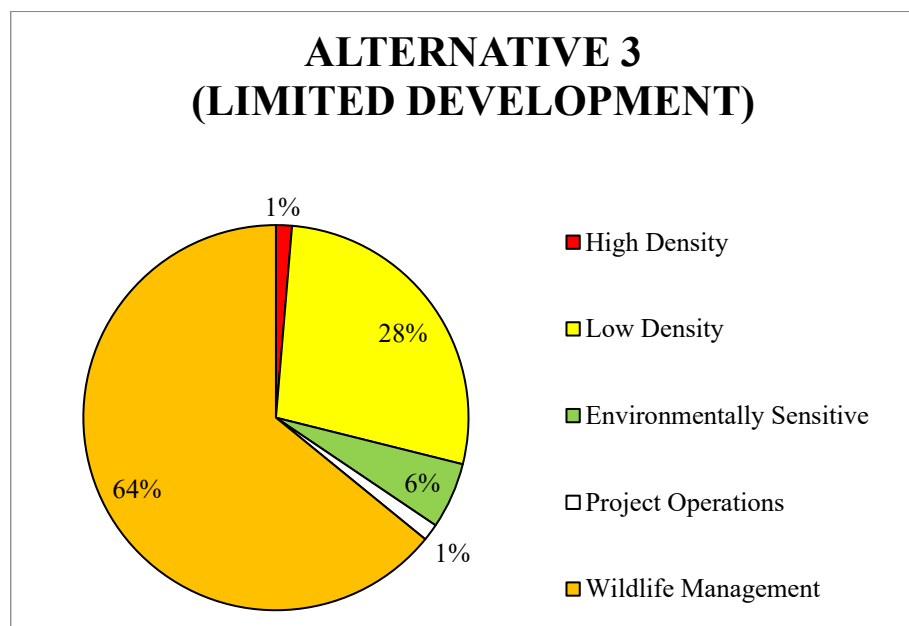
2.2.3 Alternative 3 – Limited Development

Alternative 3 seeks to limit future development of recreation areas to the greatest extent possible, maximizing Wildlife Management and Environmentally Sensitive land allocations (Figure 2-3). Compared to the No Action, this alternative would reduce High Density lands from 1,738.4 acres to 188.6 acres (12% of total land area to 1%), classify 784.0 acres (4%) as Environmentally Sensitive Areas, increase Project Operations acreage from 80.7 to 201.8, and increase Wildlife

Management lands from 8,977.1 acres to 9,049.6 acres. This alternative could protect land area from future development more than the other alternatives, as evidenced by the 784.0 acres (6% of total area) reclassified as Environmentally Sensitive lands.

The land reclassifications proposed under the Limited Development Alternative would bring the 1975 Master Plan into compliance with resource management laws, policies, and regulations that were implemented after the 1975 Blue Mountain Lake Master Plan as well as local, regional, and national objectives (Goal E). While this alternative is being considered, it prioritizes fish and wildlife management objectives over recreation objectives. Alternative 3 also overlooks the public desire for improvement of existing recreation areas and increase in recreation opportunities as expressed during the scoping comment period. This alternative does not accurately reflect the current and anticipated land use activities and natural resource management practices at the lake, as some of the reclassifications to Environmentally Sensitive Areas would prohibit a majority of the primitive camping areas and would not allow for the desired multiuse trail nor potential recreation facility improvements. While the Limited Development Alternative would fulfil the goals outlined in the USACE Environmental Operating Principles, it fails to meet many of the Master Plan-specific objectives identified for this revision and set forth in Section 3.3.2 of the 2024 Master Plan.

Figure 2-3. Percentage of Land Classifications for Alternative 3



2.3 Alternatives Comparison

Table 2-2 below compares the acreage and percent of available fee land each alternative entails. Additionally, the action alternatives are color coded to depict if the percent of each land classification increased, decreased, or remained the same compared to the 1975 Master Plan.

Alternative 2 was selected as the Preferred Alternative because it seeks to balance all components of lake usage, including the provision for growth and recreation improvements, while protecting and preserving terrestrial and aquatic resources. This action would protect and/or preserve vegetation and unique habitat in areas classified as Environmentally Sensitive and reduce stormwater runoff quantity and velocity, resulting in less in-lake sedimentation and turbidity thereby improving water quality and fisheries. The increase in Wildlife Management Area reflects

the importance of natural resource management objectives as well as public hunting recreational opportunities. In High and Low Density areas, the opportunity would still exist to reopen, modify, or expand existing or potential future recreation areas. Alternative 3, the Limited Development Alternative, does not allow for potential recreation improvements and expansion, as desired by lake staff and the public. Additionally, the increase in Low Density acreage represents a more accurate classification for the J. Perry Mikles Special Use Area as it entails infrastructure and recreation activities that fall outside of the existing Wildlife Management classification. The Preferred Alternative best meets both the recreation and fish and wildlife objectives desired by the public and resource agencies as verbalized in the scoping period, and exemplifies the objectives set by Blue Mountain Lake Project staff.

Table 2-2. Comparison of Alternatives and Change Compared to the No Action

Land Classification	Alternative 1 – No Action		Alternative 2 – Preferred		Alternative 3 – Limited Development	
	Acres	Percent	Acres	Percent	Acres	Percent
High Density	1,738.4	12	403.5	3	188.6	1
Low Density	3,009.6	21	4,087.8	29	3,888.7	28
Environmentally Sensitive	288.9	79	690.1	5	784.0	6
Project Operations	80.7	1	201.8	1	201.8	1
Wildlife Management	8,977.1	64	8,729.5	62	9,049.6	64
Not Allocated	18.0	0	0	0	0	0
<i>Change compared to Alternative 1</i>		<i>Decrease</i>	<i>Increase</i>		<i>No Change</i>	

3. AFFECTED ENVIRONMENT

This chapter presents a description of the environmental resources and baseline conditions that could be affected from implementing the alternatives. All potentially relevant environmental resource areas were considered for analysis in this EA.

3.1 Project Setting

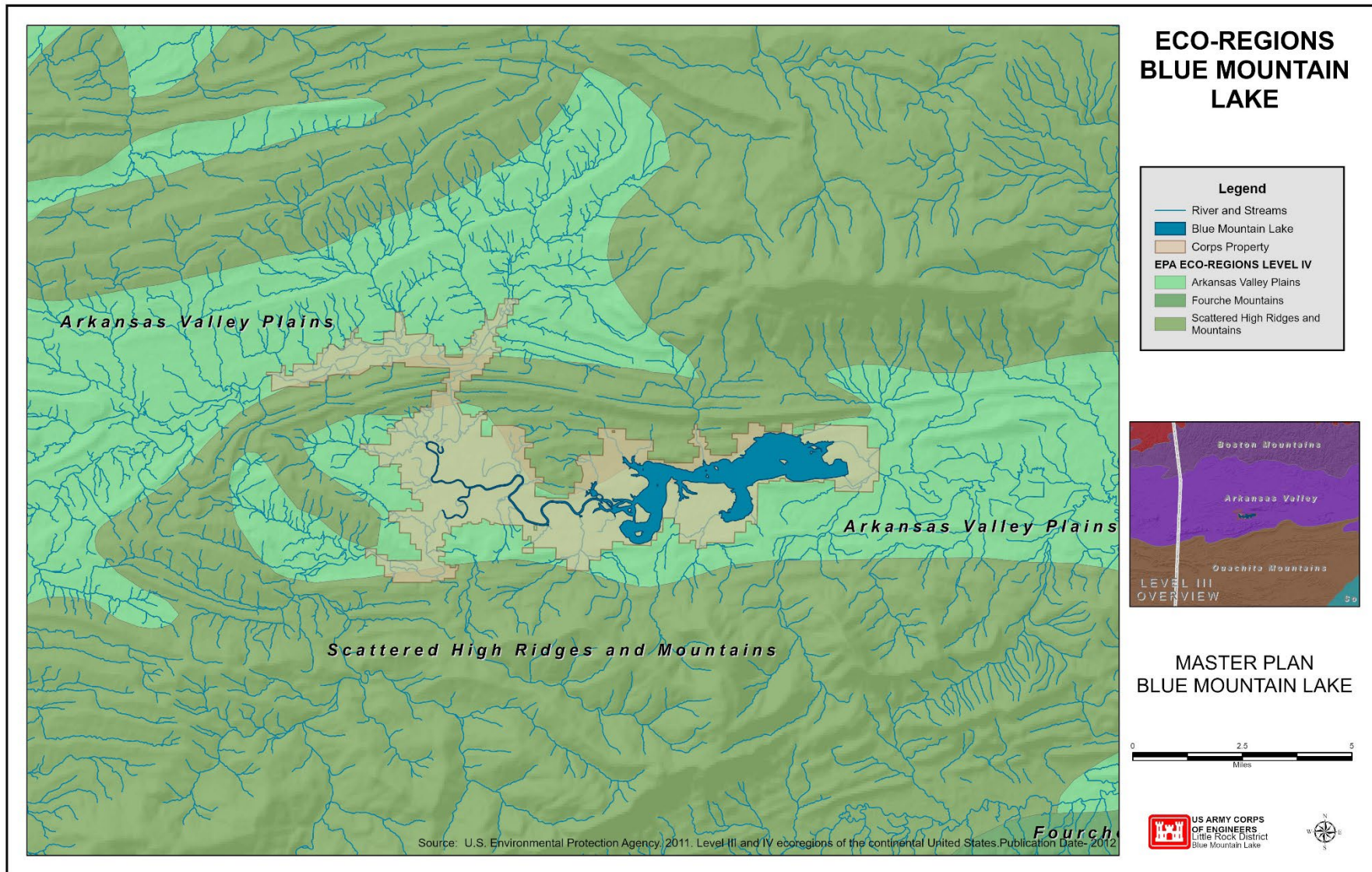
Blue Mountain Dam is located on the Petit Jean River in Yell County, Arkansas, about one and one-half miles southwest of the community of Waveland and about four miles southeast of the town of Blue Mountain, Arkansas. Blue Mountain Lake is located in Yell and Logan Counties, Arkansas, with the dam being about three and one-half miles downstream from the boundary line between the two counties. About 77 percent (%) of the lake area is in Logan County with the remaining 23%, including the spillway, embankment, and outlet works, in Yell County.

The conservation pool of Blue Mountain Lake is at elevation 384.0 mean sea level (msl), and seasonally adjusted to 387.0 msl for fisheries management. The total water surface is about 2,890 acres at conservation pool. Blue Mountain Lake lies in the sharply defined valley of the Petit Jean River, a tributary of the Arkansas River. Tributary streams that flow into the lake include Cedar Creek, Lick Creek, Sugar Creek, Crow Creek and Ashley Creek. These are generally short and less than five miles in length. The total drainage area is approximately 488 square miles. The total fee owned area contained in the Blue Mountain Project, including both land and water surface, consists of 17,263 acres.

Blue Mountain Lake lies within the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) Arkansas Valley Level III Ecoregion, located in western central Arkansas and extending into eastern Oklahoma (Figure 3-1). The Arkansas Valley contains plains, hills, floodplains, terraces and scattered mountains. It is largely underlain by interbed Pennsylvanian sandstone, shale and siltstone. It is a synclinal and alluvial valley lying between the Ozark Highlands and the Ouachita Mountains. More specifically, Blue Mountain Lake is bordered to the north by the Scattered High Ridges and Mountains Level IV Ecoregion and to the south by the Arkansas Valley Plains Level IV Ecoregion. The Scattered High Ridges and Mountains sub-ecoregion is covered by savannas, open woodlands, or forests dominated or co-dominated by upland oaks, hickory and shortleaf pine; loblolly pine occurs but is not native. It is underlain by Pennsylvanian sandstone and shale. Nutrient and mineral values (including turbidity and hardness) in streams are slightly higher than in other parts of the Arkansas Valley (Woods et al., 2004).

The Arkansas Valley Plains sub-ecoregion is in the rainshadow of the Fourche Mountains. This region was once covered by a distinctive mosaic of prairie, savanna, and woodland. It is mostly undulating but a few hills and ridges occur. Westward, this area becomes flatter, drier, more open and has fewer topographic fire barriers. Prior to the 19th century, frequently burned western areas had extensive prairie on droughty soils; scattered pine–oak savanna also occurred. Elsewhere, potential natural vegetation is primarily oak–hickory forest or oak–hickory– pine forest. Today, pastureland and hayland are extensive but remnants of prairie, particularly the Cherokee Prairie near Fort Smith and woodland occur. Poultry and livestock farming are primary land uses. Cropland agriculture in the Arkansas Valley Plains is less important than in another Level IV Ecoregion within the Arkansas Valley, the Arkansas River Floodplain, and wooded areas are not as extensive as in more rugged ecoregions. Stream turbidity generally remains low except during storm events (Woods et al., 2004).

Figure 3-1. Ecoregions Bordering Blue Mountain Lake



3.2 Land Use

Federally owned property at Blue Mountain Lake serves the project's authorized purposes of flood control and recreation. While Fish and Wildlife is not an authorized purpose, environmental stewardship of project lands and waters is an inherent responsibility for USACE and must be taken into consideration with all project management activities. As such, land uses to execute these purposes primarily include dam operations for flood risk management, lake- and land-based recreation opportunities, timber management practices, and other fish and wildlife stewardship activities. Land surrounding Blue Mountain Lake is primarily utilized for logging operations and agricultural practices. South of the project is the Ouachita National Forest, and north of the project is the Ozark-St. Francis National Forest (USDA, 2024). Figure 3-2 below depicts land cover classifications on the Blue Mountain Lake fee-owned property and surrounding areas.

3.3 Climate, Climate Change, and Greenhouse Gases

The climate in the Blue Mountain Lake area is classified as humid subtropical according to the Köppen climate model. A humid subtropical climate is characterized by a warm, temperate climate with fully humid precipitation and temperatures that are hot during the summer months (Kottek et al., 2006). Warm, humid, subtropical air that is generated by the Gulf of Mexico can lead to heavy precipitation under certain large-scale pressure patterns. The warm, moist air meets with cold, dry air from the west, creating an environment of high instability and wind shear. These fronts tend to have a north-south alignment but can also shift east-west, can occur any time of year, and can generate heavy precipitation for daily or longer durations (Perica et al., 2013).

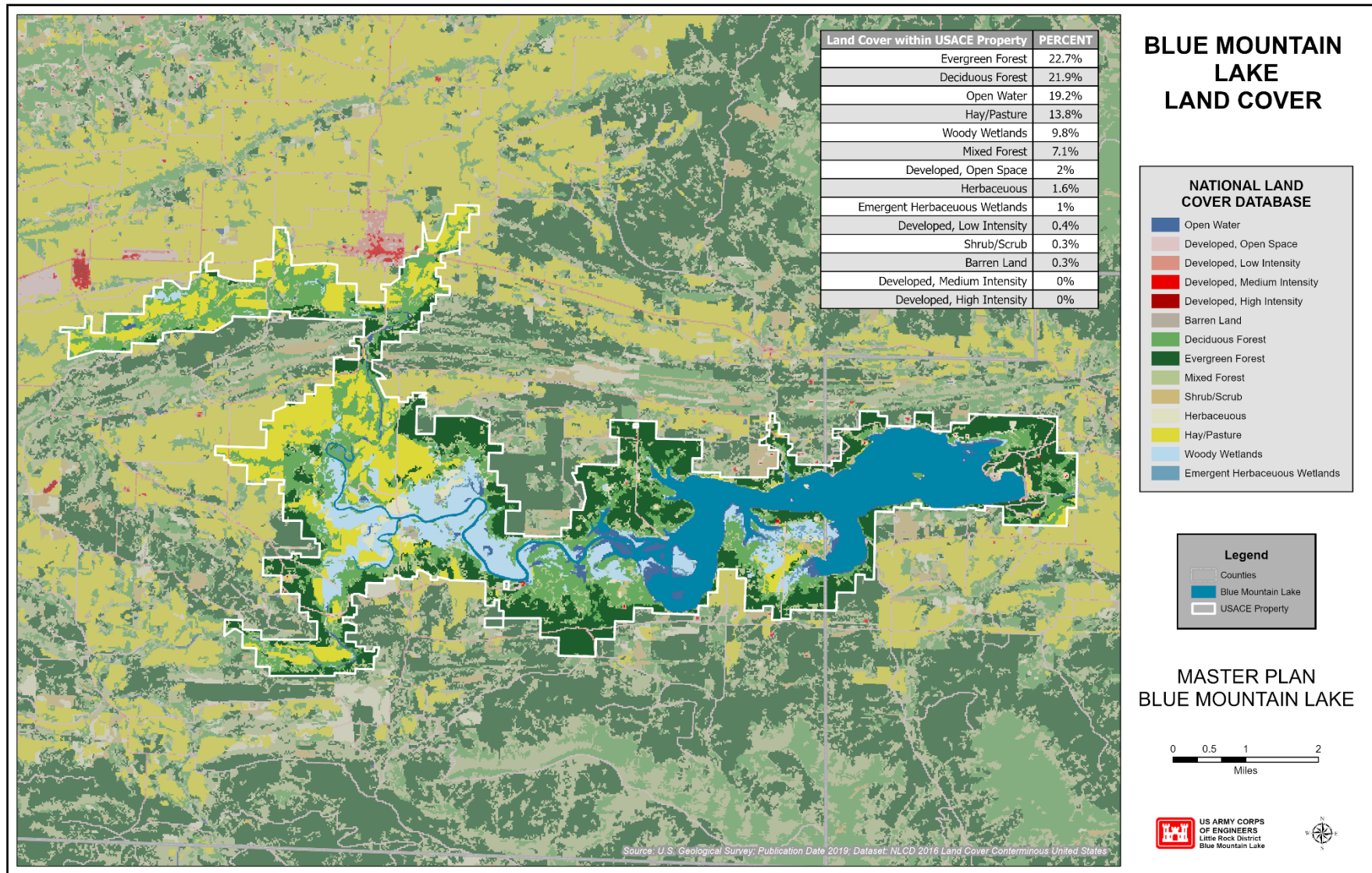
Precipitation

Proximity to the Gulf of Mexico makes Blue Mountain Lake susceptible to tropical storm systems, which account for the majority of extreme rainfall events (Perica et al., 2013). Blue Mountain Lake intersects Logan County and Yell County, Arkansas, and precipitation data was evaluated for both counties over the past 20 years. The two counties see an average of 52.1 inches of precipitation annually, with the majority of rainfall during spring months. The area sees roughly three inches of frozen precipitation annually (NOAA, 2023).

Temperatures

Blue Mountain Lake intersects Logan County and Yell County, Arkansas. Temperature data was evaluated for both counties for the last 20 years. The average annual temperature for Logan County over the last 20 years is 61.1 degrees Fahrenheit (°F), and Yell County averages 61.5°F annually. Average annual temperatures in Logan County range from a maximum of 72.4°F to minimum annual temperatures of 49.8°F, and in Yell County from 73.0°F to 50.1°F. July is typically the hottest month, with mean daily highs of approximately 92.4°F in Yell County and 92.1°F in Logan County. January is typically the coldest month, with a mean daily low of approximately 29.3°F in Logan County and 29.9°F in Yell County (NOAA, 2023).

Figure 3-2. Blue Mountain Lake Land Cover



Climate Change and Greenhouse Gases

Climate change is an area of concern due to the potential for effects on many aspects of the environment, especially those related to water resources. While temperature and precipitation variations determine habitat types and wildlife diversity under normal conditions, extremes to include flooding, drought, and tornados will introduce stress that has the potential to negatively impact the health and productivity of ecosystems (USDA, 1999). The U.S. Global Change Research Program summarized information regarding climate change and its potential effects in regional assessments. In the South, extreme events such as heat waves, droughts, and heavy rainfall events are projected to occur more frequently. If the current rate of greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions continues, the potential severity and frequency of these extreme weather events is likely to increase over time.

The USACE mission for the Responses to Climate Change Program is “to develop, implement, and assess adjustments or changes in operations and decision environments to enhance resilience or reduce vulnerability of USACE projects, systems, and programs to observed or expected changes in climate.” Further, the USACE has prepared an Adaptation Plan in response to previously existing related EOs and Climate Action Plan. The Adaptation Plan includes the following USACE policy statement: “It is the policy of USACE to integrate climate change preparedness and resilience planning and actions in all activities for the purpose of enhancing the resilience of our built and natural water-resource infrastructure and the effectiveness of our military support mission, and to reduce the potential vulnerabilities of that infrastructure and those missions to the effects of climate change and variability.” The effects of climate change and mitigation efforts are evolving, and it is a USACE responsibility as a steward for some of the Nation’s most important natural resources to act accordingly. As such, Blue Mountain Lake and all federally owned property is managed to comply with laws and executive orders to respond to the growing threat of climate change.

3.4 Topography, Geology, Soils, Prime Farmland, and Mineral Resources

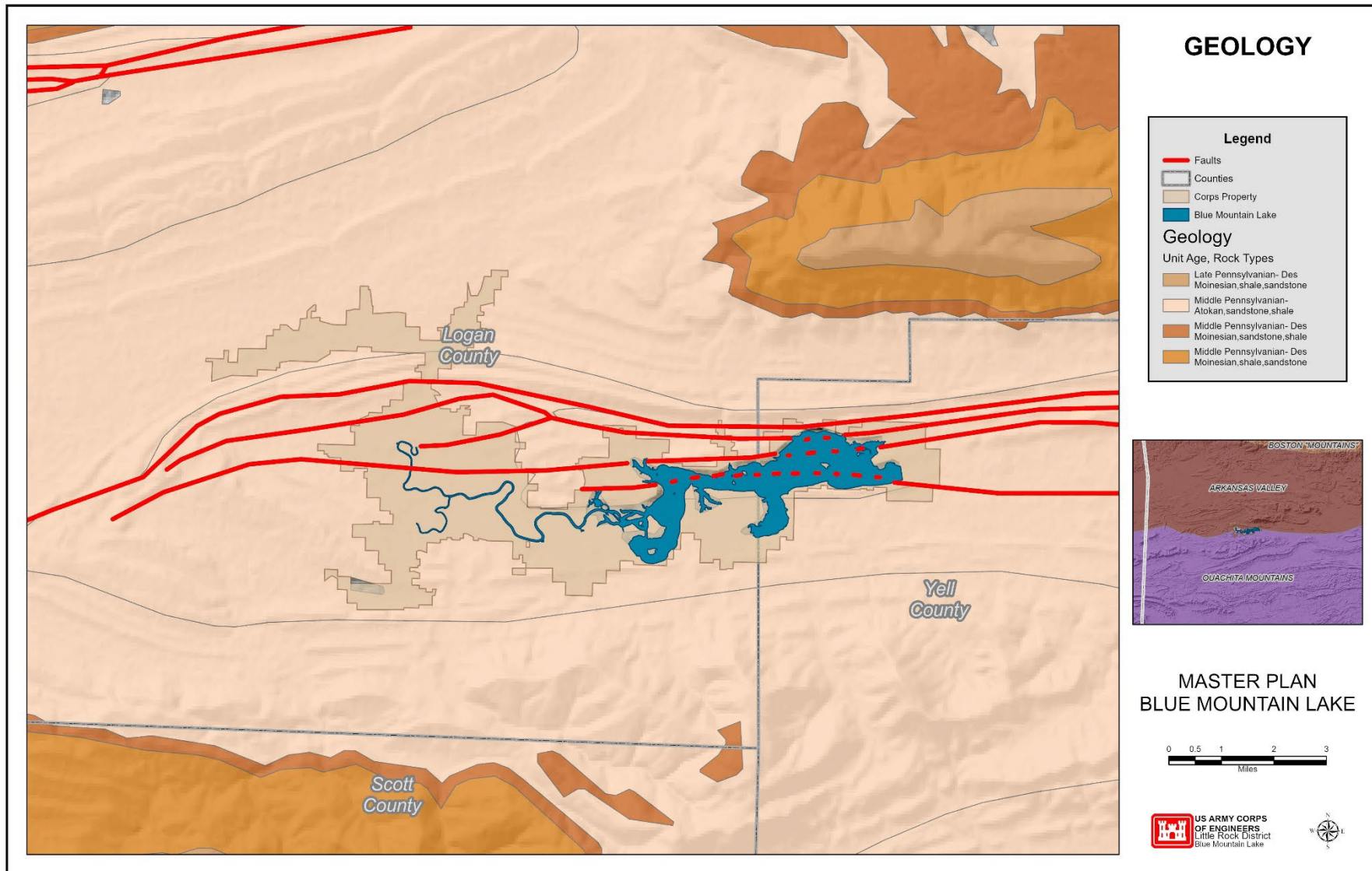
3.4.1 General Topography

The topography in the southern portion and extreme north-central portion of the watershed of Blue Mountain Lake includes steep inclines typical of the Ouachita Mountains with the remainder of the watershed characterized as typically low-lying, gently tilted sedimentary rocks of the Arkansas River Valley Region. The southern portion has a rugged topography, with average relief of several hundred feet and some areas that exceed 2,000 feet in elevation. This area also forms the topographic boundary between the Petit Jean River watershed and the watershed to the south (Dutch Creek) and contains the Petit Jean Mountains. The greatest elevation within the State of Arkansas is Mount Magazine and is located in the extreme north-central portion of the watershed.

3.4.2 Site Geology

The Ouachita Mountain physiographic province underlying the Blue Mountain Lake watershed is composed mainly of Paleozoic sedimentary rocks and represents the extreme frontal element of the orogenic belt and is a mildly compressed fold belt (Figure 3-3). Structurally, the area is made up of broad synclines and relatively narrow anticlines, with the axis of the folds generally trending east-west (Office of the State Geologist, 2024). Most of the faults are normal, however there are some thrust faults. There is a large fault that runs just north of Blue Mountain Lake (the longest fault trace in Figure 3-3) that was mapped in 1930 and subsequently named the Ranger fault (Cannon and Chandler, 2016). The predominant formation underlying the Blue Mountain Lake watershed is the

Figure 3-3. Geology of Blue Mountain Lake Watershed



Pennsylvanian-aged Atoka Formation and is characterized as being mostly dark shales with sandstones and sandy limestones. The area known as the Arkansas River Valley has been above sea level and eroding since the beginning of the Permian Period and, therefore, no rocks were preserved until the Quaternary Period when the Arkansas River deposited sediment in the form of terraces (Chandler, 2007).

3.4.3 Soils

Soils of the Arkansas Valley range from deep to shallow with slopes ranging from level to gently sloping in the valleys and on ridgetops, while hillsides and mountainsides are moderately sloping to very steep. The steeper hillsides remain mostly wooded while the valleys are used primarily for pasture (USDA, 1982).

The major soil groups around Blue Mountain Lake are Linker-Mountainburg, Nella-Enders, and Enders-Mountainburg. Linker-Mountainburg are described as moderately deep and shallow, well drained, moderately permeable to moderately rapidly permeable, are located on the sides and tops of hills and ridges, and are used mainly for pasture, hayland, and woodland (USDA, 1982). Nella-Enders and Enders-Mountainburg are described as deep to shallow, well drained, very slow permeable to moderately rapidly permeable, are located on sides, tops, and footslopes of hills and ridges and are used mainly used for woodland (USDA, 1982).

Soil surveys as published by the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) are available for all the counties located in the Blue Mountain Lake watershed. These could be utilized for developing specific resource management plans for the Operational Management Plan.

Soil conservation and management are major considerations when planning natural resource and recreation management practices. Soil movement is influenced by uncontrollable factors, such as climate, soil type, and topography. Additionally, it can also be negatively affected by compaction, modification of vegetative cover, and very high lake pool elevations which increase wave action and inundation of unprotected shoreline.

3.4.4 Prime Farmland

The Farmland Protection Policy Act (FPPA), part of the 1981 Farm Bill, is intended to limit federal activities that contribute to the unnecessary conversion of farmland to other uses. The law applies to construction projects funded by the federal government such as highways, airports, and dams, and to the management of federal lands. As part of the implementation of this law, the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) identified high quality agricultural soils as prime farmland, unique farmland, and land of statewide or local importance. Farmlands are extremely important to meet the Nation's short- and long-range needs for food and fiber.

Prime farmland, as defined by the USDA, is land that has the best combination of physical and chemical characteristics to produce food, feed, forage, fiber, and oilseed crops and is available for these uses. It could be cultivated land, pastureland, forestland, or other land, but it is not urban or built-up land or water areas. The soil quality, growing season, and moisture needed for the soil to economically produce and sustain high yields of crops.

The NRCS Web Soil Survey tool was used to evaluate prime farmland presence within the Blue Mountain Lake project area, inclusive of roughly 17,275 acres including surface waters.

Approximately 10,580 acres were found to exhibit farmland characteristics, with 6,414 acres classified as prime farmland and 3,267 acres designated as farmland of statewide importance

(NRCS, 2024). Much of the acreage identified as farmland is currently being used as such through USACE agricultural leases or Arkansas Game and Fish Commission (AGFC) subleases. Some areas considered farmland are currently serving other purposes, including timber management and fish and wildlife stewardship. Lands not classified as Prime Farmlands includes open water areas, developed areas, and soils with a slope greater than eight percent.

Table 3-1. Prime Farmland Acreage at Blue Mountain Lake

Farmland Classification	Area (acres)	Percent of Fee Area
Not prime farmland	6,691.4	39%
All areas are prime farmland	6,414.3	37%
Farmland of statewide importance	3,267.1	19%
Prime farmland if drained	902.0	5%

3.4.5 Mineral Resources

Natural gas production and extraction occurs on Blue Mountain Lake fee property. There are a total of 12 active and 15 inactive natural gas wells on fee property. Permission to drill for the purposes of natural gas extraction on fee lands is processed by the USACE Real Estate Division which administers easements to conduct these activities. A non-statutory mitigation plan and recommendation is provided to the Little Rock District Real Estate Division, the approving authority for these actions. After the closure of a gas well, the site is restored back to the original contour and previous conditions of the site prior to the soil disturbance. These conditions are based upon the requirements listed within the executed easement describing the site closure requirements. Typically, mineral rights were not purchased by USACE on fee lands located on the Blue Mountain Lake, though there are some exceptions. Permits for natural gas extraction are issued by the Department of Interior, Bureau of Land Management (BLM). There are no other active mineral production sites on the project.

3.5 Aquatic Environment

3.5.1 Hydrology and Groundwater

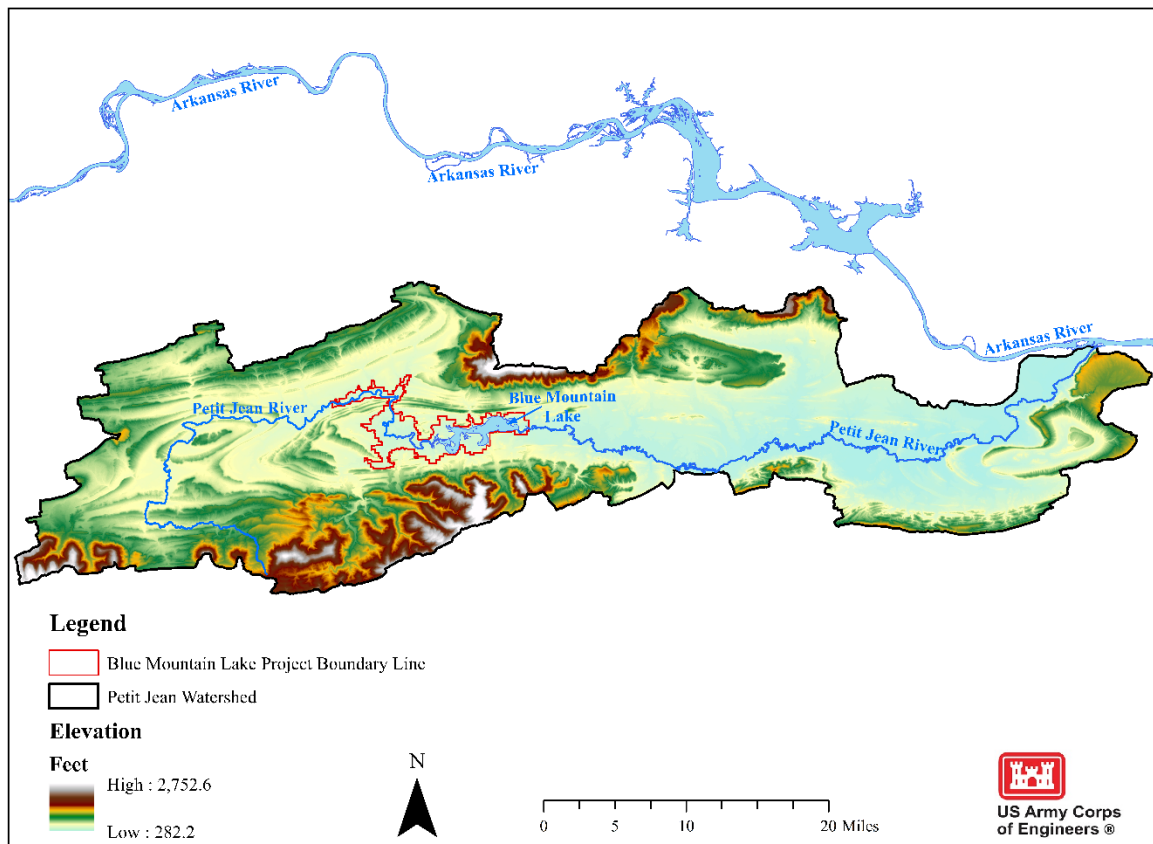
3.5.1.1 Surface Water

The Petit Jean River Watershed is contained entirely in the Ouachita Mountain physiographic province. However, the watershed is split almost exactly in half by the Arkansas Valley physiographic section to the north and the Ouachita Mountains physiographic section to the south with Blue Mountain Lake residing entirely in the Ouachita Mountains physiographic section. However, the watershed resides entirely in the EPA's Arkansas River Valley ecoregion and is described as once covered by a distinctive mosaic of prairie, savanna, and woodland. Today, pastureland and hay land are extensive, but remnants of prairie and woodland occur (Woods et al., 2004).

The Petit Jean River and its principal tributaries have their source in the Ouachita Mountains in west central Arkansas and flows in an easterly direction to its confluence with the Arkansas River. The area upstream of Blue Mountain Dam is approximately 515 square miles (Figure 3-4) with a maximum basin elevation of approximately 2,753 feet above msl, the highest elevation in Arkansas, a minimum basin elevation of approximately 282 feet above msl, and an average basin

elevation of approximately 675 feet above msl. The Petit Jean River drops, on average, approximately 7.0 feet per mile from the headwaters (elevation 1,227 feet above msl) to the confluence with the Arkansas River (elevation 285 feet above msl). Some of the more notable tributaries that join the Petit Jean River include Chickalah Creek, Revilee Creek, Rock Creek, Rose Creek, Spring Creek, and Sugar Creek.

Figure 3-4. Petit Jean Watershed and Surrounding Topography



3.5.1.2 Groundwater

Blue Mountain Lake is located in the Pennsylvanian-aged Atoka Formation. This formation comprises the Ouachita Mountains aquifer and is located within the Interior Highlands aquifer system (Kresse et al, 2014). This aquifer system is formed by rocks of sedimentary origin and were deposited by a regionally extensive sinking trough (geosyncline) that extended at minimum from central Oklahoma to central Arkansas (Kresse et al, 2014). Filling and lithification of this geosyncline were followed by orogenic activity resulting in a complexly folded and thrust-faulted anticlinorium that trended east to west and in which many of the folds were broken by thrusts or high-angle reverse faults.

Groundwater availability occurs primarily through secondary porosity and permeability provided by faults, fractures, joints, and bedding planes and yields are highly dependent on the degree of fracturing (Kresse et al, 2014). Because of this dependency on degree of fracturing, well yields have a fairly large range but typically are low throughout the aquifer and, therefore, the primary use of groundwater is for domestic supply (Kresse et al, 2014).

Other information about water management may be found in the Arkansas Water Plan, the state's policy for long term water management, which was last updated in 2014. The update brings data, science, and public input together to define water demands, water supplies, issues, and potential solutions to meet the state's needs for the next 40 years.

3.5.2 Water Quality

Regional water quality is influenced by lithology, soil composition, and land use activities. In the Arkansas Valley, less rugged upland areas have been cleared for pastureland or hay land. Poultry and livestock farming are important land uses (Fowler, 2015). Rivers within the Arkansas Valley Plains often have low turbidity except during storm events (Woods et al., 2004).

Section 303(d) of the Clean Water Act (CWA) requires states to identify waters where existing pollution controls are not stringent enough to achieve state water quality standards and establish a priority ranking of these waters. The Arkansas Department of Energy and Environment (ADEE) is responsible for assessing water quality monitoring data and developing a 303(d) list every two years in accordance with the CWA. The Arkansas Draft 2022 303(d) List represents the most recent evaluation of water quality data. Blue Mountain Lake itself is not listed as an impaired waterbody for any appraised metrics, but the lake is formed by damming the Petit Jean River. River Segment 3G of the Petit Jean River, inclusive of approximately 24 miles of the river upstream of Blue Mountain Lake, is listed on the Draft 2022 Impaired Waterbodies 303(d) List as Category 5 (truly impaired) for turbidity base flow parameters attributed to surface erosion (ADEE, 2022).

Turbidity is a measure of water clarity, and high turbidity makes water appear cloudy or muddy. Effects of high turbidity not only impact aesthetic values of water resources, but also can negatively effect aquatic health by decreasing visibility and light penetration, clogging gills or the filter-feeding systems of other aquatic animals, and altering egg and larval development (EPA, 2021). While the Petit Jean River upstream of Blue Mountain Lake exceeds set standards for turbidity base flow parameters and is considered Truly Impaired under the Clean Water Act, it is classified as Low Priority, and it is expected that turbidity improves as water pools and sediment settles in the Blue Mountain Lake pool as described in Section 3.5.4 below. There are no fish consumption bans proposed by AGFC at this time, meaning that fish caught at Blue Mountain Lake are safe to consume.

3.5.3 Wetlands

Wetlands are complex habitats that are transitional from dry land to open water, and they have soil, water, and plant components. Wetlands are defined as those areas inundated or saturated by surface or ground water at a frequency and duration to support a prevalence of vegetation typically adapted for life in saturated soil conditions (40 CFR 120.2[c]). Many common species of waterfowl, fish, birds, mammals, and amphibians also live in wetlands during certain stages of their lives.

According to the USFWS National Wetland Inventory Mapper, there are approximately 4,109 acres of wetlands within the Blue Mountain Lake project boundary, with approximately 3,337 of the total acreage characterized as lacustrine with water features including the lake itself as well as flowing and standing water within fee land. However, wetland acreages within the project area can and do fluctuate seasonally in response to precipitation and lake level. The remaining

771 acres of wetlands are characterized as palustrine, typically surrounded by standing dead timber and vegetated shorelines. Blue Mountain Lake palustrine wetlands can be further categorized as freshwater emergent (seven acres) and freshwater forested/shrub wetlands (764 acres). The forested/shrub wetlands include a mixture of scrub/shrub (six meters or less in height) or forested wetland species of greater than six meters in height. Common woody wetland species typically include buttonbush, willow, green ash, hackberry, elm, willow oak, water oak, overcup oak, sweetgum, and river birch. Some locations may have cypress as well. Palustrine forested/shrub wetlands also occur in the feeder streams' floodplains and are called riverine wetlands (USFWS, 2023b).

3.5.4 Sedimentation and Shoreline Erosion

Throughout the lifespan of the project, silt and sediment has accumulated in Blue Mountain Lake. Most of the sediments entering Blue Mountain Lake come from the inflow of the Petit Jean River. Other contributing factors to accumulated sediment include sedimentation from upland areas and land use changes from areas within the watershed that are beyond USACE control and, to a lesser extent, from shoreline erosion.

There were no bathymetric surveys conducted immediately post-impoundment of Blue Mountain Lake. However, in collaboration with the United States Geological Survey (USGS), USACE conducted the first bathymetric survey for Blue Mountain Lake in May 2017 (Wagner, 2018). The results of this survey produced a terrain dataset for the lakebed within the extent of pool elevation 420 feet above the North American Vertical Datum of 1988 (NAVD88). The degree of sedimentation could be determined by examining the changes between historical, pre-impoundment topography, given the contour interval is small enough, and the May 2017 bathymetric survey.

Reduced capacity of the lake will ultimately negatively impact the primary purposes of flood risk management and. Furthermore, excessive sediment accumulation could cause a reduction in aquatic habitat in some areas of the lake.

3.5.5 Fish Species and Habitat

Management of the fisheries resource at Blue Mountain Lake is the responsibility of the AGFC. The overall function of the USACE has been primarily one of support with planning and management. The waters of Blue Mountain Lake are categorized as a warm-water fishery. The lake is relatively shallow (at conservation pool level, more than 75% of the lake is less than ten feet deep), receives strong wind action, and regularly contains heavy concentration of colloidal turbidity.

The current Water Control Manual was devised and put in place in 1968. It came into being as a solution to the shallow water areas which created boating & fishing problems. The plan increased the water surface elevation seasonally by three feet (from 384' to 387'). The plan enhanced the fishery by increasing natural reproduction of fish and improving survival and growth rate of young fish.

Recent community sampling identified at least 34 fish species representing 21 taxonomic genus groups that have been identified in Blue Mountain Lake (see Table 3-2). The AGFC conducts various types of fish sampling surveys on Blue Mountain Lake to guide management decisions. Surveys may help determine the need for a drawdown, habitat work, or regulation modifications

such as with daily limits, slot limits, and commercial fishing seasons. Lake drawdowns have been utilized often, though at irregular intervals, to address turbidity and for fisheries benefits. Drawdowns, both partial and total, should continue to be used to help manage the fisheries of the lake. These drawdowns are to be requested by the AGFC and should be coordinated to include work such as lakebed seeding, fish habitat work, and shoreline work.

The seasonal fluctuations of lake levels can have either beneficial or negative affects depending on the timing and duration of flooding. Fish stocking is not an annual practice but can occur as deemed necessary by AGFC. This can include stocking of smaller bodies of water that occur within the Project. Fish structures should continue to be placed within the conservation pool area of the lake to create additional habitat for suspending fish. These artificial structures can be constructed of wood, plastic, or other non-toxic materials.

Table 3-2. Common Fish Species at Blue Mountain Lake

SCIENTIFIC NAME	COMMON NAME
<i>Notropis boops</i>	Bigeye Shiner
<i>Ictiobus cyprinellus</i>	Bigmouth Buffalo
<i>Pomoxis nigromaculatus</i>	Black Crappie
<i>Fundulus olivaceus</i>	Blackspotted Topminnow
<i>Cyprinella venusta</i>	Blacktail Shiner
<i>Lepomis macrochirus</i>	Bluegill
<i>Etheostoma chlorosomum</i>	Bluntnose Darter
<i>Labidesthes sicculus</i>	Brook Silverside
<i>Pimephales vigilax</i>	Bullhead Minnow
<i>Ictalurus punctatus</i>	Channel Catfish
<i>Percina copelandi</i>	Channel Darter
<i>Cyprinus carpio</i>	Common Carp
<i>Percina sciera</i>	Dusky Darter
<i>Notropis atherinoides</i>	Emerald Shiner
<i>Pylodictis olivaris</i>	Flathead Catfish
<i>Aplodinotus grunniens</i>	Freshwater Drum
<i>Dorosoma cepedianum</i>	Gizzard Shad
<i>Notemigonus crysoleucas</i>	Golden Shiner
<i>Lepomis cyanellus</i>	Green Sunfish
<i>Camptostoma spadiceum</i>	Highland Stoneroller
<i>Lepomis spp.</i>	Hybrid Sunfish
<i>Micropterus salmoides</i>	Largemouth Bass
<i>Lepomis megalotis</i>	Longear Sunfish

SCIENTIFIC NAME	COMMON NAME
<i>Lepomis humilis</i>	Orangespotted Sunfish
<i>Percina fulvitaenia</i>	Ozark Logperch
<i>Lepomis microlophus</i>	Redear Sunfish
<i>Etheostoma whipplei</i>	Redfin Darter
<i>Ictiobus bubalus</i>	Smallmouth Buffalo
<i>Micropterus punctulatus</i>	Spotted Bass
<i>Lepisosteus oculatus</i>	Spotted Gar
<i>Minytrema melanops</i>	Spotted Sucker
<i>Lepomis gulosus</i>	Warmouth
<i>Morone chrysops</i>	White Bass
<i>Pomoxis annularis</i>	White Crappie

3.6 Terrestrial Resources

3.6.1 Wildlife

Blue Mountain Lake provides a diversity of habitat, which supports a wide variety of wildlife species. The area provides a mix of wetlands, open fields, and woodlands of varied age and composition. White-tailed deer (*Odocoileus virginianus*) is the most abundant big game animal found on the Project area. Eastern wild turkey (*Meleagris gallopavo*) and black bears (*Ursus americanus*) are also common. Some other wildlife species that are common to the area may be found in Additional information can be found in the Fish and Wildlife Management Plan for Blue Mountain Lake, Appendix D to the 1975 Master Plan, until revised in the future.

Table 3-3Table 3-3. Additional information can be found in the Fish and Wildlife Management Plan for Blue Mountain Lake, Appendix D to the 1975 Master Plan, until revised in the future. The AGFC have been and will continue to monitor the whitetail deer population for Chronic Wasting Disease (CWD), which has previously been recorded in Logan and several surrounding counties.

The entirety of the Blue Mountain Lake Project lands is managed cooperatively with the AGFC through two license agreements. One license is for the J. Perry Mikles Special Use Area (SUA), which consists of approximately 4,300 acres south of Magazine, Arkansas. The SUA is utilized to host various field trials for multiple dog breeds. The AGFC management administrative offices and other facilities for the area are located on the SUA. The remainder of the Project land is licensed as the Blue Mountain Lake Wildlife Management Area (WMA).

Field work fluctuates annually, but AGFC plants about 60 to 70 acres of combined food plots, food strips, and dove patches, while USACE contributes another approximately 30 acres of plantings. Other wildlife management may include mowing, soil disturbance, silvicultural activities such as mechanical and/or chemical wildlife stand improvements (WSI), removal/treatment of exotic species, and application of prescribed fire. There are also areas within the Project that will benefit local wildlife by the creation of small watering holes. Additional information can be found in the Fish and Wildlife Management Plan for Blue Mountain Lake, Appendix D to the 1975 Master Plan, until revised in the future.

Table 3-3. Common Wildlife at Blue Mountain Lake

COMMON NAME	SCIENTIFIC NAME
Black Bears	<i>Ursus americanus</i>
Bobcat	<i>Lynx rufus</i>
Bobwhite Quail	<i>Colinus virginianus</i>
Eastern Cottontail Rabbit	<i>Sylvilagus floridanus</i>
Coyote	<i>Canis latrans</i>
Fox Squirrels	<i>Sciurus niger</i>
Gray Fox	<i>Urocyon cinereoargenteus</i>
Gray Squirrels	<i>Sciurus carolinensis</i>
Mourning Dove	<i>Lenaida macroura</i>
North American Beaver	<i>Castor canadensis</i>
Virginia Opossum	<i>Didelphis virginiana</i>
Raccoon	<i>Procyon lotor</i>
River Otter	<i>Lontra canadensis</i>
Striped Skunk	<i>Mephitis mephitis</i>
Swamp Rabbit	<i>Sylvilagus aquaticus</i>
White-Tailed Deer	<i>Odocoileus virginianus</i>
Eastern Wild Turkey	<i>Meleagris gallopavo</i>

Birding enthusiasts are provided an excellent opportunity for viewing at the Blue Mountain Lake area. Additionally, a wide variety of waterfowl species migrating along the central flyway utilize Blue Mountain Lake. Of the birds on the state list, over 300 have been recorded on or near the lake. Winter flooding which spreads into bottomland hardwoods provides feeding opportunities for many of the dabbling species while the open water of the lake is utilized by other diving duck species. A list of common bird species may be found in Table 3-4.

Vultures, primarily black vultures, have been increasing in numbers over the past decade, and are beginning to become a nuisance within the recreation areas causing significant damage to vehicles and boats. Mitigation may include cutting of dead trees (snags) in and around recreation areas to reduce roosting opportunities to these areas. Additional deterrents such as pyrotechnics, noise-making devices, chemical repellants, or even lethal means may become necessary with expanding populations utilizing the parks.

Table 3-4. Common Birds Species at Blue Mountain Lake

SCIENTIFIC NAME	COMMON NAME
<i>Corvus brachyrhynchos</i>	American Crow
<i>Pelecanus erythrorhynchos</i>	American White Pelicans
<i>Mareca americana</i>	American Wigeon
<i>Haliaeetus leucocephalus</i>	Bald Eagle
<i>Coragyps atratus</i>	Black Vulture
<i>Passerina caerulea</i>	Blue Grosbeak
<i>Spatula discors</i>	Blue-Winged Teal
<i>Sitta pusilla</i>	Brown-Headed Nuthatch
<i>Branta canadensis</i>	Canada Geese
<i>Petrochelidon fulva</i>	Cave Swallow
<i>Phalacrocorax auritus</i>	Double Crested Cormorant
<i>Mareca strepera</i>	Gadwall
<i>Ardea herodias</i>	Great Blue Heron
<i>Ardea alba</i>	Great Egret
<i>Butorides virescens</i>	Green Heron
<i>Anas carolinensis</i>	Green-Winged Teal
<i>Lophodytes cucullatus</i>	Hooded Merganser
<i>Passerina cyanea</i>	Indigo bunting
<i>Aythya affinis</i>	Lesser Scaup
<i>Anas platyrhynchos</i>	Mallard Duck
<i>Pandion haliaetus</i>	Osprey
<i>Passerina ciris</i>	Painted Bunting
<i>Dryocopus pileatus</i>	Pileated Woodpecker
<i>Anas acuta</i>	Northern Pintail
<i>Podilymbus podiceps</i>	Pied-billed Grebe
<i>Protonotaria citrea</i>	Prothonotary Warbler
<i>Melanerpes erythrocephalus</i>	Red-headed Woodpecker
<i>Aythya collaris</i>	Ring-Necked Duck
<i>Tachycineta bicolor</i>	Tree Swallows
<i>Spatula clypeata</i>	Northern Shoveler

3.6.2 Vegetation

The lands of the Blue Mountain Lake Project offer a mix of open land and forested land with diverse species populations (see Table 3-5). This diversity can be attributed to the area's

physiographic variations from river valleys to steep, rocky slopes.

Much of the open land is currently managed through Real Estate instruments as either an Agriculture and Grazing (A&G) lease to local farmers or a license agreement with the AGFC. The A&G leased areas are regularly cut and bailed for hay, whereas the AGFC maintain the lands in their licensed areas through infrequent brush-hogging and prescribed burning. USACE does maintain a couple hundred acres of open land in a manner similarly to that of the AGFC.

Most of the Blue Mountain Lake Project is made up of various woodland types. The major types are bottomland hardwood, upland hardwood, pine-hardwood, and pine. The most common forest type within the bottomland hardwood is of a red oak-sweetgum composition. The frequent high water that occurs within the flood pool area has significantly impacted the bottomland hardwood forest, particularly those areas that fall below elevation 400 feet msl. Over the past 15 years, there has been an increase in high water events that have frequently extended into the growing season. The result has been a massive die off of multiple tree species. The greatest impact has been on the red oak species. A few of the pioneer species that have emerged in their stead include buttonbush (*Cephalanthus occidentalis*), water elm (*Planera aquatica*), and silver maple (*Acer saccharinum*), which are far less desirable than the preexisting species. Reforestation efforts are difficult due to spring flooding, but also due to the changing hydric soil conditions in these low lying areas. Also, common in these die-off areas are various vine species such as trumpet creeper (*Campsis radicans*) and buckwheat/red vine (*Brunnichia ovata*), which present in dense mats of vegetation and severely hinder the natural regeneration process. Regeneration efforts should continue to be explored where soil conditions allow. It may be necessary to shift species composition to more water tolerant species which may include species such as overcup oak (*Quercus lyrata*), water hickory (*Carya aquatica*) or possibly bald cypress (*Taxodium distichum*) in the wettest of areas. In areas where reforestation may not be conducive with current land conditions, they may be examined for their suitability to transition to open land.

Blue Mountain Project utilizes/may utilize a wide array of tools to meet management objectives. Open land management may include mowing, disking, mulching, herbicide spraying, utilization of food plots & strips, mechanical clearing, and/ or utilization of prescribed fire. Silvicultural prescriptions for woodland areas may include site prep actions such as chemical or mechanical using dozer, roller chopping, or mulching equipment. Timber Stand Improvement (TSI) work to include pre-merchantable thinning, understory/midstory removal with or without herbicide (cut stump treatment), hack-and-squirt, basal spray applications, and foliar spray applications. Prescribed burning is also utilized within forested stands. Timber sales to include Minor Forest Products Sales in the form of small manager sales, salvage sales, and firewood sales, as well as major Forest Product sales will be utilized. Forest product sales will be coordinated with Real Estate as required in ER 405-1-12.

Additional information can be found in the Forest Management Plan for Blue Mountain Lake, Appendix B to the 1975 Master Plan, until revised in the future.

Table 3-5. Common Vegetation at Blue Mountain Lake

Scientific Name	Common Name
<i>Teucrium canadense</i>	American Germander
<i>Taxodium distichum</i>	Bald Cypress
<i>Vernonia baldwinii</i>	Baldwin's Ironweed
<i>Andropogon gerardii</i>	Big Bluestem
<i>Salix nigra</i>	Black Willow
<i>Rubus</i> spp.	Brambles: Blackberry, Dewberry
<i>Andropogon virginicus</i>	Broom Sedge
<i>Brunnichia ovata</i>	Buckwheat Vine
<i>Asclepias tuberosa</i>	Butterfly Weed
<i>Cephalanthus occidentalis</i>	Buttonbush
<i>Rudbeckia triloba</i>	Brown-Eyed Susan
<i>Solidago auriculata</i>	Eared Goldenrod
<i>Tripsacum dactyloides</i>	Eastern Gamagrass
<i>Juniperus virginiana</i>	Eastern Red Cedar
<i>Ulmus</i> spp.	Elms
<i>Cyperus echinatus</i>	Globe flatsedge
<i>Celtis</i> spp.	Hackberries
<i>Carya</i> spp.	Hickory: Bitternut, Mockernut, Pignut, Shagbark, Water
<i>Schizachyrium scoparium</i>	Little Bluestem
<i>Pinus taeda</i>	Loblolly Pine
<i>Chamaecrista fasciculata</i>	Partridge Pea
<i>Diospyros virginiana</i>	Persimmon
<i>Quercus</i> spp.	Red Oaks: Cherrybark, Northern, Pin, Shumard, Southern, Water, Willow
<i>Carex</i> spp.	Sedges
<i>Pinus echinata</i>	Shortleaf Pine
<i>Polygonum pennsylvanicum</i>	Smartweed
<i>Bidens</i> spp.	Spanish Needles
<i>Platanus occidentalis</i>	Sycamore
<i>Liquidambar styraciflua</i>	Sweet Gum
<i>Campsis radicans</i>	Trumpet Vine
<i>Vicia</i> spp.	Vetches
<i>Planera aquatica</i>	Water Elm / Planertree
<i>Quercus</i> spp.	White Oaks: Bur, Post, Overcup, White
<i>Hibiscus lasiocarpus</i>	Wooly Rosemallow

3.6.3 Forestry

Blue Mountain Lake is surrounded by forested land, which is managed for multi-use, sustained yield as outlined in the Public Law 86-717:

To provide for the protection of forest cover for reservoir areas under the jurisdiction of the Secretary of the Army and the Chief of Engineers.

Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States of America in Congress assembled, That it is hereby declared to be the policy of the United States to provide that reservoir areas of projects for flood control, navigation, hydroelectric power development, and other related purposes owned in fee and under the jurisdiction of the Secretary of the Army and the Chief of Engineers shall be developed and maintained so as to encourage, promote, and assure fully adequate and dependable future resources of readily available timber, through sustained yield programs, reforestation, and areas for conservation, recreation, and other beneficial uses: Provided, That such development and management shall be accomplished to the extent practicable and compatible with other uses of the project.

USACE utilizes multiple tools as part of a timber management program. One management tool is timber disposal in the form of timber sales, which are administered through the Real Estate Branch of the Little Rock District. These timber sales are conducted as outlined in ER 405-1-90.

Additionally, forest management on Blue Mountain Lake will be conducted in consonance with PL 86-717, ER 1130-2-400, TM 5-631, and AR 420-74. See Blue Mountain Dam and Lake Design Memorandum No. 1-C (1975 Blue Mountain Lake Master Plan), Appendix B: Forest Management Plan.

3.7 Threatened and Endangered Species

There are many species in the Arkansas Valley ecoregion that are considered either threatened, endangered, or state species of concern. Species become listed for a variety of reasons including over-hunting, over-fishing, and habitat loss as a result of human development and pollution. Of these, habitat loss is the main contributor that imperils most species.

3.7.1 Federally Listed Threatened and Endangered Species

The Endangered Species Act of 1973 establishes protections for fish, wildlife, and plants that are listed as threatened or endangered. Threatened species are those which are likely to become endangered within the foreseeable future. Endangered species are in danger of extinction throughout all or a significant portion of their range. The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) also identifies species that are candidates and proposed for listing as a result of identified threats to their continued existence. The Candidate designation includes those species for which USFWS has sufficient information to support proposals to list as endangered or threatened under the Endangered Species Act; however, proposed rules have not yet been issued because such actions are precluded at present by other listing activity. The Proposed designation (either threatened or endangered) includes those species that USFWS has determined are in danger of extinction or likely to become endangered throughout all or significant portions of its range, and for which a draft rule to list as threatened or endangered has been proposed.

The USFWS Information for Planning and Consultation (IPaC) tool was utilized to determine species listed under the Endangered Species Act potentially located in the Blue Mountain Lake area, and the IPaC report can be found in Appendix B (USFWS, 2024b). Table 3-6 below

depicts federally listed species that may occur on project and/or surrounding lands. No critical habitat was found within the project area.

Table 3-6. Federally Listed Species

Scientific Name	Common Name	Status
Mammals		
<i>Myotis sodalist</i>	Indiana Bat	Endangered
<i>Myotis septentrionalis</i>	Northern Long-eared Bat	Endangered
<i>Perimyotis subflavus</i>	Tricolored Bat	Proposed Endangered
Birds		
<i>Laterallus jamaicensis ssp. jamaicensis</i>	Eastern Black Rail	Threatened
<i>Charadius melodus</i>	Piping Plover	Threatened
<i>Calidris canutus rufa</i>	Rufa Red Knot	Threatened
Reptiles		
<i>Macrochelys temminckii</i>	Alligator Snapping Turtle	Proposed Threatened
Insects		
<i>Nicrophorus americanus</i>	American Burying Beetle	Threatened
<i>Danaus plexippus</i>	Monarch Butterfly	Candidate
Source: USFWS 2023a		

Federally-listed bird species known to migrate through Pulaski County include the eastern black rail, piping plover, and Rufa red knot. While these bird species may migrate through the Blue Mountain Lake area, there are no known occurrences or critical habitat within the footprint of this project.

The alligator snapping turtle (AST) is proposed to be listed as a Federally threatened species and may occur within the study area. ASTs are generally found in deeper water of large rivers and their major tributaries; however, they are also found in a wide variety of habitats, including small streams, bayous, canals, swamps, lakes, reservoirs, ponds, and oxbows. ASTs more often select structure (i.e. tree root masses, stumps, submerged trees, etc.) than open water and may select sites with a high percentage of canopy cover. These turtles are opportunistic scavengers, with fish comprising a significant portion of their diet. They may also consume crayfish, mollusks, smaller turtles, insects, nutria, snakes, birds, and vegetation (USFWS, 2021). ASTs may occur within Blue Mountain Lake, its surrounding lands, and its tributaries.

The monarch butterfly is listed as a candidate species due to its population decline over the past two decades. The iconic orange and black butterfly is known for its lengthy migration, from as far as Canada and across the United States to forested overwintering sites in the mountains of central Mexico and coastal California. Primary drivers affecting the health of the two North American migratory populations are changes in breeding, migratory, and overwintering habitat as well as continued exposure to insecticides and effects of climate change (USFWS, 2024c). Monarchs may occur on the federally-owned lands associated with Blue Mountain Lake.

3.7.1.1 Federally Listed Bat Species

The northern long-eared bat (NLEB) roosts in cavities of both live trees and snags or caves, mines, and other manmade structures during the active season. Hibernation occurs in caves and mines (USFWS, 2024d). The NLEB was first listed as threatened in April 2015 with an Interim 4(d) Rule. In November 2022, the NLEB was reclassified as endangered. The NLEB range includes all of the USACE Little Rock District, including Blue Mountain Lake.

The Indiana bat (IBAT), an insectivorous species, hibernates colonially in caves and mines in the winter and utilizes forests for foraging in roosting in the summer months. Threats to the species include human disturbance during hibernation, habitat loss, pesticides and other contaminants, and white-nose syndrome (USFWS, 2024a). Blue Mountain Lake was not initially in the consultation area for the species. However, in 2021 a radio-tagged female IBAT traveled to southwest Arkansas. During her monitored period, she spent about 10 days at Nimrod Lake, near Blue Mountain Lake. This monitoring and tracking project led to an updated species range for the IBAT and thus, an updated and significantly expanded consultation range, which now includes Blue Mountain Lake.

The tricolored bat (TCB) is currently listed as a proposed endangered species as they face extinction due to the impacts of white-nose syndrome, a deadly disease affecting cave-dwelling bats across the continent. During the winter, tricolored bats are found in caves and mines, and occasionally road-associated culverts in the southern United States. During the spring, summer, and fall, these bats are found in forested habitats where they roost in deciduous hardwood trees, both live and recently dead. They have also been observed roosting in Spanish moss, lichen, and manmade structures like barns, bridges, and culverts (USFWS, 2024e). The TCB bat has a wide range that encompasses most of the American southeast, which includes Blue Mountain Lake.

Bat monitoring first begun in 2020 on Blue Mountain Lake. Since then, Blue Mountain Lake has confirmed presence of the TCB. The USACE Little Rock District plans to create a PBO for all listed bat species, which would cover each Little Rock District Project, but in the interim, presence/absence surveys will continue to be conducted for all necessary upcoming projects.

3.7.1.2 American Burying Beetle

The American Burying Beetle (ABB) is a large black beetle with orange-red markings that utilizes dead animals (carrion) for food, moisture, and reproduction. They are a nocturnal species, active from late spring through early fall. ABBs occupy a range of habitats excluding agricultural lands that are frequently disturbed and areas that are frequently inundated (USFWS, 2019).

Blue Mountain Lake is located in the American Burying Beetle (ABB) Area of Impact (AOI) in Arkansas, which is where the endangered ABB may occur. Presence/absence surveys for ABB were conducted on Blue Mountain on a project-by-project basis prior to 2016. In 2016, USACE conducted a comprehensive ABB survey in conjunction with preliminary development of an ABB Conservation Plan for operations in the Little Rock District. In November 2018 the Little Rock District's ABB Conservation Plan was submitted and accepted by USFWS as part of the reasonable and prudent measures outlined in the July 12, 2016, programmatic biological opinion (PBO). The conservation plan called for the establishment, management, and biennial surveying of an ABB Conservation Area. The District's ABB Conservation Area is located at Blue Mountain Lake due to a lack of contiguous, suitable acreage on the upper McClellan-Kerr

Arkansas River Project (Lake Dardanelle and Ozark Lake), which is the only other USACE Little Rock District Project that is located in the ABB range. The 1,546 acres Conservation Area was chosen based on habitat conditions, management feasibility, and long term project planning. Habitat consideration included those correlated to ABB occurrence and abundance, including the presence of wetlands and open water, soil type, land cover, and vegetation.

Presence/absence surveys for ABB within a 20-mile radius consistently show occurrence of ABB. That is, annual monitoring surveys are conducted at Fort Chaffee Joint Maneuver Training Center near Fort Smith, Arkansas, which is approximately 20 miles northwest of Blue Mountain Lake. FCJMTTC has the highest density ABB population in Arkansas. Additionally, ABB monitoring surveys at Cherokee Prairie Natural Area, Flanagan Prairie Natural Area, and Presson-Oglesby Preserve, approximately 20 miles to the north-northwest of Blue Mountain Lake, have documented ABB occurrence. The Ozark-St. Francis National Forest and Ouachita National Forest conduct annual monitoring surveys in accordance with the 2010 ABB Conservation Plan. ABB have been recorded less than two miles from Blue Mountain Lake. However, no ABB presence has been recorded on Blue Mountain Lake since monitoring first began in 2015.

On October 15, 2020, USFWS published the final rule reclassifying the ABB from endangered to threatened under the Endangered Species Act (85 FR 65241). The publication also included a final rule under the authority of Section 4(d) of the Act that provides measures that are necessary and advisable to provide for the conservation of the ABB. The 4(d) rule identifies certain activities that are excepted from take prohibitions, which differs by geographic area. The rule became effective on November 16, 2020, 30 days after publication. Blue Mountain Lake elected to adopt the 4(d) PBO to replace the existing 2016 PBO, which removes requirements to maintain the ABB Conservation Area.

3.7.2 State-Listed Rare, Threatened and Endangered Species

The Arkansas Natural Heritage Commission (ANHC) maintains a biodiversity database that tracks the location and status of rare species of animals and plants as well as natural communities in Arkansas. Table 3-7 below depicts state listed species of concern that may be located within the Blue Mountain Lake project and/or surrounding areas (ANHC, 2023).

Table 3-7. State Listed Species Found at Blue Mountain Lake

Scientific Name	Common Name	State Status	Global Rank	State Rank
<i>Aimophila ruficeps</i>	Rufous-crowned Sparrow	INV	G5	S1
<i>Allium cernuum</i>	Nodding Wild Onion	INV	G5	SH
<i>Amorpha ouachitensis</i>	Ouachita Indigo-bush	INV	G3Q	S3
<i>Amsonia hubrichtii</i>	Ouachita bluestar	INV	G3	S3
<i>Apocynum androsaemifolium</i>	Spreading Dogbane	INV	G5	S1
<i>Arianops sandersoni</i>	Magazine Mountain mold beetle	INV	G1	S1?
<i>Caecidotea oculata</i>	an isopod	INV	G2G3	S1
<i>Carex pensylvanica</i>	Pennsylvania sedge	INV	G5	S3

Scientific Name	Common Name	State Status	Global Rank	State Rank
<i>Caulophyllum thalictroides</i>	blue cohosh	INV	G5	S2
<i>Crotalus atrox</i>	Western Diamond-backed Rattlesnake	INV	G5	S2S3
<i>Crotaphytus collaris</i>	Eastern Collared Lizard	INV	G5	S2
<i>Dennstaedtia punctilobula</i>	Hay-Scented Fern	INV	G5	S2
<i>Derops divalis</i>	a beetle	INV	GNR	S1
<i>Deschampsia flexuosa</i>	Wavy Hair Grass	INV	G5	S2S3
<i>Elymus churchii</i>	Church's wild rye	INV	G3	S2?
<i>Eriocaulon koernickianum</i>	Small-Head Pipewort	SE	G2	S2
<i>Erysimum capitatum</i> var. <i>capitatum</i>	Western Wallflower	INV	G5T5	S2
<i>Etheostoma teddyroosevelt</i>	highland darter*	INV	GNR	S3
<i>Haliaeetus leucocephalus</i>	Bald Eagle*	INV	G5	S3B, S4N
<i>Hydrophyllum brownei</i>	Browne's waterleaf*	INV	G2	S2
<i>Inflectarius magazinensis</i>	Magazine Mountain Shagreen	SE	G1	S1
<i>Lasiurus seminolus</i>	Seminole bat	INV	G5	S3
<i>Liatris compacta</i>	Ouachita blazing-star	INV	G3	S3
<i>Liatris scariosa</i> var. <i>nieuwlandii</i>	northern blazing-star	INV	G5?T3T5	S2?
<i>Myotis leibii</i>	Eastern Small-footed Bat	INV	G4	S1
<i>Myotis lucifugus</i>	Little Brown Bat	SE	G3	S1
<i>Myotis septentrionalis</i>	Northern Long-eared Bat	SE	G1G2	S1S2
<i>Nicrophorus americanus</i>	American Burying Beetle	SE	G3	S1
<i>Paronychia virginica</i>	yellow nailwort	INV	G4	S2
<i>Percina phoxocephala</i>	Slenderhead Darter*	INV	G5	S2
<i>Plantago patagonica</i>	woolly plantain	INV	G1G2	S1S2
<i>Ribes cynosbati</i>	prickly gooseberry	INV	G5	S2S3
<i>Sanicula smallii</i>	Small's black-snakeroot	INV	G5	S3
<i>Speyeria diana</i>	Diana Fritillary	INV	G2G4	S2S3
<i>Stachys iltisii</i>	Ouachita hedge-nettle	INV	G3	S3
<i>Stygobromus elatus</i>	Elevated Spring Amphipod	INV	G1G2	S1?
<i>Tradescantia bracteata</i>	long-bract spiderwort	INV	G5	S2
<i>Tradescantia ozarkana</i>	Ozark spiderwort	INV	G3	S3
<i>Valerianella nuttallii</i>	Nuttall's cornsalad	INV	G3	S2
<i>Veratrum woodii</i>	Wood's false hellebore	INV	G5	S3
<i>Vitis rupestris</i>	rock grape	INV	G3	S1

Scientific Name	Common Name	State Status	Global Rank	State Rank
<i>Woodsia appalachiana</i>	Appalachian cliff fern	INV	G4	S1
Central Interior Highlands Dry Acidic Glade and Barrens		INV	GNR	S3
Source: ANHC 2023				

E = Endangered; S2: Imperiled: Imperiled in the state because of rarity or because of some factor(s) making it very vulnerable to extirpation from the nation or state (1,000 to 3,000)-typically 6 to 20 occurrences or few remaining individuals (1,000 to 3,000); S3: Vulnerable: Vulnerable in the state either because rare and uncommon, or found only in a restricted range (even if abundant at some locations), or because of other factors making it vulnerable to extirpation. Typically, 21 to 100 occurrences or between 3,000 and 10,000 individuals; G3: Vulnerable: Vulnerable globally either because very rare and local throughout its range, found only in a restricted range (even if abundant at some locations), or because of other factors making it vulnerable to extinction or elimination. Typically, 21 to 100 occurrences or between 3,000 and 10,000 individuals; ?: A question mark is used to denote an inexact numeric rank.

* Known species occurrence on project lands.

3.8 Invasive Species

In accordance with Executive Order (EO) 13112, an invasive species means an alien species whose introduction does or is likely to cause economic or environmental harm or harm to human health. Invasive species can be microbes, fungi, plants, or animals that are not native to an ecosystem. Invasive species can take over and out-compete native species by consuming their forage, invading their habitat, and altering the ecosystem in ways that harm native species. Invasive species can be accidentally transported, or they can be deliberately introduced because they are thought to be helpful in some way. Invasive species cost local, state, and federal agencies billions of dollars every year.

Blue Mountain Lake Project has been impacted by the spread of invasive species. Table 3-8 identifies some of the more impactful invasive species recorded at Blue Mountain Lake. In addition to the known species, there are some species of concern that occur at other USACE lake projects that could potentially affect Blue Mountain in the future. These include zebra mussels, hydrilla, giant salvinia, and Eurasian watermilfoil. Blue Mountain Lake staff will continue to work with other agencies and participate in species monitoring, public education through signage, preventative measures, and control measures on Project lands as possible when needed.

Invasive species control measures may include mechanical and/or chemical treatment of species. These measures may be prescribed across any Land Classification category to include Environmentally Sensitive Areas in order to prevent or control the spread of microbe, fungi, plant, or animal species.

Table 3-8. Invasive Species Identified at Blue Mountain Lake

Scientific Name	Common Name
<i>Pyrus calleryana</i>	Callery Pear
<i>Agrilus planipennis</i>	Emerald Ash Borer
<i>Sus scrofa</i>	Feral Hogs
<i>Lonicera japonica</i>	Japanese Honeysuckle
<i>Pueraria montana</i>	Kudzu
<i>Rosa multiflora</i>	Multiflora Rose

Scientific Name	Common Name
<i>Ligustrum</i> spp.	Privets
<i>Solenopsis invicta</i>	Red Imported Fire Ant
<i>Lespedeza cuneata</i>	Sericea Lespedeza
<i>Albizia julibrissin</i>	Silk Tree/Mimosa

3.9 Cultural, Archaeological, and Historic Resources

Cultural resources preservation and management is an equal and integral part of all resource management at USACE-administered operational projects. The term “cultural resources” is a broad term that includes, but is not limited to, historic and prehistoric archaeological sites, deposits, and features; burials and cemeteries; historic and prehistoric districts comprised of groups of structures or sites; cultural landscapes; built environment resources such as buildings, structures (such as bridges), and objects; Traditional Cultural Properties (TCP) and sacred sites. These property types may be listed on the National Register of Historic Places (NRHP) if they meet the criteria specified by 36 CFR 60.4 as authorized by the NHPA, reflecting significance in architecture, history, archaeology, engineering, and culture. Cultural resources that are identified as eligible for listing in the NRHP are referred to as “historic properties,” regardless of category. A TCP is a property that is eligible for inclusion in the NRHP based on its associations with the cultural practices, traditions, beliefs, lifeways, arts, crafts, or social institutions of a living community. Ceremonies, hunting practices, plant-gathering, and social practices which are part of a culture’s traditional lifeways, are also cultural resources.

Stewardship of cultural resources on USACE Civil Works water resources projects is an important part of the overall Federal responsibility. Numerous laws pertaining to identification, evaluation, and protection of cultural resources, Native American Indian rights, curation and collections management, and the protection of resources from looting and vandalism establish the importance of cultural resources to our Nation’s heritage. With the passage of these laws, the historical intent of Congress has been to ensure that the Federal government protects cultural resources. Guidance is derived from a number of cultural resources laws and regulations, including but not limited to Sections 106 and 110 of the National Historic Preservation Act (NHPA) of 1966 (as amended); Archaeological Resources Protection Act (ARPA) of 1979; Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act (NAGPRA); and 36 CFR Part 79, Curation of Federally-Owned and Administered Archeological Collections. Implementing regulations for Section 106 of the NHPA and NAGPRA are 36 CFR Part 800 and 43 CFR Part 10, respectively. All cultural resources laws and regulations should be addressed under the requirements of the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) of 1969 (as amended), as applicable. USACE summarizes the guidance provided in these laws in ER and EP 1130-2-540.

Cultural History Sequence

The cultural chronology of Arkansas is generally separated into Precontact and Historical Periods with each further subdivided into chronological periods of time as denoted by the archaeological and historical records. This cultural history sequence was derived primarily from two archaeological reports recently submitted to USACE: Cultural Resources Assessment Survey of 384 Acres at Blue Mountain Lake in Yell County, Arkansas by AmaTerra Environmental, LLC and Cultural Resource Assessment Survey Blue Mountain Lake: FY 18.3-BM-1 (Area 1), FY 18.3-BM-2 (Area 2), FY18.3-BM-3 (Area 3), and Fy18.3-BM-4 (Area 4) Logan County,

Arkansas (Thomas, 2022c) (Horvath, 2019).

Precontact Period Chronology

Paleoindian Period (13,500 – 10,500 BP)

Information used to reconstruct the Paleoindian Period in Arkansas has relied heavily on diagnostic Paleoindian projectile point surface finds, as well as archaeological data collected in other states (Sabo and Early, 1990; Morrow, 2011). Diagnostic fluted Paleoindian projectile points include the Clovis, Folsom, Sedgwick, and Gailey types (Morrow, 2011). Coldwater, Quad, and Pelican projectile points represent a transition from the Paleoindian Period to the Dalton Period. Stratified Paleoindian deposits have not been identified within the Ouachita Mountains and Arkansas Valley regions. Surface finds of fluted points and buried remains of megafauna indicate the presence and preservation of buried sites that date to this period is possible (Gillam, 1996; Sabo and Early, 1990: 38-39). Potential Paleoindian residents in the Ouachita Mountains region may have traveled from the Crowley's Ridge area to the east, which appears to be a focal point of populations during the period (Morrow, 2011). Foraging opportunities would be changing as the previous boreal forests with a megafauna presence were transitioning to deciduous forests and the extinction of megafauna by 10,000 BP.

Dalton Period (10,500 – 9,500 BP)

The Dalton Period (10,500 – 9,500 BP) is a transitional phase between the Paleoindian and Archaic Periods (Sabo and Early 1990). The most prominent temporal marker from this period are Dalton points, which are thin, concave-base, unnotched types found throughout Arkansas. Raw materials for the chipped stone tools of this period preference regional sources in the Ozark and Ouachita Mountains (Sabo and Early, 1990:44-46). Stratified Dalton Period deposits have not been found in the Ouachita Mountains and Arkansas Valley regions. However, the identification of surface recovered diagnostics indicate that alluvial valleys are areas with potential for the discovery of sites with buried context.

Archaic Period (9,500 – 2,700 BP)

The Archaic Period was a time of cultural development and population growth in central North America that corresponds to peak warmth after the end of the last Ice Age, followed by amelioration to modern climatic conditions (Trubitt, 2019). The Archaic Period is commonly broken up into the Early, Middle, and Late Archaic. Habitation during this time was concentrated along major river basins such as the Ouachita, Arkansas, Mississippi, and Red River valleys. The Early Archaic (9,500 – 7,000 BP) is marked by an increase in marine, small game, and wild plant subsistence resources, as well as the development and diversification of tools such as grooved axes and grinding stones. During the Middle Archaic from 7000 – 5000 BP, larger village sites in major river valleys were occupied on a year-round basis as climatic drying was taking place across most of central North America. Evidence of fabrics, basketry, and cordage first appear in the archaeological record during this time. During the Late Archaic (5,000 – 2,700 BP), climatic drying ended and the earliest pottery in the Midwest begins to appear at archaeological sites in the region. Additionally, early evidence of horticulture and Late Archaic burial mounds begin to occur in some areas of Arkansas. Although this phase is not well documented in the Arkansas Valley or upland in the Ouachita Mountains, researchers have suggested these are hunting-focused sites with intensive use of river environments.

Woodland Period (2,700 – 1,000 BP)

The Woodland Period is a cultural phase characterized by permanent settlements with social and economic hierarchies that intensified pottery manufacturing, mound building, and agriculture (Mainfort, 2020). Like the Archaic Period, the Woodland Period is divided into three subperiods: The Early, Middle, and Late Woodland.

The Early Woodland Period (2,700 – 2,100 BP) within the Ouachita Mountains region is generally recognized as a continuation of the Wister phase (Sabo and Early, 1990:77). The Fourche Maline phase people intensively reoccupied some of the same site locations on first level terraces adjacent to fresh water. Evidence of subsistence does not indicate large changes from the previous Archaic Period, but chipped stone hoes are found suggesting some digging activities.

People during the Middle Woodland Period (2,100 – 1,500 BP) experienced social changes most evident in the archaeological record through earthwork construction and variation in pottery production. Arkansas peoples lived in small communities and built small mounds in some areas (Mainfort, 2020). Some sites have been recorded along tributary streams that extend upwards into the Ouachita Mountains (Sloan and Early, 1990:76-79). Local materials and material evidence of burial ceremonialism increases in occurrence from the Early Woodland Period.

The Late Woodland Period (1,550 – 1,000 BP) is generally defined by larger settlements and the introduction of the bow and arrow (Mainfort, 2020). Maygrass, lambs quarters, knotweed, sunflowers, and marsh elder were commonly cultivated during this time. In the latter half of the Late Woodland Period, maize production intensified in some areas of Arkansas. Plant remains indicate that cultivated foods became a marked portion of the diet. While exotic goods indicative of long-distance exchange remained infrequent, exchange between areas of the Ouachita Mountains and areas of the Arkansas Valley seem common as pottery styles and shared raw materials seem common on sites in both regions.

Mississippian Period (1,000 – 400 BP)

Complex social, political, and economic structures coupled with a shared religious belief system developed during the Mississippian Period (Payne, 2018). Mississippian Chiefdoms had a ruling class that gained power through hereditary succession (Payne, 2018). With structured social hierarchies, came increased food production and wide-spread trade networks. Maize, squash, and beans were the primary crops produced throughout Mississippian settlements, although utilization of non-cultivated foods remained an important element of people's foodways.

Home and town structures of the Mississippian Period were typically rectangular in shape and organized around a fortified central plaza with a pyramid-shaped mound (Payne, 2018). The population in Mississippian settlements greatly increased following the development of agriculture but left people vulnerable to crop blights and drought. Increased populations also hastened the spread of disease through local communities.

The de Soto Spanish expedition of 1541 into the interior of North America wrote detailed accounts of Mississippian towns and cultures they encountered. When Jacques Marquette and Louis Joliet traveled south along the Mississippi River for France in 1673, large towns along the river had deflated, and native peoples had depopulated city centers. Widespread disease, warfare, and crop-crippling drought are thought to be the causes of this evacuation of population centers within less than 100 years of colonial contact (Hoffman, 1992; Key, 2020; Mitchem, 2017; Payne, 2018).

Historic Period Chronology

Contact Period (520-250 BP)

The Contact Period (520–250 BP/1430-1700) contact between Native American cultures and Europeans (Jeter et al., 1989:221). With the presence of European records this overview will now shift to using the European Common Era dating system. In 1541, Hernando de Soto's Spanish expedition was the first group of Europeans to enter the Arkansas Valley region and possibly the southern Ouachita Mountains (Mitchem, 2017).

Much of the Arkansas Valley and the Ouachita Mountains regions into the 1700s was the home of the Caddo. Caddo communities utilized constructed mounds as centers for community ceremonies and burials. Communities expanded well beyond these centers as family farms with multiple, circular thatched homes, fields, and other structures for farm use were clustered across the landscape (Mitchem, 2017). Early French travelers in 1687 and Joliet of the Marquette-Joliet French expedition in 1673 forged initial contacts with the Caddo for the French in the South-Central Plains region of Arkansas. The French encouraged trade with the Caddo. This trade and political contact grew in importance into the 1700s as the Caddo faced demographic shifts and hostility from the Osage in the north.

Eighteenth Century to Present (1700 – Present)

As the eighteenth century progressed, northern Caddo people increasingly relocated settlements closer to the Red River and to trading centers established by the French. Hostility between the Caddo and the Osage intensified in the 1730s and 1740s (Bailey, 2001). However, traditionally occupied lands were still recognized as part of their home and used for foraging (Mitchem, 2017). The Osage also used areas of the Arkansas Valley region during the eighteenth century. Villages were recognized as permanent residences by the Osage with seasonal subsistence and community activities undertaken in areas away from the village (Chapman, 1974). Housing consisted of rectangular longhouses while circular structures were erected for temporary use away from the village. The Ouachita Mountains and Arkansas Valley regions of the late eighteenth century were also used for hunting and lightly occupied by various settlements of the Quapaw (Sabo, 1990b:122-134; Young and Hoffman, 2001).

The eighteenth and nineteenth century was a significant period of transition as Native, European, and African Americans moved into areas west of the Mississippi River. To establish trade with local Native American groups and colonize their territory, the French continued to establish trading posts along other major river ways in the states (Key, 2020). By the late 1700s, French, Spanish, and British colonial forces laid claims to various parts of the country. In 1776, the United States claimed independence from Britain, and in 1783, through the Treaty of Paris, most of the land east of the Mississippi was owned by the United States. The earliest European Americans to settle west of the Mississippi River were often engaged in the fur trade in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century. As more people moved into Arkansas, settlements were established within the Ouachita Mountains in the early nineteenth century. Settlers in this region chose locations within the mountain uplands, often foraging and herding livestock, or within the narrow river bottoms on small farms (Sabo, 1990a:136-156).

In 1803, all of Arkansas, Missouri, and Oklahoma was purchased by the United States as part of the Louisiana Purchase (Bolton, 2018; Key, 2020). Many areas of Arkansas were sparsely populated by Native peoples, already impacted by conflict and introduced disease, and traders

were typically the only non-Native residents.

Removal Era History

Tens of thousands of Native Americans were forced to move west into Indian Territory after Andrew Jackson's administration passed the Federal Indian Removal Act in 1830 (Remini, 2001).

Arkansas, home to the Quapaw, Caddo, Osage, and Kickapoo tribes in the early nineteenth century, was the westward relocation destination of many tribes (Oklahoma Historical Society, 2021). Cherokee, Quapaw, Choctaw, Shawnee, Delaware, and Kickapoo were among the groups either relocated into or within Arkansas in the early nineteenth century (Sabo et al., 1990:121-134). As actions of the Federal Indian Removal Act gained momentum, pressure in the form of other acts, treaties, and aggression from new settlers would push Native American residents of Arkansas and other states into Indian Territory in Oklahoma.

Growth in the population and markets of Arkansas coincided with efforts to remove Native Americans from the states. Arkansas was separated from the Missouri Territory in 1819 and became a state in 1836. Growth of Arkansas after the 1830s was spurred by settlers producing cotton with the labor of enslaved Africans, which allied the state socially, culturally, and politically with the southern U.S. (Bolton, 2018). Larger farms devoted to cash crops typically occurred in the areas of the Arkansas River valley closest to the Mississippi River, near the Red River, or along the Mississippi River itself (Bolton, 1999). Enslaved people were only approximately 11% of the population of the Ouachita Mountains region (Bolton, 1999:5), but slavery became an increasingly powerful political discourse within Arkansas state politics into the mid-nineteenth century (Bolton, 1999: Missouri State Museum, 2020).

The United States Civil War

In 1861, Arkansas voted to secede from the Union and join the Confederacy (DeBlack, 2018). The Civil War negatively impacted the state, and territory shifted constantly between Union and Confederate control. Although no major battles took place near the project location, local skirmishes and guerrilla attacks were common in many areas. In the Ouachita Mountains region in 1863 the Battle of Devil's Backbone occurred when federal forces secured Fort Smith, Arkansas for the remainder of the war (Arey, 2018). Ongoing local conflicts, paired with financial hardships from the war, devastated the local economies. The Arkansas River was a focal point of conflict throughout the war as well. As a key transportation and supply route, the river was valuable to both the Union and Confederate armies and the strategic city of Dardanelle was severely damaged and held by Union forces for much of the war (Gleason, 2017).

Late Nineteenth and Twentieth Century History

During post-reconstruction, new social and economic trends were witnessed across the nation (Moneyhon, 2018). Termed the "Gilded Age" due to large wealth disparities during a period of economic growth, this period saw the expansion of railroads within the U.S. interior, allowing goods to be traded on a national market. Manufacturing facilities and resource extraction enterprises flourished, and urban populations grew. Railroad construction in previously isolated areas of Arkansas, such as the Ouachita Mountains, led to a "transition from household economies and neighborhood businesses to industrial activities on a larger scale" (Gannon, 1998:9). By 1899, the lumber industry was responsible for two-thirds of the value of the Arkansas manufactured goods total (Strausberg and Hough, 1997:7). Logging would peak

within a decade, but the effects would leave long-lasting impacts.

Economic growth favored urban centers, and a cultural divide developed between farmers and city dwellers. These divides became more fractured between black and white citizens in the 1890s when formal segregation laws were passed. Social issues in the twentieth century mirrored those of the past. Arkansas, however, continued to grow and expand its economic and environmental interests until devastated by the effects of the economic collapse of 1929 and the Great Depression of the 1930s. A decline in farm prices and years of drought devastated that farm economy and many moved out of Arkansas in search of employment elsewhere. The state then came to rely heavily on the federal government's "New Deal" programs to recover (Whayne, 2020).

Under the New Deal, a program initiated in the administration of President Franklin D. Roosevelt, the government invested in the welfare and recovery of the American people. Agencies such as the Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC) and the Works Progress Administration (WPA) were created to provide jobs for young, unemployed males. Relief programs such as these engaged in many conservation activities such as tree planting, development of recreation areas, firefighting, and other measures protecting natural resources. The work projects undertaken by the CCC were directed by the USDA on National Forest lands and by the Department of the Interior on National Park Service lands. The impact of New Deal work programs, including the WPA and most particularly the CCC, whose broad objectives were to alleviate a national economic and natural resource crisis, are represented in the distinct architectural legacy of the physical resources constructed by these programs in Arkansas forests and parks (AHPP, 1990; Smith, 1997).

During WWII, able-bodied men and women flooded to manufacturing centers throughout Arkansas to aid in the war effort and the U.S. government invested in training facilities and bases within the state (Johnson, 2017). Arkansas also hosted German and Italian prisoner-of-war (POW) camps. Although none are in or within one mile of the project location, Camp Chaffee located approximately 22 km northwest of the project location housed 3,000 German POWs between 1942 and 1946 (Radcliff, 2017). German and Italian POWs were utilized to harvest cotton.

The Flood of 1927

The Flood of 1927 was one of the largest disasters in American history. The deluge and the following relief efforts spurred major social, political, and economic changes on state and national levels. The following account is summarized from the Encyclopedia of Arkansas (Hendricks, 2017).

By 1927, numerous levees had been built along the rivers of Arkansas to control flooding. Low-lying forested lands behind the levees were drained and timbered. In the Roaring Twenties, farmers and planters with access to easy credit bought many low-lying lands and converted them to croplands. The spring thaw of 1927 arrived early in the northern headwaters of the Mississippi River watershed. Spring rains in the Midwest combined with the meltwaters to fill the Mississippi and its tributaries. In April, heavy rains fell in the South, but the saturated ground and full rivers left nowhere for the water to go.

In Arkansas, the Arkansas, St. Francis, and White Rivers began to back up due to high water in the Mississippi River. The White River even reversed and began to flow upstream due to the

water pressure from the Mississippi River. Every levee on the Arkansas River between Oklahoma and Little Rock failed. Floodwaters up to 30 ft deep inundated towns, homes, and farmlands. The disaster was most widespread in Arkansas. In the state, the amount of farmland underwater was more than twice that of Mississippi and Louisiana combined. In some places, lands remained flooded for nearly half the year.

Recently developed technology aided relief efforts. Radios broadcast warnings and bulletins, airplanes helped find survivors, and motorboats carried people to dry land. Trains carried people to aid stations set up by the Red Cross and other organizations. Half of the 154 refugee camps established by the Red Cross were in Arkansas. The camps remained in operation into September of 1927. In Arkansas alone, over 100 people were killed by the flood and 350,000 people affected. The standing water remained for months, clogged with rotting animal carcasses and a breeding ground for mosquitoes. There were outbreaks of malaria, typhoid fever, dysentery, and even smallpox.

The Flood of 1927 had a number of long-term effects. Politically, the large-scale relief efforts and the anger at the lack of federal aid contributed to changing perceptions regarding the role of government in society. The Great Depression and the Dust Bowl drought of the 1930s exacerbated these trends supporting a growing belief among many Americans that the government should play a more active role in securing the welfare of the citizens.

The Construction of Blue Mountain Lake

As part of the federal response to the devastating flood in 1927 and additional floods in the 1930s, the Flood Control Act of 1938 was passed. This was the impetus for a series of dams and reservoirs that were to be built in Arkansas over the coming decades. In 1940, the USACE proposed a dam on the Petit Jean River to control flooding in Logan County. Construction of the dam began that year but was halted in 1942 due to World War II. After the war ended, construction resumed, and the dam and lake were completed in June 1947 at a cost of \$4,770,000. The dam is an earthen structure, 115 feet high and 2,800 feet long. The Blue Mountain Lake covers about 4.5 square miles—roughly 2,880 acres—and provides about fifty miles of shoreline. It receives drainage from about 500 square miles of land. A nearby Corps of Engineers office oversees the lake and dam (Tesce, 2017).

Figure 3-5. Blue Mountain Dam Under Construction July 13, 1946



Previous Archaeological Investigations within the Blue Mountain Lake Fee Boundary

There are more than 115 known archaeological sites located wholly or in part on USACE fee lands associated with Blue Mountain Lake.

While the majority of archaeological sites at Blue Mountain Lake have been identified individually and separate from a survey, multiple formal archaeological surveys have been completed at Blue Mountain Lake since the 1970s in response to ongoing activities such as lake construction, inadvertent discoveries, and NHPA Section 106 compliance. This section includes an overview of work conducted in the area. The first archaeological survey known to take place within USACE fee lands of Blue Mountain Lake was conducted by Arkansas Archeological Society (AAS) in 1977 that identified 39 archaeological sites (Padgett, 1977). Historic Preservation Associates, LLC. surveyed a seismic test transect in 1983 that identified no new cultural resources (Klinger, 1983). In 1986 the Arkansas State Highway and Transportation Department (AHTD) conducted a survey for the locations of proposed bridge locations and approaches along the Petit Jean River that identified no new cultural resources. Briscoe Consulting Services surveyed two seismographic test lines in 1989 identified three new sites (Briscoe, 1989). Historic Preservation Associates conducted a survey along three proposed seismic corridors in 1990, one of which that crossed USACE fee lands at Blue Mountain Lake within which no new cultural resources were documented (Klinger and Smith, 1991).

Spears, Inc. conducted an archaeological survey for a proposed waterline extension in 1992 that identified two new sites (Hoffman and Waddell, 1992). The AHTD surveyed for a bridge replacement on USACE fee lands in 2004 that identified no new archaeological sites (Hughes, 2004). Historic Preservation Associates, LLC. conducted a survey ahead a proposed drill pad, access road, and pipeline in 2005 that identified no new archaeological sites. Historic Preservation Associates surveyed for improvements to water lines and found a single new site in 2006 (Klinger, 2006). The AAS conducted an archaeological salvage project of a site in 2016 (Porter, 2016).

Archaeological Consultants, Inc. and Coastal Environments, Inc. collaborated on two surveys, one in 2018 and another in 2019. The 2018 survey identified four new archaeological sites while the 2019 survey identified six new archaeological sites (Horvath, 2018) (Horvath, 2019). Coastal Environments, Inc. conducted a survey in 2016 that identified three new archaeological sites (Weinstein and Phillips et. al., 2019). AmaTerra Environmental, Inc. conducted three surveys in between 2021 and 2022 in which they identified two, four, and one new archaeological site(s), respectively (Thomas et. al., 2022a) (Thomas et. al., 2022b) (Thomas et. al., 2022c).

Long-Term Objectives for Cultural Resources

As funding allows, the Little Rock District will plan and budget for a Historic Preservation Management Plan (HPMP) that shall be developed and incorporated into the Operational Management Plan (OMP) in accordance with EP 1130-2-540. The purpose of the HPMP is to provide a comprehensive program to direct the historic preservation activities and objectives at Blue Mountain Lake and it will be accomplished if future funding is forthcoming. Completion of a full inventory of cultural resources at Blue Mountain Lake is a long-term objective that is needed for compliance with Section 110 of the National Historic Preservation Act (NHPA). All currently known sites with unknown eligibility and newly recorded sites must be evaluated to determine their eligibility for the NRHP. Identification and evaluation of sites is an ongoing process at Blue Mountain Lake. As more significant sites are identified, they could be protected

through further land classifications.

In accordance with Section 106 of the NHPA, any proposed activities or projects at Blue Mountain Lake will require review by District Archaeologists to assess their potential to impact historic properties. These activities may include those described in this master plan or those that may be proposed in the future by others for leases, licenses, right-of-way easements, recreational development, construction, wildlife management, or other activities that can be considered undertakings subject to Section 106 of the NHPA. The need for cultural resource surveys to locate and evaluate historic and prehistoric resources, consultation, or other compliance activities related to Section 106 of the NHPA shall be determined and coordinated by a qualified District Archaeologist. Resources determined eligible for the NRHP must be protected from proposed project impacts, or the impacts must be mitigated in consultation with appropriate parties.

The Archaeological Resources Protection Act (ARPA) secures the protection of archaeological resources and sites on lands owned and administered by the United States for the benefit of the American people. According to ARPA, it is illegal to excavate, remove, damage, or deface archaeological resources on public lands without a permit issued by the federal agency managing the land. It is also illegal to sell or transport archaeological resources removed from public lands. Little Rock District requires permits for archaeological investigations at Blue Mountain Lake in accordance with ARPA, and is increasing surveillance and coordination with law enforcement agencies in the state to enforce ARPA civil and criminal penalties.

According to the Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act (NAGPRA), it is the responsibility of a federal agency to inventory human remains and associated funerary objects, as well as summarize any potential sacred objects, that existed within their archaeological collections prior to the passage of the law and, to the extent possible, identify their cultural affiliation in order to repatriate such objects to affiliated Tribes requesting their return. In addition, there are responsibilities related to the inadvertent discovery of human remains or funerary objects that occurred on federal land after the passage of the law that require a separate process of consultation, affiliation determinations, and notifications prior to repatriation. Although NAGPRA compliance has been an ongoing focus of the Little Rock District and many consultations and repatriations have occurred over the past 25-30 years, there is still more work to be done.

In recognition of the significance of the responsibility the Little Rock District has to ensure the proper and respectful treatment of the individuals who have been - or may inadvertently be - disinterred from Little Rock District land, and acknowledging the fact that this work requires more than a part-time effort to be accomplished, a new full-time position has been established to focus on the proper execution of this responsibility. The intensive process to verify existing documentation and complete any missing part of the process for all collections of human remains, funerary objects, or sacred objects subject to NAGPRA in Little Rock District archaeological collections is in progress. As a necessity, this renewed effort is starting with research and reorganization of associated records and archaeological collections to ensure the proper identification and initial inventory of all NAGPRA materials that are under the control of Little Rock District. This effort will include NAGPRA collections that have been made – or may yet be discovered – at Blue Mountain Lake, therefore, compliance with NAGPRA is ongoing.

3.10 Air Quality

The Clean Air Act (CAA) of 1970 is the comprehensive federal law that regulates air emissions

from stationary and mobile sources. Among other things, this law authorizes the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) to establish National Ambient Air Quality Standards (NAAQS) to protect public health and welfare and to regulate emissions of hazardous air pollutants. NAAQS define the maximum permissible concentrations six pollutants, known as criteria pollutants. Criteria pollutants include Carbon Monoxide (CO), Lead (Pb), Nitrogen Dioxide (NO₂), Ozone (O₃), Particulate Matter (PM₁₀ and PM_{2.5}), and Sulfur Dioxide (SO₂). Primary standards provide public health protection, including protecting the health of "sensitive" populations such as asthmatics, children, and the elderly. Secondary standards provide public welfare protection, including protection against decreased visibility and damage to animals, crops, vegetation, and buildings.

The ADEE Office of Air Quality works to meet Arkansas' federal obligations under the CAA. All counties within the State of Arkansas encompassing Blue Mountain Lake are in attainment for all NAAQS criteria pollutants (EPA, 2023). According to the ADEE, the entire state of Arkansas is compliant with all EPA ambient air quality standards. Only ozone concentrations occasionally approach the limit of the standard. The Conformity Rule of the CAA, as amended, states that all Federal actions must conform to appropriate State Implementation Plans (SIPs). This rule took effect on January 31, 1994, and at present applies only to Federal actions in non-attainment areas (those not meeting the National Ambient Air Quality Standards for the criteria pollutants in the CAA). The State of Arkansas, including the Blue Mountain Lake area, is considered an attainment area and is therefore exempt from the Conformity Rule of the CAA.

Although there are some populated areas around Blue Mountain Lake, they are not in close proximity. Areas surrounding the lake are rural and therefore no major emission sources are located directly on project lands. Around the lake, agricultural practices may contribute adversely to air quality. Sources at the Blue Mountain Lake Project produce negligible quantities of emissions. Stationary emissions include those emitted from utilities at lake recreation and operations facilities. Mobile sources include recreational and operational boat and vehicle engines as well as area traffic.

3.11 Socio-Economic Resources and Environmental Justice

3.11.1 Zone of Interest

Blue Mountain Dam is located on the Petit Jean River, around 75 miles upstream from its confluence with the Arkansas River and approximately 1.8 miles southwest of Waveland, Arkansas in the Arkansas River Basin. The zone of influence (ZOI) for the socio-economic analysis of Blue Mountain Lake encompasses two states, Arkansas (AR) and Oklahoma (OK), and 15 counties (Table 3-9). The ZOI for the purposes of this Master Plan and EA is defined as those areas within a 50-mile driving distance from the lake, based primarily on historic visitation information. The demographic and socioeconomic description in this section of the report is summarized at the county level.

Table 3-9. Zone of Interest Counties

Zone of Interest Counties	
Conway County, AR	Polk County, AR
Crawford County, AR	Pope County, AR
Franklin County, AR	Scott County, AR
Garland County, AR	Sebastian County, AR
Johnson County, AR	Yell County, AR
Logan County, AR	Le Flore County, OK
Montgomery County, AR	Sequoyah County, OK
Perry County, AR	

3.11.2 Population

The total population for the ZOI in 2020 was 591,418, as shown in Table 3-10. Approximately 22% of the ZOI population resides in Sebastian County, AR, 16% in Garland County, AR, and 10% in Pope County, AR. All counties are expected to see growth except Crawford County, Logan County, Montgomery County, Polk County, AR, and Le Flore and Sequoyah Counties, OK. From 2020 to 2050, the population in the ZOI is expected to increase from 591,418 to approximately 640,176. The distribution of the population among gender, as shown in Table 3-11 is approximately 49% male and 51% female in the ZOI. Population age 65 and older represented averaged 19.5% of the total population within the ZOI or a total of 115,576 persons.

Table 3-10. Population of the Blue Mountain ZOI

Geographical Area	2010	2020	2021 Population Estimate	2050 Population Projection	65 years of Age and Older
Arkansas	2,915,918	3,011,524	3,006,309	3,832,115	536,051
Oklahoma	3,751,351	3,959,353	3,958,136	4,376,036	649,334
Conway County, AR	21,273	20,715	20,687	23,482	4,164
Crawford County, AR	61,948	60,133	60,483	53,745	10,824
Franklin County, AR	18,125	17,097	17,159	18,751	3,454
Garland County, AR	96,024	100,180	99,694	108,554	25,145
Johnson County, AR	25,540	25,749	25,853	27,228	4,583
Logan County, AR	22,353	21,131	21,299	19,871	4,332
Montgomery County, AR	9,487	8,484	8,525	6,795	2,325
Perry County, AR	10,445	10,019	10,056	10,353	2,114
Polk County, AR	20,662	19,221	19,476	18,639	4,517
Pope County, AR	61,754	63,381	63,234	83,366	10,521
Scott County, AR	11,233	9,836	9,928	10,949	2,115
Sebastian County, AR	125,744	127,799	127,941	154,662	21,854
Yell County, AR	22,185	20,263	20,489	21,461	3,708
Le Flore County, OK	50,384	48,129	48,436	46,106	8,615
Sequoyah County, OK	42,391	39,281	39,652	36,214	7,306
ZOI Total	599,548	591,418	592,912	640,176	115,576

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2010 and 2020 Decennial Census. U.S. Census Bureau, 2021 American Community Survey 5-Year (2017-2021). 2050 Population Projections from Arkansas Economic Development Institute and Oklahoma Department of Commerce.

Table 3-11. 2021 Percent of Population Estimate by Gender

Geographical Area	Male	Female
Arkansas	1,483,520	1,522,789
Oklahoma	1,964,927	1,983,209
Conway County, AR	10,264	10,423
Crawford County, AR	29,880	30,603
Franklin County, AR	8,486	8,673
Garland County, AR	48,107	51,587
Johnson County, AR	12,872	12,981
Logan County, AR	10,492	10,807
Montgomery County, AR	4,305	4,220
Perry County, AR	5,110	4,946
Polk County, AR	9,534	9,942
Pope County, AR	31,348	31,886
Scott County, AR	5,302	4,626
Sebastian County, AR	62,886	65,055
Yell County, AR	10,426	10,063
Le Flore County, OK	24,311	24,125
Sequoyah County, OK	19,629	20,023
ZOI Total	292,952	299,960
<i>Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2021 American Community Survey 5-Year (2017-2021)</i>		

Population by Race and Hispanic Origin is displayed in Table 3-12. The ZOI is approximately 73.5% white, 11.1% Hispanic or Latino, 4.9% Black, 3.6% American Indian and Alaska native, 0.9% Asian, <0.0% native Hawaiian-Pacific Islander, 0.1% some other race and 5.8% two or more races.

Table 3-12. Population Estimate by Race/Hispanic Origin

Area	White	Hispanic or Latino	Black	American Indian and Alaska Native	Asian	Native Hawaiian and Other Pacific Islander	Some other race	Two or more races
Arkansas	2,123,715	236,001	455,748	13,665	45,575	10,408	6,267	114,930
Oklahoma	2,533,380	443,914	278,454	285,097	87,388	6,155	9,148	304,600
Conway County, AR	16,774	871	2,119	85	125	-	-	713
Crawford County, AR	50,280	4,979	836	701	782	17	168	2,720
Franklin County, AR	15,400	589	136	65	142	-	-	827
Garland County, AR	80,861	5,982	8,213	702	692	80	32	3,132
Johnson County, AR	20,179	3,668	412	29	83	40	82	760
Logan County, AR	18,851	652	306	92	35	-	10	1,023
Montgomery County, AR	7,716	383	43	94	83	-	-	206
Perry County, AR	9,181	310	256	7	6	-	-	296
Polk County, AR	16,964	1,290	79	294	56	45	120	628
Pope County, AR	52,601	6,026	1,493	139	764	8	56	2,147
Scott County, AR	8,319	794	291	34	76	-	-	414
Sebastian County, AR	8,712	18,931	7,723	1,107	564	-	105	6,699
Yell County, AR	15,210	4,274	342	59	228	-	-	376
Le Flore County, OK	33,833	3,560	861	5,421	380	-	39	4,342
Sequoyah County, OK	2,415	1,850	791	8,716	364	24	48	3,714
ZOI	357,296	54,159	23,901	17,545	4,380	214	660	27,997
<i>Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2021 American Community Survey 5 Year (2017-2021)</i>								

3.11.3 Education and Employment

Table 3-13 displays the highest level of education attained by the population ages 25 and over. In the ZOI, 5.1% of the population has less than a 9th grade education, and another 9.4% has between a 9th and 12th grade education; 35.2% has a high school diploma or equivalent, and another 22.5% has some college and no degree; 8.2% has an Associate degree; 13.1% has a bachelor's degree, and

6.5% has a graduate or professional degree.

Table 3-13. Highest Level of Educational Attainment, Population 25 Years of Age and Older

Area	Population 25 years and over	Less than 9th grade	9th to 12th grade, no diploma	High school graduate (includes equivalency)	Some college, no degree	Associate degree	Bachelor's degree	Graduate or professional degree
Arkansas	2,021,290	93,191	155,530	688,732	437,893	154,675	313,527	177,742
Oklahoma	2,607,741	99,948	193,425	803,726	595,930	214,570	457,256	242,886
Conway County, AR	14,381	640	1,066	5,896	2,790	1,303	2,009	677
Crawford County, AR	40,859	1,802	4,359	13,947	9,198	3,761	5,541	2,251
Franklin County, AR	11,803	662	934	4,911	2,863	1,182	914	337
Garland County, AR	72,278	1,885	5,070	23,014	18,195	6,936	11,173	6,005
Johnson County, AR	16,953	1,552	1,825	6,929	3,143	788	1,751	965
Logan County, AR	15,100	579	1,274	6,704	3,432	1,203	1,260	648
Montgomery County, AR	6,421	318	712	2,111	1,729	566	701	284
Perry County, AR	7,090	245	372	3,076	1,727	429	893	348
Polk County, AR	13,607	505	1,064	5,178	3,646	1,102	1,322	790
Pope County, AR	40,886	2,344	4,098	13,836	8,388	2,718	6,480	3,022
Scott County, AR	6,921	536	851	2,827	1,436	514	562	195
Sebastian County, AR	85,679	5,282	7,932	25,325	20,426	6,155	13,072	7,487
Yell County, AR	13,905	1,249	1,886	5,240	2,739	838	1,372	581
Le Flore County, OK	32,447	1,736	3,385	13,027	6,218	3,113	3,420	1,548
Sequoyah County, OK	26,917	1,465	3,234	10,609	5,092	2,681	2,780	1,056
ZOI	405,247	20,800	38,062	142,630	91,022	33,289	53,250	26,194
<i>Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2021 American Community Survey 5-Year (2017-2021)</i>								

Employment by sector is presented in Table 3-14, showing that the largest percentage of the ZOI is employed in the educational services, and health care and social assistance sector at 22.4%, followed by manufacturing at 15.8%, and retail trade at 12.3%.

Table 3-14. Annual Average Employment by Sector

Employment Sector	Arkansas	Oklahoma	Conway County, AR	Crawford County, AR	Franklin County, AR	Garland County, AR	Johnson County, AR	Logan County, AR	Montgomery County, AR	Perry County, AR	Polk County, AR	Pope County, AR	Scott County, AR	Sebastian County, AR	Yell County, AR	Le Flore County, OK	Sequoyah County, OK	ZOI
Civilian employed population 16 years and over	1,310,863	1,786,742	9,044	24,572	6,824	41,466	10,535	9,118	3,119	3,782	7,466	26,903	4,192	58,021	9,120	18,436	15,177	247,775
Agriculture, forestry, fishing and hunting, and mining	33,858	75,146	663	385	334	572	391	540	304	215	505	560	302	1,150	616	1,346	468	8,351
Construction	93,603	127,323	731	1,727	565	3,668	690	374	286	599	554	1,559	213	3,874	587	1,392	1,210	18,029
Manufacturing	173,633	170,052	1,614	4,586	1,643	2,882	2,675	2,079	325	474	1,170	4,672	1,167	9,688	1,976	2,243	1,956	39,150
Wholesale trade	31,953	43,614	204	514	90	955	57	48	71	48	188	646	127	1,738	95	400	322	5,503
Retail trade	170,365	206,484	822	3,267	594	5,832	1,538	1,190	445	544	919	3,245	301	6,861	935	2,359	1,701	30,553
Transportation and warehousing, and utilities	78,705	100,374	506	1,724	556	1,054	616	519	199	190	442	2,137	205	4,144	619	1,406	817	15,134
Information	17,000	27,555	118	151	42	811	62	103	14	49	64	239	29	552	120	155	65	2,574
Finance and insurance, and real estate and rental and leasing	65,352	99,119	186	1,141	300	2,258	320	231	136	118	194	1,235	231	2,456	262	715	689	10,472
Professional, scientific, and management, and administrative and waste management services	101,903	158,036	778	1,862	249	4,004	340	518	245	282	354	1,860	329	5,291	642	926	1,027	18,707
Educational services, and health care and social assistance	319,672	407,799	2,132	5,278	1,494	9,403	2,107	2,230	665	730	1,837	6,370	805	12,552	1,703	4,399	3,873	55,578
Arts, entertainment, and recreation, and accommodation and food services	103,712	168,114	498	1,920	384	5,291	724	503	164	246	718	2,560	169	5,077	884	1,359	1,754	22,251
Other services, except public administration	62,683	92,997	306	1,362	184	2,970	612	437	145	98	299	1,151	149	2,507	399	809	502	11,930
Public administration	58,424	110,129	486	655	389	1,766	403	346	120	189	222	669	165	2,131	282	927	793	9,543
Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2021 American Community Survey 5-Year (2017-2021)																		

3.11.4 Households, Income and Poverty

Table 3-15 displays the number of households and average household sizes in the state and ZOI. There were approximately 231,718 households in the ZOI with an average household size of 2.53.

Table 3-15. Households and Household Size

Geographic Area	Total Households	Average Household Size
Arkansas	1,158,460	2.53
Oklahoma	1,503,868	2.56
Conway County, AR	8,460	2.43
Crawford County, AR	22,748	2.63
Franklin County, AR	6,718	2.51
Garland County, AR	41,919	2.34
Johnson County, AR	9,849	2.55
Logan County, AR	8,271	2.51
Montgomery County, AR	3,669	2.29
Perry County, AR	3,732	2.66
Polk County, AR	7,736	2.50
Pope County, AR	23,304	2.58
Scott County, AR	3,938	2.51
Sebastian County, AR	51,587	2.45
Yell County, AR	7,541	2.67
Le Flore County, OK	17,623	2.67
Sequoyah County, OK	14,623	2.69
ZOI	231,718	2.53
<i>Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2021 American Community Survey 5-Year (2017-2021)</i>		

The median household income in the ZOI ranged from \$40,628 in Johnson County, AR to \$68,605 in Saline County, AR displayed in Table 3-16. Per capita income in the ZOI was \$26,163, which is lower than the states of Arkansas and Oklahoma.

Table 3-16. 2021 Median and Per Capita Income

Geographic Area	Median Household Income	Per Capita Income
Arkansas	52,123	29,210
Oklahoma	56,956	30,976
Conway County, AR	45,812	27,435
Crawford County, AR	52,057	26,609
Franklin County, AR	42,128	22,391
Garland County, AR	49,985	29,214
Johnson County, AR	40,628	22,509
Logan County, AR	46,570	24,061
Montgomery County, AR	41,032	24,184
Perry County, AR	47,500	24,857
Polk County, AR	43,444	26,879
Pope County, AR	47,322	26,212
Pulaski County, AR	55,235	35,718
Saline County, AR	68,605	33,861
Scott County, AR	43,577	22,064
Sebastian County, AR	50,226	29,684
Yell County, AR	51,070	24,771
Le Flore County, OK	43,049	22,167
Sequoyah County, OK	43,496	22,158
ZOI Mean	47,749	26,163
<i>Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2021 American Community Survey 5-Year (2017-2021)</i>		

Table 3-17 displays the percentage of persons and families whose incomes fell below the poverty level during in the year 2021. Within the ZOI, Le Flore County, OK had the greatest share of people with incomes below the poverty level at 17.0% followed by Polk County, AR at 16.6%, and Montgomery County, AR at 16.1%. In terms of all persons below the poverty level, Franklin County, AR had the greatest share of people with incomes below the poverty level at 22.8%, followed by Le Flore County, OK at 21.2%. The average poverty rate for the ZOI in the year 2021 was 18% compared to the United States that was 11.5%. The unemployment rate for the ZOI in 2021 averaged 5.8% compared to the poverty rate of 4.3% for the United States.

Table 3-17. Percent of Families and People Whose Income in the Prior 12 Months is Below the Poverty Level (2021)

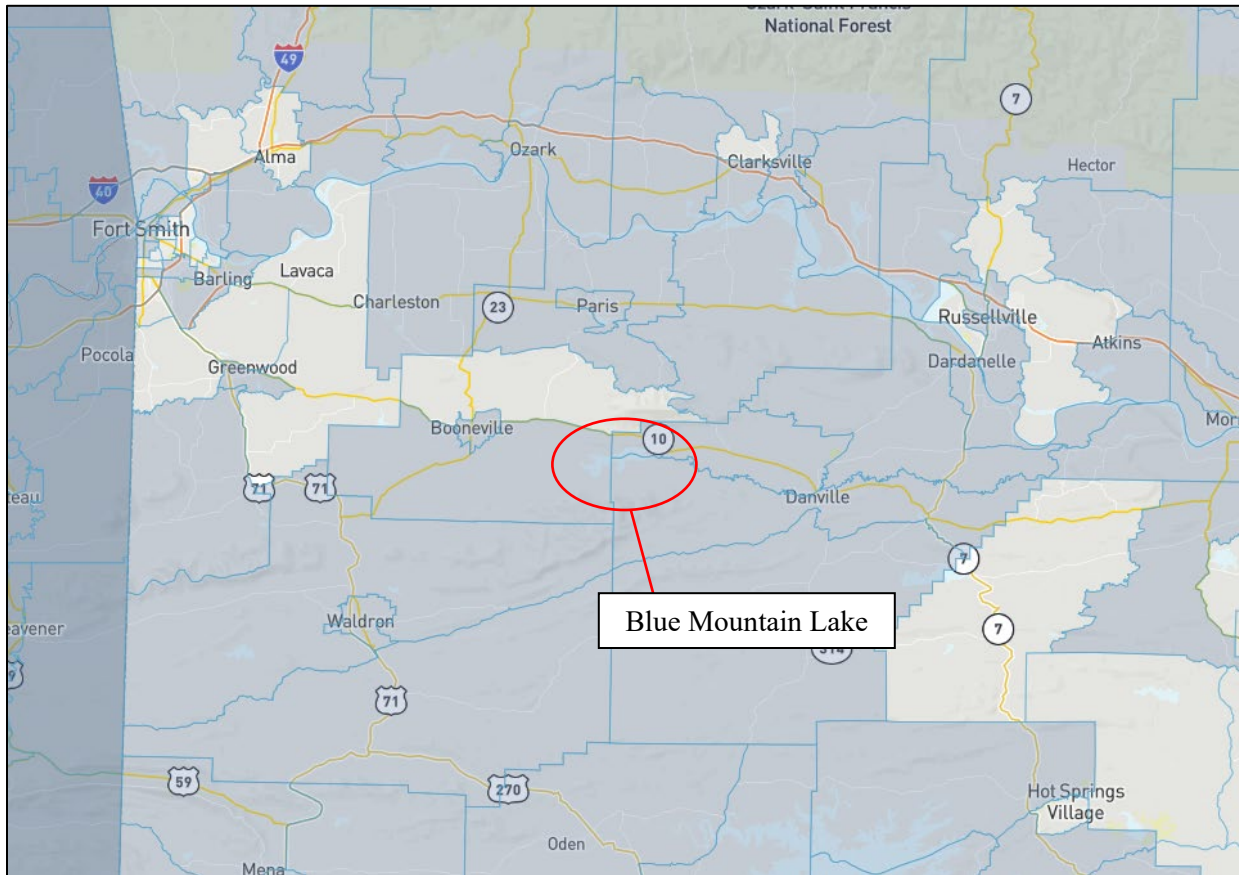
Geographic Area	All Families	All People
Arkansas	11.6	16.0
Oklahoma	11.0	15.2
Conway County, AR	13.3	18.9
Crawford County, AR	12.2	17.7
Franklin County, AR	14.7	22.8
Garland County, AR	10.9	16.2
Johnson County, AR	13.9	18.9
Logan County, AR	10.5	15.7
Montgomery County, AR	16.1	18.9
Perry County, AR	13.1	15.3
Polk County, AR	16.6	20.9
Pope County, AR	12.5	17.4
Scott County, AR	11.2	15.2
Sebastian County, AR	12.6	17.5
Yell County, AR	11.0	13.8
Le Flore County, OK	17.0	21.2
Sequoyah County, OK	14.4	19.4
ZOI Median	13.3	18.0
<i>Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2021 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates (2017-2021)</i>		

3.11.5 Environmental Justice

Environmental Justice (EJ) is the fair treatment and meaningful involvement of all people regardless of race, color, national origin, or income with respect to the development, implementation, and enforcement of environmental laws, regulations, and policies. EJ is achieved when everyone enjoys the same degree of protections and equal access to Civil Works programs and services to achieve a healthy environment in which to live. The CEQ Climate and Economic Justice Screening Tool (CEJST) was utilized to conduct a review of disadvantaged census tracts within the project area (CEQ, 2023).

Figure 3-6 below is a screenshot of the CEJST mapping tool spanning the study area, which shades census tracts in blue if they are considered disadvantaged by CEQ definition. Census tracts in green are not considered disadvantaged, those in light blue are considered disadvantaged for any metric evaluated that exceeds the CEQ's acceptable threshold, and dark blue census tracts represent those considered disadvantaged because they contain Federal Indian land area, in addition to any of the other metrics evaluated.

Figure 3-6. CEJST Map of the Blue Mountain Lake Area



A majority of the census tracts within the ZOI are identified in the Council on Environmental Quality (CEQ) Climate and Economic Justice Screening Tool (CEJST) as economically disadvantaged. Contributing factors across the more rural areas surrounding Blue Mountain Lake include climate change, related to expected agriculture, building, and population loss rates resulting from natural hazards; health, including high rates of diabetes and heart disease; legacy pollution, related to the presence of abandoned land mines (off of federal property) as well as proximity to Risk Management Plan (RMP) facilities and Superfund sites; and transportation barriers, related to transportation barriers, defined as the average relative cost and time spent on transportation.

The nearest, more urban areas include the cities of Russellville and Fort Smith, Arkansas, that face unique economic disadvantages in addition to those EJ concerns listed above for rural communities. Russellville is considered economically disadvantaged due to expected population loss rate, or fatalities and injuries resulting from natural hazards each year; workforce development, including low median income, linguistic isolation, poverty, and unemployment all paired with a high proportion of those with less than a high school education; proximity to RMP facilities; and high rates of heart disease, all paired with an average low income (roughly 80th percentile) above the 65th percentile threshold when compared to the Nation. Fort Smith is considered disadvantaged for metrics related to energy cost, low life expectancy, proximity to RMP facilities, and poverty. Booneville also experiences similar economic characteristics.

On a more local scale, the three census tracts immediately surrounding Blue Mountain Lake are

all considered disadvantaged. The recurring metrics contributing to this designation are primarily related to climate change and health variables, paired with a low income rate in the 84th to 88th percentile compared to that of the Nation. The following climate change factors, metrics impacted by natural hazards each year, that exceed the acceptable thresholds include expected agriculture loss rate, expected building loss rate, and expected population loss rate. These three census tracts average in the 92nd percentile for heart disease compared to national averages, exceeding the acceptable threshold of the 90th percentile. To the east of the lake in Logan County, the transportation barriers metric, defined as the average relative cost and time spent on transportation, is in the 93rd percentile paired with the low income rate at the 87th percentile, exceeding acceptable thresholds.

3.12 Recreation Resources

The Blue Mountain Lake Project serves as a staple recreational resource, not only for the local community, but also for the state of Arkansas. Many visitors, from both near and far, have fond memories of their childhood days camping on Blue Mountain Lake; some still carry on the tradition today by bringing their children or grandchildren. Many visitors have relatives that were members of the crews that constructed the dam. This continuation of tradition is what gives this lake value that cannot be expressed by monetary value. Blue Mountain Lake has been managed by USACE to preserve the natural beauty of the area, as well as utilize the land and natural resources to provide optimal recreational opportunities for visitors. Blue Mountain Lake offers numerous recreational opportunities such as camping, swimming, boating, canoeing, kayaking, picnicking, bird watching, fishing, and hunting. There are 15 recreation areas managed by USACE and one by the City of Magazine. Available recreation facilities are listed in Table 3-18 below.

Multiple parks and campgrounds, lake access points, boat ramps, and primitive camping areas exist on Blue Mountain Lake. Recreation area maps can be found in Appendix C. If adequate funding becomes available for park operation, recreation areas or portions of recreation areas will be brought up to current design standards and future development may occur as identified in the park descriptions below. However, these proposed improvements are not indicated on the park plates.

Table 3-18. Recreation Facilities at Blue Mountain Lake

Facility	Number of Sites
Recreation Areas	16
Group Shelters	3
Camping Sites	112
Playgrounds	3
Swimming Areas	1
Boat Ramps	9

For a detailed description of the recreational resources, as well as visitation data at Blue Mountain Lake, see Chapter 2 of the Blue Mountain Revised Master Plan.

3.13 Health and Safety

Safety of project visitors and project staff are the highest priority in daily project operations.

Facilities and recreational areas are routinely evaluated to ensure sites are safe for visitor use. Project staff conducts numerous water safety programs and public announcements to educate children and project visitors about ways to be safe on the lake. Life jacket loaner stations are provided for visitor use. Park Rangers provide visitor assistance and work with county law enforcement agencies to ensure public safety. Park Rangers and AGFC personnel provide water safety and enforcement patrols on the lake as their budgets allow.

3.14 Aesthetics

Management objectives include maintaining scenic vistas while limiting impacts that would negatively affect aesthetics. Natural landscapes and views of undeveloped lands are an important feature that enhances the recreational experience. The perimeter lands around Blue Mountain Lake provide a natural setting that is aesthetically pleasing while buffering the lake from development and negative impacts such as erosion and storm water runoff. However, there are problems in maintaining these aesthetic qualities. Project resource staff investigate trespasses that include activities such as timber cutting and land destruction by unauthorized off road vehicles. In addition, littering and illegal trash dumping both on project lands and in project waters are continual problems. Vandalism within recreation areas also occurs. Other concerns that impact aesthetics are demands put upon project resources for uses such as road and utility line corridors.

3.15 Hazardous, Toxic, and Radioactive Waste

This section describes existing conditions within the Project area with regard to potential environmental contamination and the sources of releases to the environment. No known, explicitly contaminated sites exist at the project. Contaminants could enter the lake environment via air or water pathways or through illegal trash dumping. While no marinas exist at Blue Mountain Lake, there are numerous public campgrounds and recreational areas that could contribute small amounts of hazardous materials and waste to the watershed. USACE and area law enforcement officials work cooperatively to apprehend those responsible for illegal trash dumping.

4. ENVIRONMENTAL CONSEQUENCES

This section describes the potential impacts to the human and physical environment that would result from the implementation of Alternative 1 – No Action (1975 Plan), Alternative 2 – Preferred, and Alternative 3 – Limited Development, which are outlined in Section 3 of this document. Only those resources that have the potential to be affected by any of the alternatives are described, as per CEQ guidance (40 CFR § 1501.7 [3]). Some topics are limited in scope due to the lack of direct effect from Alternatives 2 and 3 on the resource, or because that particular resource or subject matter topic is not located, or is not a factor, within the project area.

Impacts (consequence or effect) can be either beneficial or adverse and can be either directly related to the action or indirectly caused by the action. Direct effects are caused by the action and occur at the same time and place (40 CFR § 1508.8[a]). Indirect effects are caused by the action and are later in time or further removed in distance but are still reasonably foreseeable (40 CFR § 1508.8[b]). As discussed in this section, the alternatives may create temporary (less than 1 year), short-term (up to 3 years), long-term (3 to 10 years) or permanent effects.

In considering whether the effects of each alternative are significant, agencies shall analyze the potentially affected environment and degree of the effects of the action (40 CFR 1501.3). Impacts on each resource can vary in degree or magnitude from a slightly noticeable change to a total change in the environment. For this analysis, the intensity of impacts would be classified as negligible, minor, moderate, or major. The intensity thresholds are defined as follows:

- Negligible: A resource would not be affected, or the effects would be at or below the level of detection, and changes would not be of any measurable or perceptible consequence.
- Minor: Effects on a resource would be detectable, although the effects would be localized, small, and of little consequence to the sustainability of the resource. Mitigation measures, if needed to offset adverse effects, would be simple and achievable.
- Moderate: Effects on a resource would be readily detectable, long-term, localized, and measurable. Mitigation measures, if needed to offset adverse effects, would be extensive and likely achievable.
- Major: Effects on a resource would be obvious and long-term and would have substantial consequences on a regional scale. Mitigation measures to offset adverse effects would be required and extensive, and success of the mitigation measures would not be guaranteed.

In considering the potentially affected environment, agencies should consider, as appropriate to the specific action, the affected area (national, regional, or local) and its resources, such as listed species and designated critical habitat under the Endangered Species Act. Significance varies with the setting of the alternatives, and significance is dependent on the extent of the affected area. In considering the degree of the effects, agencies should consider the following, as appropriate to the specific action:

- Both short- and long-term effects.
- Both beneficial and adverse effects.
- Effects on public health and safety.
- Effects that would violate Federal, State, Tribal, or local law protecting the environment.

4.1 Land Use

4.1.1 Alternative 1 – No Action

Under the No Action Alternative, there will be no impacts to land use within the project area as no action will take place and existing conditions will not be altered.

4.1.2 Alternative 2 – Preferred

The Preferred Alternative would have no impact on existing land uses within the Blue Mountain Lake project area or surrounding areas. The land classification revisions proposed under the Preferred Alternative are intended to reflect current and anticipated land uses and management practices, and no construction efforts or changes to existing uses would occur as a result. Therefore, there will be no significant short- or long-term impacts to land use as a result of the Preferred Alternative.

4.1.3 Alternative 3 – Limited Development

Similar to the Preferred Alternative, the Limited Development Alternative would have no impact on existing land uses within the Blue Mountain Lake project area or surrounding areas. While this alternative involves further limiting High and Low Density Recreation acreage and proposes an increase in Environmentally Sensitive Areas, the permitted activities under each of these classifications would still enable existing uses and management practices to occur. The land classification revisions proposed under the Limited Development Alternative are largely representative of current and anticipated land uses and management practices, and no construction efforts or changes to existing uses would occur as a result. Therefore, there will be no significant short- or long-term impacts to land use as a result of the Limited Development Alternative.

4.2 Climate, Climate Change, and Greenhouse Gases

4.2.1 Alternative 1 – No Action

The No Action Alternative does not involve any activities that would contribute to changes in existing conditions. There would be no impacts to climate, climate change, or GHG emissions as a result of implementing the No Action Alternative.

4.2.2 Alternative 2 – Preferred

The Preferred Alternative would have no significant impact on the climate of the study area, nor on climate change. Because the land classification conversions proposed in the Preferred Alternative are reflective of existing land use and land management practices at Blue Mountain Lake, and no construction efforts are involved under this alternative that would contribute to GHG emissions, no impacts to climate or climate change are expected as a result of its implementation.

4.2.3 Alternative 3 – Limited Development

Similar to the Preferred Alternative, the Limited Development Alternative would have no significant impact on the climate of the study area, nor on climate change. Additionally, it would not impact GHG emissions. While land area available for future development will decrease under this alternative, the reclassification of land largely reflects existing management practices.

No construction efforts that would contribute to GHG emissions are involved under the Limited Development Alternative, and therefore no impacts to climate or climate change are expected as a result of its implementation.

4.3 Topography, Geology, Soils, Prime Farmland, and Mineral Resources

4.3.1 Alternative 1 – No Action

The No Action Alternative does not involve any activities that would contribute to changes in existing conditions, so there would be no impacts on topography, geology, soils, prime farmland, or mineral resources as a result of implementing the No Action Alternative.

4.3.2 Alternative 2 – Preferred

Topography, geology, and soils were considered during the refining process of land reclassifications for the 2024 Master Plan. Under the Preferred Alternative, total acreage for High Density Recreation would be reduced from 1,738.4 acres to 403.5 acres. This net reduction is based on the realization that the amount of acreage originally planned for intensive recreation use per the 1975 Master Plan was, in reality, being utilized as other land classifications under current land management practices and uses. Under Alternative 2, existing park areas would remain largely unchanged.

Land reclassifications and new resource objectives proposed as part of the Preferred Alternative would have a potential long-term beneficial impact on soil conservation at Blue Mountain Lake. The reduction of High and Low Density Recreation Areas will limit future intensive development, thus reducing potential adverse impacts from soil erosion and pervious surface conversion. The new resource objectives will provide a level of consistency in beneficial management practices that would not occur with the No Action Alternative. As described in Chapter 3 of the revised Master Plan, resource goals B, C, D, and E, and several natural resource management objectives, particularly those that concern addressing unauthorized uses of public land, evaluating erosion control, and addressing sedimentation issues, are supported by the proposed classifications. Prime and unique farmlands at Blue Mountain Lake, including areas leased for agricultural practices by USACE and through AGFC, will remain, as will existing mineral rights and operations. Therefore, under the Preferred Alternative, there would be long-term, minor beneficial impacts to topography, geology, soils, and prime farmland at the Project.

4.3.3 Alternative 3 – Limited Development

Similar to the Preferred Alternative, land reclassification proposed as a part of the Limited Development Alternative would have a potential for minor, long-term beneficial impact on topography, geology, and soils. Total acreage for High Density Recreation would be reduced from 1,738.4 acres to 188.6 acres, which would limit future intensive development, providing increased protection to existing soils. Roughly 1,235 acres of High Density Recreation lands will be converted to Wildlife Development, contributing soil and topography protection by conserving natural vegetation communities in these areas and allowing for management practices that would enhance these resources. Environmentally Sensitive Areas totals 784.0 acres, compared to 288.9 acres in the No Action Alternative. This would provide increased protection to landscapes with scientific, ecological, cultural, and aesthetic features that have been identified. Prime and unique farmlands at Blue Mountain Lake, including areas leased for agricultural practices by USACE and through AGFC, will remain, as will existing mineral rights and

operations. Though land development would be further restricted in Alternative 3 compared to Alternative 2, this alternative would also have minor, long-term beneficial impacts to topography, geology, soils, and prime farmland.

4.4 Aquatic Environment

4.4.1 Hydrology and Groundwater

4.4.1.1 Alternative 1 – No Action

There would be no short- or long-term impacts on hydrology and groundwater as a result of implementing the No Action Alternative, since there would be no change to the existing Master Plan.

4.4.1.2 Alternative 2 – Preferred

The reclassifications included in the Preferred Action would allow land management and land uses to be compatible with the goals of good stewardship of natural resources. Land reclassifications and new resource objectives proposed as part of the Preferred Alternative would have a potential for negligible, long-term beneficial impacts on hydrology and groundwater. For example, 784.0 acres would be classified as Environmentally Sensitive Areas compared to the No Action Alternative, which allocates 288.9 acres to strictly Environmentally Sensitive Areas (see Table 3-2). This directly supports resource goals B, D, and E and several natural resource management objectives, including the resource goals that consider watershed approach during decision-making process, all of which are further described in Chapter 3 of the revised Master Plan. While total Wildlife Management acreage decreases by 247.6 acres compared to the No Action Alternative, the vegetation conservation and management measures under this alternative will still serve to benefit groundwater quality. The net reduction of High Density Recreation lands from 1,738.4 acres in the No Action Alternative to 403.5 acres in the Preferred Alternative will limit future intensive development, thus reducing the potential for erosion, sedimentation, and conversion of pervious surfaces to impervious which increases runoff. The Preferred Alternative would provide negligible, long-term beneficial impacts to hydrology and groundwater resources.

4.4.1.3 Alternative 3 – Limited Development

Similar to the Preferred Alternative, land reclassification proposed as a part of the Limited Development Alternative would have a potential for negligible, long-term beneficial impacts on hydrology and groundwater. Under this alternative, Wildlife Management lands total 9,049.6 acres, compared to 8,977.1 in the No Action Alternative. While the difference in acreage is minimal, the vegetation conservation and management measures under this land classification will still serve to benefit groundwater quality and infiltration. Environmentally Sensitive Areas totals 784.0 acres, compared to 288.9 acres in the No Action Alternative. This increase in Environmentally Sensitive Areas would potentially contribute to an increased rate of groundwater recharge by increasing rain fall absorption through vegetation. The net reduction of High Density Recreation lands from 1,738.4 acres to 188.6 acres will limit future intensive development, thus reducing potential infrastructure development, such as buildings, roads, and other impervious surfaces, that reduce groundwater recharge. Though land development would be further restricted in Alternative 3 compared to Alternative 2, this alternative would also have negligible,

long-term beneficial impacts on hydrology and groundwater resources.

4.4.2 Water Quality

4.4.2.1 Alternative 1 – No Action

There would be no short- or long-term impacts to existing water quality conditions as a result of implementing the No Action Alternative as there would be no change to the existing Master Plan.

4.4.2.2 Alternative 2 – Preferred

The reclassifications included in the Preferred Alternative would allow land management and land uses to be compatible with the goals of natural resource stewardship. Land reclassifications and new resource objectives proposed under 2024 Master Plan as part of the Preferred Action would have a potential for negligible, long-term beneficial impacts on water quality. Under the Preferred Alternative, 403.5 acres would be classified as Environmentally Sensitive compared to 288.9 acres in the No Action Alternative, and this classification serves to conserve existing biotic features by limiting future intensive development. This directly supports resource goals B, D, and E, and several natural resource management objectives, including the resource goals that aim to protect natural habitat, all of which are further described in Chapter 3 of the revised Master Plan. Under the Preferred Alternative, Wildlife Management lands decrease by 247.6 acres compared to the No Action, but benefits to water quality such as contaminant filtration through will still be realized. The net reduction of High Density Recreation lands from 1,738.4 acres to 403.5 acres will limit future intensive development, thus reducing the potential for erosion and sedimentation by retaining natural vegetation communities which act as buffers to trap runoff. As a result, the Preferred Alternative would provide negligible, long-term beneficial impacts to water quality.

4.4.2.3 Alternative 3 – Limited Development

Similar to the Preferred Alternative, the reclassifications included in the Limited Development Alternative would allow land management and land uses to be compatible with the goals of natural resource stewardship. Land reclassifications and new resource objectives proposed under 2024 Master Plan would have a potential for negligible, long-term beneficial impacts on water quality. Under the Limited Development Alternative, 784.0 acres would be classified as Environmentally Sensitive compared to 288.9 acres in the No Action Alternative, and this classification serves to conserve existing biotic features by limiting future intensive development. This directly supports resource goals B, D, and E, and several natural resource management objectives, including the resource goals that aim to protect natural habitat, all of which are further described in Chapter 3 of the revised Master Plan. Under this alternative, Wildlife Management lands total 9,049.6 acres, compared to 8,977.1 in the No Action Alternative. While the difference in acreage is minimal, the vegetation conservation and management measures under this land classification will still serve to benefit water quality. Although there is an increase in Low Density Recreation lands in the Limited Development Alternative (3,888.7) compared to the No Action (3,009.6), this primarily accounts for recreation activities that do not involve land disturbance and further development is not anticipated in most locations. The net reduction of High Density Recreation lands from 1,738.4 acres to 188.6 acres will limit future intensive development, thus reducing the potential for erosion and sedimentation

by retaining natural vegetation communities which act as buffers to trap runoff. As a result, the Preferred Alternative would provide negligible, long-term beneficial impacts to water quality.

4.4.3 Wetlands

4.4.3.1 Alternative 1 – No Action

There would be no significant short- or long-term impacts to wetlands as a result of implementing the No Action Alternative, since there would be no change to the existing Master Plan.

4.4.3.2 Alternative 2 – Preferred

The land reclassifications included in the Preferred Alternative would allow land management and land use to be compatible with the goal of wetland stewardship. Land reclassifications proposed as part of the Preferred Alternative would have a potential for negligible, long-term beneficial impacts on wetlands. For example, 690.1 acres are classified as Environmentally Sensitive Areas compared to the No Action Alternative, which allocates 288.9 acres to Environmentally Sensitive Areas. While wetlands are not extremely prevalent at Blue Mountain Lake, under this alternative, lands classified as Environmentally Sensitive Areas were primarily around shoreline and isolated areas, many of which encompass wet areas. Most wetland acreage has been identified in the lower reaches of the major tributary streams, and the limited High Density classification near the lower end of the lake, as reflected in this alternative, would prevent potential impacts to wetland resources by limiting the potential for intensive development in the future. Classifications in the Preferred Alternative would limit future intensive development, further reducing the potential vegetation removal, increased erosion, and general disturbances that could impact wetland area and quality. The Preferred Alternative would provide negligible, long-term beneficial impacts to wetlands.

4.4.3.3 Alternative 3 – Limited Development

Similar to the Preferred Alternative, land reclassification proposed under the Limited Development Alternative would have a potential for negligible, long-term beneficial impacts to wetlands. Under this alternative, Environmentally Sensitive Areas acreage totals 784.0 acres, compared to 288.9 acres in the No Action Alternative. The Environmentally Sensitive Areas classification would protect wetlands from adverse impacts such as erosion, land development, and sedimentation. Most wetland acreage has been identified in the lower reaches of the major tributary streams, and the limited High Density classification near the lower end of the lake, as reflected in this alternative, would prevent potential impacts to wetland resources by limiting the potential for intensive development in the future. Classifications in the Limited Development Alternative would limit future intensive development, further reducing the potential vegetation removal, increased erosion, and general disturbances that could impact wetland area and quality. While it provides more protections for natural areas around the lake compared to the Preferred Alternative, the Limited Development Alternative would also provide negligible, long-term beneficial impacts to wetlands.

4.4.4 Fish Species and Habitat

4.4.4.1 Alternative 1 – No Action

The No Action Alternative does not involve any activities that would contribute to changes in existing conditions; therefore, no significant short- or long-term impacts to fish species and their habitat would be anticipated as a result of implementing the No Action Alternative.

4.4.4.2 Alternative 2 – Preferred

Under the Preferred Alternative, the proposed net increase of Environmentally Sensitive Areas by 401.2 acres may cause negligible, long-term beneficial impacts to fish species and habitat within these areas. The Environmentally Sensitive Area classification provides the highest form of protection for fish species as it decreases the potential for soil erosion and sedimentation by retaining natural vegetative communities which act as buffers to trap runoff and filter water, thus improving water quality and available habitat for fish species. Additionally, protected vegetation could potentially contribute to reduced localized ambient air and water temperatures, benefitting fish habitat. In the Preferred Alternative, Wildlife Management acreage decreases by 247.6 acres compared to the No Action Alternative, but this is not expected to adversely impact fisheries. Instead, the management objectives outlined in the Revised Master Plan would allow project lands to continue supporting the USFWS missions associated with fish and wildlife conservation, such as drawdowns for fish habitat planting, and implementation of operational practices that would protect and enhance fishery populations and habitat.

4.4.4.3 Alternative 3 – Limited Development

Similar to the Preferred Alternative, land reclassification proposed as a part of the Limited Development Alternative would have a potential for minor, long-term beneficial impact on fish species and habitat. Under this alternative, Wildlife Management lands total 9,049.6 acres, compared to 8,977.1 in the No Action Alternative. Environmentally Sensitive Areas total 784.0 acres, compared to 288.9 acres in the No Action Alternative. This increase in Wildlife Management and Environmentally Sensitive classifications would help to decrease soil erosion and sedimentation by retaining natural vegetative communities, which act as buffers to trap runoff and filter water, thus improving water quality and available habitat for fish species. Additionally, protected vegetation could potentially contribute to reduced air and water temperatures by providing shade, benefitting fish habitat. The net reduction of High Density Recreation lands from 1,738.4 acres to 188.6 acres will limit future intensive development, thus reducing the potential impacts of soil erosion and subsequent sedimentation. Though land development would be further restricted in Alternative 3 compared to Alternative 2, this alternative would also have minor, long-term, beneficial impacts to fish species and habitat.

4.5 Terrestrial Resources

4.5.1 Wildlife

4.5.1.1 Alternative 1 – No Action

The No Action Alternative does not involve any activities that would contribute to changes in existing conditions; therefore, no significant short- or long-term adverse impacts to wildlife would be anticipated as a result of implementing the No Action Alternative.

4.5.1.2 Alternative 2 – Preferred

Under the Preferred Alternative, the proposed net increase in Environmentally Sensitive Areas by 401.2 acres would cause minor, long-term beneficial impacts to wildlife within these areas. The Environmentally Sensitive Areas classification provides the highest form of protection for wildlife by limiting most all anthropogenic disturbances, such as habitat fragmentation resulting from land development. Wildlife Management lands would make up 62% of available acreage, under which land management practices could be used to combat invasive species, implement beneficial prescribed burning, create food plots, and otherwise promote habitat for local wildlife and migratory birds. While Low Density Recreation acreage represents 29% of total land area in this alternative, the majority of the recreation activities under this alternative do not involve the creation and upkeep of infrastructure, such as hunting activities and primitive camping.

The Preferred Alternative would allow project lands to continue supporting federal and state missions associated with wildlife conservation and implementation of operational practices that would protect and enhance wildlife populations and habitat. In addition, the Preferred Alternative would be compatible with conservation principles and measures to protect migratory birds as mandated by EO 13186.

4.5.1.3 Alternative 3 – Limited Development

Land reclassification proposed as a part of the Limited Development Alternative would have a potential for minor, long-term beneficial impact on wildlife. The Environmentally Sensitive Areas classification totals 784.0 acres under Alternative 3, compared to 288.9 acres in the No Action Alternative. The Environmentally Sensitive Areas classification provides the highest form of protection for natural resources by preventing adverse disturbances that harm wildlife, such as habitat fragmentation. Wildlife Management lands increase by 72.5 acres compared to the No Action Alternative. This would result in 64% of available acreage classified as Wildlife Management lands, under which land management practices could be used to combat invasive species, implement beneficial prescribed burning, create food plots, and otherwise promote habitat for local wildlife and migratory birds. While Low Density Recreation acreage represents 28% of total land area in this alternative, the majority of the recreation activities under this alternative do not involve the creation and upkeep of infrastructure, such as hunting activities and primitive camping.

The Limited Development Alternative would allow project lands to continue supporting the USFWS missions associated with wildlife conservation and implementation of operational practices that would protect and enhance wildlife populations and habitat. In addition, this alternative would be compatible with conservation principles and measures to protect migratory birds as mandated by EO 13186.

4.5.2 Vegetation

4.5.2.1 Alternative 1 – No Action

The No Action Alternative does not involve any activities that would contribute to changes in existing conditions; therefore, no significant short- or long-term impacts to vegetation resources in the project area would be anticipated as a result of implementing the No Action Alternative.

4.5.2.2 Alternative 2 – Preferred

The proposed net increase of Environmentally Sensitive Areas by 401.2 acres would cause minor, long-term beneficial impacts to vegetation within these areas. The Environmentally Sensitive Areas classification protects vegetation from various adverse impacts such as removal for the land development. The net reduction of High Density Recreation lands from 1,738.4 acres to 403.5 acres will limit future intensive development, thus retaining natural vegetation communities which act as buffers to trap runoff. While Wildlife Management acreage decreases by 247.6 acres as compared to the No Action Alternative, Project Staff will continue to forest and invasive species management activities, including timber harvesting, prescribed burning, and the mechanical and/or chemical treatment of invasives, all of which promote healthy regeneration and biodiversity. The Preferred Alternative would provide minor, long-term beneficial impacts to vegetation.

4.5.2.3 Alternative 3 – Limited Development

Similar to the Preferred Alternative, land reclassification proposed as a part of the Limited Development Alternative would have a potential for minor, long-term beneficial impact on vegetation. Environmentally Sensitive Areas totals 784.0 acres, compared to 288.9 acres in the No Action Alternative. The Environmentally Sensitive Areas classification protects vegetation from various adverse impacts such as removal for the land development. In this alternative, Wildlife Management lands total 9,049.6 acres, compared to 8,977.1 acres in the No Action Alternative. Though the acreage increase is not significant, Project Staff will be able to continue forest and invasive species management activities on these lands, including timber harvesting, prescribed burning, and the mechanical and/or chemical treatment of invasives, all of which promote healthy regeneration and biodiversity. Though land development would be further restricted through the decrease in both High and Low Density Recreation Areas in this alternative, this alternative would also have minor, long-term beneficial impacts to vegetation.

4.6 Threatened and Endangered Species

4.6.1 Alternative 1 – No Action

The No Action Alternative does not involve any activities that would adversely impact threatened or endangered species or critical habitat protected under the Endangered Species Act. USACE has determined that the No Action Alternative will have No Effect on the Indiana Bat, Northern Long-eared Bat, Tricolored Bat, Eastern Black Rail, Piping Plover, Red Knot, Alligator Snapping Turtle, American Burying Beetle, or Monarch Butterfly.

4.6.2 Alternative 2 – Preferred

Under the Preferred Alternative, USACE would continue to manage federally owned lands to preserve, enhance, and protect wildlife habitat resources. To further management opportunities and beneficially impact habitat diversity, the reclassifications proposed in the Preferred Alternative include 690.1 total acres designated as Environmentally Sensitive land, which is protected from future development and ground disturbing activities, and 8,729.5 total acres designated as Wildlife Management land, under which land management activities that would enhance wildlife habitat are conducted. Because the Preferred Alternative does not entail any ground disturbing activities that could in any way disturb species, USACE has determined that the Preferred Alternative will have No Effect on the Indiana Bat, Northern Long-eared Bat,

Tricolored Bat, Eastern Black Rail, Piping Plover, Rufa Red Knot, Alligator Snapping Turtle, American Burying Beetle, or Monarch Butterfly.

4.6.3 Alternative 3 – Limited Development

Under the Limited Development Alternative, the USACE would continue to manage federally owned lands to preserve, enhance, and protect wildlife habitat resources. To further management opportunities and beneficially impact habitat diversity, the reclassifications under the Limited Development Alternative include 784.0 total acres as Environmentally Sensitive Areas, which recognize those areas having the highest ecological value and ensures they are given the highest order of protection among possible land classifications. Under the Environmentally Sensitive classification, threatened or endangered species, and state-listed plant and animal species found in these areas, will benefit from the prevention of ground disturbing activities. The 9,049.6 acres of Wildlife Management lands, under which programs such as planting food plots to enhance wildlife habitat are conducted, will further benefit threatened and endangered species. Because the Limited Development Alternative does not entail any ground disturbing activities that could in any way disturb species, USACE has determined that the Alternative 3 will have No Effect on the Indiana Bat, Northern Long-eared Bat, Tricolored Bat, Eastern Black Rail, Piping Plover, Red Knot, Alligator Snapping Turtle, American Burying Beetle, or Monarch Butterfly.

4.7 Invasive Species

4.7.1 Alternative 1 – No Action

The No Action Alternative does not involve any activities that would contribute to changes in existing conditions, so Blue Mountain Lake would continue to be managed according to the existing invasive species management practices. There would be no significant short- or long-term impacts to invasive species as a result of implementing the No Action Alternative.

4.7.2 Alternative 2 – Preferred

The land reclassifications, resource objectives, and resource plan required to revise the Blue Mountain Lake Master Plan are compatible with the lake's invasive species management practices. The 8,729.5 acres classified as Wildlife Management may result in long-term benefits to native species as these areas are subjected to invasive species management measures, including prescribed burning and mechanical or chemical treatment. Environmentally Sensitive Areas, totaling 690.1 acres, may also be subjected to invasive species management measures. The objectives developed under the Preferred Alternative as explained in detail in Chapter 3 of the revised Master Plan will result in minor, long-term beneficial impacts by reducing and preventing the spread of invasive species. The primary objective as related to invasive species include optimizing resources, labor, funds, and partnerships for the management and prevention of invasive species in and around Blue Mountain Lake. All of these would include a public outreach and education emphasis. Under the Preferred Alternative, there would be long-term, minor beneficial impacts to invasive species management to prevent or control the spread non-native of microbe, fungi, plant, or animal species.

4.7.3 Alternative 3 – Limited Development

The land reclassifications, resource objectives, and resource plan required to revise the Blue Mountain Lake Master Plan are compatible with the lake's invasive species management

practices. The addition of 495.1 acres to the Environmentally Sensitive classification and 72.5 acres to Wildlife Management may provide long-term benefits as these areas may receive additional invasive species management measures. High and Low Density Recreation Areas are also susceptible to invasive species management measures. These measures include both mechanical and chemical treatment, as well as prescribed burns at Wildlife Management Areas, to prevent or control the spread of microbe, fungi, plant, or animal species as needed. The objectives developed under the Limited Development Alternative as explained in detail in Chapter 3 of the revised Master Plan will result in minor, long-term beneficial impacts by reducing and preventing the spread of invasive species. The primary objective as related to invasive species include optimizing resources, labor, funds, and partnerships for the management and prevention of invasive species in and around Blue Mountain Lake. All of these would include a public outreach and education emphasis. Because invasive species control measures may be prescribed across any land classification category, Alternative 3 will result in minor, long-term beneficial impacts to invasive species similar to Alternative 2.

4.8 Cultural, Archaeological, and Historic Resources

4.8.1 Alternative 1 – No Action

There would be no major adverse impacts on cultural, archaeological, or historic resources as a result of implementing the No Action Alternative, as there would be no changes to the existing 1975 Master Plan. However, maintaining existing land classifications would not recognize the presence or importance of cultural resources, which could lead to long-term negative moderate or major impacts as a result of implementing the No Action Alternative.

4.8.2 Alternative 2 – Preferred

Impacts on cultural, historical, and archaeological resources were considered during the refinement processes of land reclassifications under the Preferred Alternative. Land reclassifications would not change current cultural resource management plans or alter areas where these resources exist. The Preferred Alternative would potentially result in long-term, moderate beneficial impacts to the 401.2 acres reclassified as Environmentally Sensitive as those lands afford more protection against development and ground disturbing activities. All individual USACE undertakings at Blue Mountain Lake are subject to compliance with Section 106 of the NHPA. In addition, stewardship priorities and goals as noted in the revised Master Plan (and required under Section 110 of the NHPA as well as other laws and regulations) emphasize the need to continue inventorying and protecting cultural resources on the project and prevent unauthorized or illegal looting. No significant adverse impacts to cultural, historical, or archaeological resources would occur as a result of implementing the Preferred Alternative.

4.8.3 Alternative 3 – Limited Development

Impacts on cultural, historical, and archaeological resources were considered during the refinement processes of land reclassifications under the Limited Development Alternative. Under this alternative, land reclassifications would not change current cultural resource management plans or alter areas where these resources exist. The Limited Development Alternative would potentially result in long-term, moderate beneficial impacts to the 495.1 acres reclassified as Environmentally Sensitive as those lands afford more protection against development and ground disturbing activities. All individual USACE undertakings at Blue

Mountain Lake are subject to compliance with Section 106 of the NHPA. In addition, stewardship priorities and goals as noted in the revised Master Plan (and required under Section 110 of the NHPA as well as other laws and regulations) emphasize the need to continue inventorying and protecting cultural resources on the project and prevent unauthorized or illegal looting. No significant adverse impacts to cultural, historical, or archaeological resources would occur as a result of implementing the Limited Development Alternative.

4.9 Air Quality

4.9.1 Alternative 1 – No Action

Under the No Action Alternative, no significant short- or long-term impacts to air quality would result as there would be no change to the existing 1975 Master Plan.

4.9.2 Alternative 2 – Preferred

Existing operation and management of Blue Mountain Lake is compliant with the Clean Air Act and would not change with implementation of the Preferred Alternative. Land reclassifications proposed as part of the Preferred Alternative would have a potential for negligible, long-term beneficial impacts on air quality. The net reduction of High Density Recreation lands from 1,738.4 acres to 403.5 acres will limit future intensive development, thus reducing the potential for increased vehicular traffic, boat traffic, construction equipment usage, and mower exhaust emissions at these areas. Because Alternative 2 does not entail ground disturbance or construction activities resulting in greenhouse gas emissions, and the project is not located in a designated non-attainment or maintenance areas where air quality is impaired, a General Air Conformity Analysis and Determination is not required. The Preferred Alternative would provide long-term, negligible benefits to air quality.

4.9.3 Alternative 3 – Limited Development

Existing operation and management of Blue Mountain Lake is compliant with the Clean Air Act and would not change with implementation of the 2024 Master Plan. Land reclassifications proposed as part of the Limited Development Alternative would have a potential for negligible, long-term beneficial impacts on air quality. The net reduction of High Density Recreation lands from 1,738.4 acres to 188.6 acres will limit future intensive development, thus reducing the potential for potential vehicular traffic, boat traffic, construction equipment usage, and mower exhaust emissions on these lands. Because the proposed Master Plan revision does not entail ground disturbance or construction activities resulting in greenhouse gas emissions, and the project is not located in a designated non-attainment or maintenance area where air quality is impaired, a General Air Conformity Analysis and Determination is not required. Like the Preferred Alternative, the Limited Development Alternative would provide long-term, negligible benefits to air quality.

4.10 Socio-Economic Resources and Environmental Justice

4.10.1 Alternative 1 – No Action

Under the No Action Alternative, there would be no changes to the existing Master Plan, with the USACE continuing to manage Blue Mountain Lake natural resources as set forth in the 1975 Master Plan. There would be no significant short- or long-term impacts on socio-economic resources. Beneficial socioeconomic impacts existing as a result of the implementation of the

1975 Master Plan would continue, as visitors would continue to visit the lake from surrounding areas. In addition to camping in campgrounds, many visitors purchase goods such as groceries, fuel, and camping supplies semi-locally, eat in semi-local restaurants, stay in semi-local hotels and resorts, and shop in local retail establishments. These activities would continue to bring revenues to local companies, provide jobs for semi-local residents, and generate local and state tax revenues. Any changes to socio-economic conditions in the Blue Mountain Lake area would be the result of outside influences and unrelated to those created by the No Action Alternative. There would be no disproportionately high or adverse impacts on minority or low-income populations or children with the implementation of the No Action Alternative (CEQ, 2023).

4.10.2 Alternative 2 – Preferred

Blue Mountain Lake is negligibly beneficial to the semi-local economy through local spending by visitors, and also offers a variety of recreation opportunities. Under the Preferred Alternative, the 403.5 acres of High Density Recreation and 4,087.8 acres of Low Density Recreation will continue to support existing recreation opportunities and provides a means to potentially develop additional facilities, as desired by the public. Forest management efforts will continue on lands classified for Wildlife Management, and timber sales will continue to contribute to the regional economy. Under this alternative, socio-economic conditions such as demographic makeup, income, and housing units are not expected to be affected. Since recreational opportunities remain abundant, and the Preferred Alternative recognizes and reinforces projected recreational trends, there would be negligible, long-term beneficial impacts to area socio-economic resources as a result. The Preferred Alternative would not result in any disproportionate adverse impacts to economically disadvantaged individuals or communities, and instead would allow Blue Mountain Lake staff to more effectively manage public lands for the enjoyment of future generations.

4.10.3 Alternative 3 – Limited Development

Blue Mountain Lake is negligibly beneficial to the semi-local economy through local spending by visitors, and also offers a variety of recreation opportunities. The Limited Development alternative would maintain the present-day availability of public lands for recreation activities, although the reduction of High Density lands to 188.6 acres and Low Density lands to 3,888.7 acres could indirectly decrease local spending by visitors in the future as park development is more limited. Forest management efforts will continue on lands classified for Wildlife Management, and timber sales will continue to contribute to the regional economy. Under this alternative, socio-economic conditions such as demographic makeup, income, and housing units are not expected to be affected. While Alternative 3 limits the future development and enhancement of parks for the public, including those communities and individuals considered economically disadvantaged, to enjoy, this alternative does not recognize public preference to further develop existing recreation areas or provide additional recreation opportunities. Under Alternative 3, there may be negligible, long-term adverse impacts to area socio-economic resources resulting as it limits the future development of project lands for some recreational uses desired by its patrons, thereby limiting user capacity. The Preferred Alternative would not result in any disproportionate adverse impacts to economically disadvantaged individuals or communities, and instead would focus on preserving and enhancing environmental stewardship while still offering existing recreation opportunities.

4.11 Recreation Resources

4.11.1 Alternative 1 – No Action

Under the No Action Alternative, there would be no significant short- or long-term impacts on recreational resources, as there would be no changes to the existing Master Plan.

4.11.2 Alternative 2 – Preferred

The primary objective for revising the 1975 Blue Mountain Lake Master Plan is to capture current land use and management that has evolved to meet day-to-day operational needs. Under the Preferred Alternative, the required revisions to the Blue Mountain Lake Master Plan would be compatible with current recreation management plans while recognizing regional outdoor recreation trends and local preferences. The 403.5 acres of High Density Recreation and 4,087.8 acres of Low Density Recreation will continue to provide existing recreation opportunities, including camping, day use, and swim beaches. These Recreation reclassifications more accurately represent the extent of existing recreation facilities, including primitive areas and access points, and potential or anticipated development, including proposed new access areas. Under these classifications, the opportunity exists to further develop or create new infrastructure in support of recreation opportunities. Some High and Low Density areas were reclassified as Wildlife Management to better reflect current land management practices and uses, including hunting, fishing, timber management, and habitat management. The 8,729.5 total acres of Wildlife Management lands under the Preferred Alternative will allow for numerous recreation activities such as hunting and fishing. The J. Perry Mikles SUA is classified as Low Density Recreation under this alternative, more accurately reflecting and allowing for the AGFC-organized recreation activities and supporting infrastructure, including bird dog field trials, that are held on the lease. The 690.1 acres of Environmentally Sensitive lands will also allow minimally invasive recreation activities such as wildlife viewing and hiking. Since recreational opportunities remain abundant, and the revised Master Plan balances recreation and environmental stewardship objectives in line with projected recreational trends, there would be minor, long-term beneficial impacts on recreation resulting from the revision of the Master Plan from the Preferred Action.

4.11.3 Alternative 3 – Limited Development

The primary objective of revising the 1975 Blue Mountain Lake Master Plan is to capture current land use and management that has evolved to meet day-to-day operational needs. Under the Limited Development Alternative, the required revisions to the Blue Mountain Lake Master Plan would be not compatible with current recreation management plans, recognize regional recreation trends, or represent public desire for development. Although it maintains the present-day availability of public lands for recreation activities, the reduction of High Density lands to 188.6 acres and Low Density lands to 3,888.7 acres would not take into consideration current lake operations nor the public desire for improvement of existing and development of new recreation infrastructure, as expressed during the scoping period. Although it minimizes potential for development, land-based recreational opportunities such as hunting, hiking, and bird watching would still be available under the Wildlife Management areas and some Low Density recreation areas. The 784.0 acres of Environmentally Sensitive Areas will also allow minimally invasive recreation activities such as wildlife viewing and hiking. Although existing recreation opportunities would still be abundant, Alternative 3 may have long-term, negligible adverse

impacts to recreation resources as it prioritizes environmental preservation over recreation purposes, limiting potential increased and/or improved public use opportunities and overlooking input from the public provided during scoping. The Limited Development Alternative does not support the recreation-related objectives as outlined in the revised Master Plan.

4.12 Health & Safety

4.12.1 Alternative 1 – No Action

Under the No Action Alternative, the 1975 Master Plan would not be revised. No significant short- or long-term impacts on human health or safety would be anticipated because no action will be taken.

4.12.2 Alternative 2 – Preferred

Under the Preferred Alternative, the required revisions to the 1975 Blue Mountain Lake Master Plan would be compatible with project safety management plans. The project would continue to have reporting guidelines in place should water quality become a threat to public health. Existing regulations and safety programs throughout the Blue Mountain Lake area would continue to be enforced to ensure public safety. Therefore, the implementation of the Preferred Alternative would have no effect on public health and safety.

4.12.3 Alternative 3 – Limited Development

Like the Preferred Alternative, under the Limited Development Alternative the required revisions to the 1975 Blue Mountain Lake Master Plan would be compatible with project safety management plans. The project would continue to have reporting guidelines in place should water quality become a threat to public health. Existing regulations and safety programs throughout the Blue Mountain Lake area would continue to be enforced to ensure public safety. Therefore, there would be no effect on public health and safety as a result of implementing the Limited Development Alternative.

4.13 Aesthetics

4.13.1 Alternative 1 – No Action

No significant short- or long-term impacts to visual resources would result from implementing the No Action Alternative, as there would be no change to the existing 1975 Master Plan.

4.13.2 Alternative 2 – Preferred

Blue Mountain Lake's scenic beauty conveys a sense of tranquility to the lake visitors and is one of the enticing features for patrons. The conversion of 1,102.8 acres of High Density lands and 10.8 acres of unallocated lands to Environmentally Sensitive and Wildlife Management acreage would continue to preserve the aesthetic value of the lake while reflecting changes in land management and land uses that have occurred since 1975 at Blue Mountain Lake. Because no construction or development would occur as part of the Preferred Alternative, conversion of these lands would have no significant adverse impacts on current or projected public use or visual aesthetics. Furthermore, the addition of 401.2 acres of land classified as Environmentally Sensitive Areas would protect lands that are aesthetically pleasing at Blue Mountain Lake and limit future development.

Lake Natural Resources Management Objectives will continue to minimize activities which will disturb the scenic beauty and aesthetics of the lake. By balancing environmental stewardship and recreation priorities, the protection and improvement of natural, native vegetation would enhance the viewscales enjoyed by those recreating at the lake. Under the Preferred Alternative, impacts to visual aesthetics would be long-term, negligible, and beneficial.

4.13.3 Alternative 3 – Limited Development

Similar to the Preferred Alternative, the Limited Development Alternative would have long-term, negligible benefits to aesthetic resources. The conversion of 1,388.1 acres of High Density lands and 18.0 acres of unallocated lands to Environmentally Sensitive and Wildlife Management acreage would continue to preserve the aesthetic value of the lake. The addition of 495.1 acres of land classified as Environmentally Sensitive Areas would protect lands that are visually pleasing at Blue Mountain Lake and limit future development.

Lake Natural Resources Management Objectives will continue to prioritize minimizing activities which will disturb scenic beauty and aesthetics. However, by decreasing High and Low Density Recreation classifications and restricting the ability for further development, annual wear and deterioration of lands and existing facilities may result as the increased demand for recreation opportunities continues to increase. Additionally, opportunities for the public to enjoy lake viewscales would be more limited as the primitive camping areas within lands reclassified as Wildlife Management would no longer be authorized. While Alternative 3 prioritizes environmental preservation, it may result in long-term, negligible adverse impacts to aesthetics by overlooking the recreation needs at Blue Mountain Lake.

4.14 Hazardous, Toxic, and Radioactive Waste

Because there are no known contaminated sites or contamination sources at Blue Mountain Lake, the No Action Alternative, Preferred Alternative, and Limited Development Alternative are all expected to have no effect on hazardous, toxic, and radioactive waste. If implemented, the existing land classifications under the No Action and proposed reclassifications under the two action alternatives would not significantly impact any existing or potential external sources of pollution.

4.15 Summary of Environmental Consequences

The following table summarizes the impacts of the three alternatives evaluated on each resource category (Table 5-1).

Table 4-1. Resources Likely Affected by the Implementation of Each Alternative

Resource	Environmental Consequences		
	No Action Alternative	Preferred Alternative	Limited Development Alternative
Land Use	No Impact	No Impact; Reflective of existing land uses	No Impact; Largely reflective of existing land uses
Climate, Climate Change, & GHG	No Impact	No Impact; Promotes land management practices and design standards that promote sustainability	No Impact; Promotes land management practices and design standards that promote sustainability
Topography, Geology, Soils, Prime Farmland, & Mineral Resources	No Impact	Long-term, minor beneficial impacts resulting from restricting future development opportunities and decrease erosion potential; No impact to Prime Farmland or mineral resources; Encourages good stewardship that would reduce existing and potential erosion	Long-term, minor beneficial impacts resulting from restricting future development opportunities and decrease erosion potential; No impact to Prime Farmland or mineral resources; Encourages good stewardship that would reduce existing and potential erosion
Hydrology and Groundwater	No Impact	Long-term, negligible benefits from retaining pervious surfaces and encouraging groundwater filtration and retention	Long-term, negligible benefits from retaining pervious surfaces and encouraging groundwater filtration and retention
Water Quality	No Impact	Long-term, negligible benefits from retaining pervious surfaces and decreasing potential stormwater runoff	Long-term, negligible benefits from retaining pervious surfaces and decreasing potential stormwater runoff
Wetlands	No Impact	Long-term, negligible benefits from protection under Environmentally Sensitive classification and potential water quality improvements; Promotes restoration and protection of the lake's wetlands and good land stewardship	Long-term, negligible benefits from protection under Environmentally Sensitive classification and potential water quality improvements; Promotes restoration and protection of the lake's wetlands and good land stewardship
Fish Species and Habitat	No Impact	Long-term, negligible benefits to fisheries through preservation of aquatic and shoreline vegetation; Gives full recognition of sensitive resources and regional trends and priorities related to natural resources	Long-term, negligible benefits to fisheries through preservation of aquatic and shoreline vegetation; Gives full recognition of sensitive resources and regional trends and priorities related to natural resources
Wildlife	No Impact	Long-term, minor benefits through increased protection and availability of programs for wildlife species; Gives full recognition of sensitive resources and regional trends and priorities related to natural resources	Long-term, minor benefits through increased protection and availability of programs for wildlife species; Gives full recognition of sensitive resources and regional trends and priorities related to natural resources.

Resource	Environmental Consequences		
	No Action Alternative	Preferred Alternative	Limited Development Alternative
Vegetation	No Impact	Minor, long-term benefits from increased protections and invasive management strategies; No impact to existing timber management practices	Minor, long-term benefits; Gives full recognition of sensitive resources and priorities related to natural resources; No impact to existing timber management practices
Threatened & Endangered Species	No Effect	No Effect; Fully recognizes federal and state-listed species	No Effect; Fully recognizes federal and state-listed species
Invasive Species	No Impact	Long-term, minor beneficial impacts from invasive management practices and objectives outlined in revised Master Plan	Long-term, minor beneficial impacts from invasive management practices and objectives outlined in revised Master Plan
Cultural, Historical, and Archaeological Resources	Potential to Effect Historic Resources	Potential to Effect Historic Resources	Potential to Effect Historic Resources
Air Quality	No Impact	Long-term, negligible benefits; Promotes activities and goals that will help to reduce emissions	Long-term, negligible benefits; Promotes activities and goals that will help to reduce emissions
Socioeconomics and Environmental Justice	No Impact	Long-term, negligible benefits to local economy if park improvements are made; No adverse impacts to economically disadvantaged communities	Long-term, negligible benefits to local economy if park improvements are made; No adverse impacts to economically disadvantaged communities
Recreation	No Impact; Fails to recognize current outdoor recreation trends	Long-term, minor benefits; Fully recognizes current outdoor recreation trends and provides opportunity for future development of parks	Long-term, negligible adverse impacts; Fails to recognize current outdoor recreation trends and public desires, and limits opportunity for future development of parks
Health and Safety	No Impact; Fails to emphasize public safety programs.	No Impact; Recognizes the need for public safety programs.	No Impact; Recognizes the need for public safety programs.
Aesthetic Resources	No Impact; Fails to minimize activities that disturb the scenic beauty and aesthetics of the lake.	Long-term, negligible benefits; Promotes activities that limit disturbance to the scenic beauty and aesthetics of the lake.	Long-term, negligible benefits; Promotes activities that limit disturbance to the scenic beauty and aesthetics of the lake.
Hazardous, Toxic, & Radioactive Waste	No Impact	No Impact; No known HTRW sites	No Impact; No known HTRW sites

5. CUMULATIVE IMPACTS

NEPA regulations updated May 20, 2023, require that cumulative impacts of a proposed action be assessed and disclosed in an EA. CEQ regulations define a cumulative impact as “the impact on the environment which results from the incremental impact of the action when added to other past, present, and reasonably foreseeable future actions regardless of what agency (federal or non-federal) or person undertakes such other actions. Cumulative impacts can result from individually minor but collectively significant actions taking place over a period of time” (40 CFR 1508.7). Cumulative impacts can be positive or negative. CEQ recommends narrowing the focus of cumulative impacts analyses to important issues of local, regional, or national significance.

For each resource topic, the timeframe for analysis of cumulative impacts is the time since the 1975 Master Plan was implemented (past) and through the anticipated life of the proposed 2024 Master Plan (25 years, to 2049). The zone of interest for all resources is Yell and Logan counties, and the ZOI for socioeconomics is that which was used in Sections 3.11 and 4.10.

5.1 Past Impacts Within the Zone of Influence

Blue Mountain Lake was originally authorized for construction in 1938 as a multi-purpose reservoir for flood control, recreation, water supply, and fish and wildlife. Construction of the Blue Mountain Dam began in June 1941 and, after a pause in construction, was completed in June 1947. The total project area at Blue Mountain Lake encompasses approximately 17,263 acres, including about 2,890 acres of surface water at conservation pool. The Master Plan for Blue Mountain Lake was last approved in 1975, followed by multiple supplements over the last 50 years.

5.2 Current and Reasonably Foreseeable Projects Within and Near the Zone of Influence

Current recreation and fish and wildlife management practices at Blue Mountain Lake are expected to continue into the future. The Logan County population is estimated to decrease slightly by 2050, while the Yell County population is anticipated to increase slightly. Similar population trends are expected within surrounding counties included in the ZOI, and the State of Arkansas as a whole is expected to experience population growth.

National USACE policy set forth in ER 1130-2-550, Appendix H, states that USACE lands will, in most cases, only be made available for roads that are regional arterials or freeways (as defined in ER 1130-2-550). All other types of proposed roads, including driveways and alleys, are generally not permitted on USACE lands. The proposed expansion or widening of existing roadways on USACE lands will be considered on a case-by-case basis.

5.3 Analysis of Cumulative Impacts

Impacts on each resource were analyzed according to how other actions and projects within the ZOI might be affected by the No Action Alternative, Preferred Alternative, and Limited Development Alternative. Impacts can vary in degree or magnitude from a slightly noticeable change to a total change in the environment. For the purpose of this analysis the intensity of impacts will be classified as negligible, minor, moderate, or major. These intensity thresholds were previously defined in Section 4.0. Minimal growth and development are expected in the

vicinity of Blue Mountain Lake, and cumulative adverse impacts on resources will not be expected when added to the impacts of activities associated with any of the alternatives. A summary of the anticipated cumulative impacts on each resource is presented below. The topics of Socioeconomics and Environmental Justice as well as Hazardous, Toxic, and Radioactive Waste have been excluded from further cumulative analysis as they will not result in any direct or indirect impacts and therefore would not contribute to cumulative impacts, and/or the nature of the resource is such that impacts do not have the potential to cumulate.

5.3.1 Land Use

Land use at the Blue Mountain Lake project and surrounding areas has remained largely the same since the dam's construction. Under the No Action Alternative, no impacts to land use are expected. While the Preferred Alternative and Limited Development Alternative will result in the reclassification of project lands, the reclassifications were developed to help fulfill regional goals associated with good stewardship of land resources that will allow for continued use of project lands, and these reclassifications largely reflect existing land use practices. Cumulative impacts on land use within the area surrounding Blue Mountain Lake, when combined with past and proposed actions in the region, are anticipated to be negligible.

5.3.2 Climate, Climate Change, Greenhouse Gases, and Air Quality

No projects are known to be proposed within the ZOI that would significantly contribute to stationary nor non-stationary air pollution. Neither the Preferred Alternative nor the Limited Development Alternative would adversely impact air quality, contribute adversely to climate change, or otherwise adversely impact ambient air conditions. Vehicle traffic along the park and area roadways and routine daily activities at the project and in nearby communities contribute to current and future emission sources; however, the impacts associated with the reclassification of lands at Blue Mountain Lake under both the Preferred Alternative and the Limited Development Alternative would be negligible. Seasonal prescribed burning could occur on project lands or surrounding forested areas to further ecological health, but would have minor, negative impacts on air quality through elevated ground-level O₃ and PM concentrations; however, these seasonal burns will be scheduled so that impacts are minimized. Implementation of the revised Master Plan, when combined with other existing and proposed projects in the region, could result in both minor adverse and beneficial cumulative impacts on climate, climate change, greenhouse gas emissions, and air quality.

5.3.3 Topography, Geology, Soils, and Prime Farmland

Substantial impacts could occur if a proposed future action exacerbates or promotes long-term erosion, if the soils are inappropriate for the proposed construction and would create a risk to life or property, or if there would be a substantial reduction in agricultural production or loss of Prime Farmland soils. Cumulative impacts on topography, geology, soils, and Prime Farmland at and around Blue Mountain Lake, when combined with past and proposed actions in the region, are anticipated to be negligible.

5.3.4 Aquatic Resources

Major impacts to water resources would occur if external actions were inconsistent with adopted surface water classifications or water use plans, or if an action would substantially alter those resources required for, supporting, or benefitting the current use. The Arkansas Water Plan

revision is being conducted to reflect current and anticipated water needs, problems, and solutions, benefitting aquatic resources across the state. Blue Mountain Lake was developed for flood control, and later on recreation was authorized as a project purpose. Fish and wildlife and general environmental stewardship practices are also an inherent USACE responsibility. The reclassifications and resource objectives required to revise the Blue Mountain Lake Master Plan are compatible with water use plans and surface water classifications; further, they were developed to help fulfill regional goals associated with good stewardship of water resources that will allow for continued use of water resources associated with Blue Mountain Lake. Therefore, cumulative impacts on water resources within the area surrounding the project, when combined with past and anticipated future actions in the region, are anticipated to be negligible.

5.3.5 Natural Resources

The significance threshold for natural resources would include a substantial reduction in ecological processes, communities, or populations that would threaten the long-term viability of a species or result in the substantial loss of a sensitive community that could not be offset or otherwise compensated. Past, present, and future projects are not anticipated to impact the viability of any plant species or community, rare or sensitive habitats, or wildlife. The defining of Environmentally Sensitive Areas and Wildlife Management Areas, as well as resource objectives that favor protection and restoration of valuable natural resources, will have beneficial cumulative impacts. No identified projects will threaten the viability of natural resources. Therefore, there will be minor, long-term beneficial impacts to natural resources resulting from the revision of the Master Plan when combined with past and proposed actions in the area.

5.3.6 Cultural, Historical, and Archaeological Resources

Neither the Preferred Alternative nor Limited Development Alternative will affect cultural resources or historic properties, as the master plan revision does not involve any ground disturbing activities. However, Environmentally Sensitive and Wildlife Management lands provide additional protection against ground disturbances. Therefore, this action, when combined with other existing and proposed projects in the region, will not result in major cumulative impacts on cultural resources or historic properties.

5.3.7 Recreation

Blue Mountain Lake provides regionally significant outdoor recreation benefits including a variety of recreation opportunities. Even though the amount of acreage available for High Density Recreation and Low Density Recreation will decrease as a result of implementing the reclassifications, resources objectives, and resource plan in the MP, these changes reflect changes in land management and historic recreation use patterns that have occurred since 1975. The conversion of these lands will have no effect on current or projected public use and are representative of existing and anticipated recreation needs and uses. Therefore, the action alternatives, when combined with other existing and proposed projects in the region, will result in negligible beneficial cumulative impacts on area recreational resources.

5.3.8 Aesthetic Resources

No impacts on visual resources will occur as a result of implementing the reclassifications, resource objectives, and resource plan in the revised Master Plan. The Preferred Alternative and Limited Alternative Development, especially the classification of Environmentally Sensitive and

Wildlife Management Areas, in conjugation with other projects in the region, will result in negligible, beneficial cumulative impacts on the visual resources in the Blue Mountain Lake area.

5.3.9 Health and Safety

No health or safety risks will be created by either action alternative. The effects of implementing the revised Master Plan, when combined with other ongoing and proposed projects in the project area, will not be considered a significant cumulative effect.

6. IRREVERSIBLE AND IRRETRIEVABLE COMMITMENT OF RESOURCES

NEPA requires that federal agencies identify “any irreversible and irretrievable commitments of resources which would be involved in the proposed action should it be implemented” (42 U.S.C. 4332). An irreversible commitment of resources occurs when the primary or secondary impacts of an action result in the loss of future options for a resource. Usually, this is when the action affects the use of a nonrenewable resource, or it affects a renewable resource that takes a long time to renew. The impacts of reclassification of land would not be considered an irreversible commitment because subsequent Master Plan revisions could result in some lands being reclassified to a prior, similar land classification. An irretrievable commitment of resources is typically associated with the loss of productivity or use of a natural resource (i.e., loss of production or harvest). No irreversible or irretrievable impacts on federally protected species or their habitat is anticipated from implementing revisions to the 1975 Blue Mountain Lake Master Plan.

7. ENVIRONMENTAL COMPLIANCE

Compliance with Federal Acts and Executive Orders are summarized in Table 6-1 below.

Table 7-1. Federal Act/Executive Order Compliance

Act/Executive Order	Status	Compliance
Protection of Wetlands (EO 11990)	No effect	C
Farmland Protection Policy Act (FPPA) of 1980 and 1994	No effect	C
Floodplain Management (EO 11988)	N/A	N/A
Clean Water Act		
Section 404	No effect	N/A
Section 401	No effect	N/A
NPDES	No effect	N/A
Fish and Wildlife Coordination Act	No effect	C
Endangered Species Act	No effect	C
Migratory Bird Habitat Protection (EO 13186)	No effect	C
Migratory Bird Treaty Act	No effect	C
National Historic Preservation Act	No effect	C
Environmental Justice (EO 12898)	No effect	C
Clean Air Act	No effect	C
Comprehensive Environmental Response Compensation and Liability Act (CERCLA)	N/A	N/A
Resource Conservation and Recovery Act (RCRA)	N/A	N/A
Wild and Scenic Rivers Act	No effect	C
Rivers and Harbors Act	N/A	N/A
N/A—not applicable; C—Compliant; P—Pending		

7.1 Fish and Wildlife Coordination Act

USACE is required to coordinate with the USFWS and applicable state agencies under the Fish and Wildlife Coordination Act (FWCA) (48 Stat. 401, as amended; 16 U.S.C. 661 et. seq.). Coordination was initiated with a scoping notice; no concerns were raised by these agencies. Review of the Environmental Assessment is pending; no concerns are anticipated.

7.2 Endangered Species Act

The Endangered Species Act requires the determination of possible effects on species or degradation of habitat critical to Federally-listed endangered or threatened species. Implementation of a revised Master Plan is not likely to affect threatened or endangered species. Individual requests for use of project lands would be evaluated to ensure compliance with this Act.

7.3 Environmental Justice

It is USACE policy and priority to fully comply with all applicable laws and guidance on environmental justice, as well as the USACE policies on environmental justice, by incorporating environmental justice concerns in decision-making processes. In this regard, USACE ensures that it will identify, disclose, and respond to potential adverse social and environmental impacts on minority, low-income, and economically disadvantaged populations within the area affected by a proposed USACE action.

EO 12898, “Federal Actions to Address Environmental Justice in Minority Populations and Low-Income Populations,” tasks Federal Agencies to identify and address disproportionately high and adverse human health and environmental effects of their programs, policies, and activities on minority and low-income populations. Additionally, recent EOs have been executed, along with several new USACE regulations, to promote EJ considerations within Federal projects. These include EO 13985, “Advancing Racial Equity and Support for Underserved Communities Through the Federal Government,” EO 14008, “Tackling the Climate Crisis at Home and Abroad,” and EO 14082, “Implementation of the Energy and Infrastructure Provisions of the Inflation Reduction Act of 2022.”

Impacts to economically disadvantaged and sensitive communities were fully considered during the development of this EA and evaluation of each alternative. The public and resource agencies, as well as the appropriate Federally Recognized Tribes, were invited to participate in a scoping period and will continue to be involved during the draft release comment period. Comments received during scoping were thoroughly considered and integrated into the Master Plan and EA. This EA is fully compliant with all EJ-related laws, regulations, and guidance. It was found that the proportion of minority and low-income populations in the study area were comparable to the respective state averages, and no disproportionate impacts to disadvantaged communities are expected as a result of the implementation of the Preferred Alternative. Contrarily, the Preferred Alternative proposed in the Master Plan revision is expected to balance recreation with fish and wildlife management objectives, promoting the longevity of public resources for all to enjoy regardless of race, ethnicity, income, or any other discriminating characteristics.

7.4 Cultural Resource Requirement

Pursuant to Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966, as amended, all Federal undertakings within the Blue Mountain Lake fee boundary are subject to Section 106 review and coordination with the Arkansas State Historic Preservation Officer (SHPO) and appropriate Tribal Nations in accordance with 36 CFR Part 800, regardless of land classification.” Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966 requires the Corps to identify historic properties affected by the proposed action and to evaluate the eligibility of those properties for the National Register of Historic Places. Section 110 of the Act requires the Corps to assume responsibility for the preservation of historic properties in its ownership. The Act also requires Federal agencies to provide the Advisory Council on Historic Preservation an opportunity to comment on undertakings through the process outlined in the Council’s regulations (36 CFR 800).

There would be no effect on cultural resources with implementation of a revised Master Plan. Individual requests for use of project lands would be evaluated on a case-by-case basis to ensure compliance with this act.

8. SCOPING AND PUBLIC CONCERN

8.1 Introduction

No single agency has complete oversight of stewardship activities on the public lands and waters surrounding Blue Mountain Lake. Responsibility for natural resource and recreation management falls to several agencies that own or have jurisdiction over these public lands and waters.

Increasingly, competition for the use of these lands and waters and their natural resources can create conflicts and concerns among stakeholders. The need to coordinate a cooperative approach to protect and sustain these resources is compelling. Many opportunities exist to increase the effectiveness of Federal programs through collaboration among agencies and to facilitate the process of partnering between government and non-government agencies. To sustain healthy and productive public lands and water with the most efficient approach requires individuals and organizations to recognize their unique ability to contribute to commonly held goals. The key to progress is building on the strengths of each sector, achieving goals collectively that could not be reasonably achieved individually. Given the inter-jurisdictional nature of Blue Mountain Lake, partnering opportunities exist and can promote the leveraging of limited financial and human resources. Partnering and identification of innovative approaches to deliver justified levels of service defuse polarization among interest groups, and lead to a common understanding and appreciation of individual roles, priorities, and responsibilities.

To the extent practical, this Master Plan and a proactive approach to partnering would position Blue Mountain Lake to aggressively leverage project financial capability and human resources in order to identify and satisfy customer expectations, protect and sustain natural and cultural resources and recreational infrastructure, and programmatically bring Corps management efforts and outputs up to a justified level of service. Public involvement and extensive coordination within the Corps of Engineers and with other affected agencies and organizations is a critical feature required in developing or revising a Project Master Plan.

Agency and public involvement and coordination have been a key element in every phase of the Blue Mountain Lake Master Plan revision.

8.2 Scoping

In accordance with NEPA and ER 200-2-2, USACE initiated the environmental compliance and review process for the Blue Mountain Lake Master Plan revision project. This EA is being prepared to identify potential direct, indirect, and cumulative impacts related to implementation of the Master Plan. The process of determining the scope, focus, and content of a NEPA document is known as “scoping” and this occurs at the start of the process. Scoping is a useful tool to obtain information from the public and governmental agencies in order to help set the parameters of issues to focus on and analyze.

The Nimrod Lake Master Plan is being revised concurrently with the Blue Mountain Lake Master Plan. While these revised plans will be prepared as individual, lake-specific documents, each with its own accompanying EA, public review periods will be held concurrently for both of the projects. Nimrod Lake and Blue Mountain Lake are close in proximity and likely see public visitation from similar entities. Tribal Nation and resource agency interests also overlap. To streamline the public involvement process, outreach efforts and public comment

opportunities will be advertised and occur simultaneously for both MP revision efforts.

The Blue Mountain Lake and Nimrod Lake Master Plan Revision website, <https://www.swl.usace.army.mil/Missions/Planning/Nimrod-Blue-Mountain-Master-Plan/>, was created as a primary source of project information. Website information was provided through various sources, such as notification postcards, news releases, agency scoping letters, and media outreach, for individuals to visit the project website to find out more information about the process to revise the 1975 Master Plan and to solicit comments for scoping. As part of the initial phase of the environmental process, a public scoping comment period was held between March 16, 2023, and April 30, 2023, to gather agency and public comments on the Master Plan revision process and issues that should be examined as part of the environmental analysis.

In particular, the scoping process was used as an opportunity to solicit input from the public and agencies about the vision for the Master Plan revision and the issues that the Master Plan should address. When people visited the Blue Mountain Lake and Nimrod Lake Master Plan revision website, they were encouraged to provide input by completing a comment form that asked for responses to specific questions in addition to soliciting for general comments about the plan and the environmental review. Between March 16, and April 30, 2023, 518 individuals visited the project website.

USACE published notice of the scoping period through an email blast, direct mail postcards, press releases, and agency notification letters. The postcard notice and email blast were sent to landowners adjacent to USACE-owned lands around both Blue Mountain Lake and Nimrod Lake, holders of fishing permits purchased in Arkansas whose listed zip code is within seven miles of the two lakes, and those who held reservations to camp at the two lakes' campgrounds within the 2022 recreational season. Postcards were sent to those for whom only a postal address was available; all others received the email blast. Agency coordination letters were sent to potentially interested agencies.

Agencies were invited to participate in the scoping process and provide input on the vision for the Blue Mountain Lake Master Plan on issues that should be addressed through the land classification designations as well as this EA. Notifications were provided by email and, where email addresses were unavailable, by mail to 33 agencies and eight Federally Recognized Tribes (Appendix B) providing notification of the upcoming agency scoping comment period and links to the project website where more information could be found.

Agencies, members of the public, and other interested parties submitted a total of 24 letters, e-mails, and comment cards related to both the Blue Mountain Lake and Nimrod Lake Master Plan revisions during the scoping period, which were thoroughly considered and integrated into the drafting of the Master Plan and this EA.

8.3 Draft Master Plan/Draft Environmental Assessment.

Scheduled to be completed in the Summer of 2024.

8.4 Final Master Plan/Final EA

Scheduled to be completed in the Summer of 2025.

9. CONCLUSIONS

The Master Plan for Blue Mountain Lake was last approved in 1975; this was followed by multiple supplements over the last roughly 50 years. During that time, public use patterns have remained similar, but trends, facility and service demands have shifted due to the need for alternative experiences in recreation and tourism. Blue Mountain Lake receives pressure for public recreation use, resulting in management concerns regarding the overall sustainability of the lake. With public use at project facilities changing, reallocations of services at these facilities need to be addressed. Changes involving recreation area closures and improvements have occurred during the last four decades to meet the evolving public use.

The Master Plan is not intended to address the specifics of regional water quality or water level management; these areas are covered in a project's Water Control Manual. However, specific issues identified through the Master Plan revision process can still be communicated and coordinated with the appropriate internal USACE resource or external resource agency responsible for that specific area. To facilitate this action, the current Master Plan development evaluated three alternatives relative to their potential impacts on both the physical and human resources of Blue Mountain Lake.

These alternatives ranged from retaining the existing Master Plan in the No Action Alternative, in which recreation development is prioritized and High and Low Density land classifications are at their highest, to prioritizing the conservation and preservation of natural resources in the Limited Development Alternative, in which Environmentally Sensitive and Wildlife Management Area acreages are at their highest. Potential effects on the human, terrestrial, and aquatic environment from the implementation of each of these alternatives was evaluated. The No Action Alternative looked at leaving the lake as it currently exists in terms of developable areas and protected areas. Of the roughly 17,300 acres of available land around the lake, 12% of this is classified as High Density and 21% is classified as Low Density, allowing for potential future development. While 64% of available acreage is classified as Wildlife Management, 2% is classified as Environmentally Sensitive and 18 acres currently have no classification. The No Action Alternative would leave some lands unclassified, and the land classification designations are not reflective of historical, current, and projected recreation and wildlife management objectives.

The action alternatives included Alternative 2, the Preferred Alternative, and Alternative 3, the Limited Development Alternative. The Limited Development Alternative (Alternative 3) shifted the majority of the available acreage toward future protection and/or preservation, with 1% classified as High Density, 28% classified as Low Density, 6% classified as Environmentally Sensitive, 64% classified as Wildlife Management, and 1% classified as Project Operations. Potential effects from this would be decreased vegetation removal and a reduction in soil erosion due to the reclassification of High and Low Density lands as Environmentally Sensitive or Wildlife Management, thereby decreasing the potential for construction and conversion of pervious surfaces to impervious. This construction activity is generally detrimental to water quality and terrestrial and aquatic wildlife species. The increase in Wildlife Management areas would allow for increased resource management opportunities, including prescribed burning and timber management. While the Limited Development Alternative maximizes protections and increases management opportunities for natural resources, it does not accurately account for Blue Mountain Lake's authorized purpose of recreation, nor does it reflect current land management

and use patterns or the public desire for improved and increased recreational opportunities.

The Preferred Alternative (Alternative 2) includes 3% High Density lands, while Low Density lands increase from 21% to 29%. Wildlife Management lands decrease slightly from 64% in the No Action to 62% in Alternative 2, and Environmentally Sensitive lands increase from 2% to 5%. Although acreage increased slightly, the Project Operations classification remains at 1% of available area. The Preferred Alternative seeks to balance all components of lake usage, including the provision for growth and recreation improvements, while protecting and preserving terrestrial and aquatic resources. This action would protect and/or preserve vegetation and unique habitat in areas classified as Environmentally Sensitive and reduce stormwater runoff quantity and velocity, resulting in less in-lake sedimentation and turbidity thereby improving water quality and fisheries. The increase in Wildlife Management Area reflects the importance of natural resource management objectives as well as public hunting recreational opportunities. In High and Low Density areas, the opportunity would still exist to reopen, modify, or expand existing or potential future recreation areas. Additionally, the increase in Low Density acreage represents a more accurate classification for the J. Perry Mikles SUA as it entails infrastructure and recreation activities that fall outside of the existing Wildlife Management classification. The Preferred Alternative best meets both the recreation and fish and wildlife objectives desired by the public and resource agencies as verbalized in the scoping period, and exemplifies the objectives set by Blue Mountain Lake Project staff.

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10.1 LIST OF PREPARERS

Elizabeth Knapp, Biologist, Regional Planning and Environmental Center
Cecelia Marascalco, Biologist, Regional Planning and Environmental Center
Jesse Palmer, Natural Resources Specialist, Nimrod and Blue Mountain Lake
Jack (Gus) Adamson, Archaeologist, Operations Division
Glenn Fulton, Economist, Regional Planning and Environmental Center
Michael Love, Planner, Operations Division
Patricia Tannehill, GIS Specialist, Operations Division