

## **FINDING OF NO SIGNIFICANT IMPACT (FONSI)**

**NAME OF PROPOSED ACTION:** Table Rock Lake Master Plan Revision

### **PURPOSE AND NEED FOR THE PROPOSED ACTION**

The revised Master Plan updates Design Memorandum No. 17-E, Updated Master Plan for Development and Management of Table Rock Reservoir approved December 1976. 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.

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

**ALTERNATIVES:** A No Action alternative, a Balanced Use Alternative, a Slow Growth alternative, a Maintain High Density alternative, a No New High Density alternative, a No Vegetative Management Area alternative, a Conservative alternative, an Extreme Development alternative, and the Selected Alternative (Alternatives 1, 2a, 2b, 2c, 2d, 3, and 4, respectively, with the Selected Alternative as a hybrid of 2d and 2) were evaluated in the Environmental Assessment.

No Action Alternative - The “No Action” alternative will not reclassify any of the 19,539 available lands for uses that differ from the current land classifications. High Density lands would total 1,984.2 acres; Low Density lands would total 7,796.8 acres; Environmentally Sensitive lands would total 4,639.4 acres; Project Operations would total 392.8 acres; Wildlife Management would total 232.4 acres. Lands that are currently not classified (i.e. lands from the US Forest Service land exchange) would remain unclassified and would total 4,492.1 acres. In addition, there would not be a Vegetative Management classification. Under this scenario, land and water resources could potentially continue to be impacted by increasing shoreline development.

The Selected Alternative - The Selected Alternative, which is now the preferred alternative, contains elements of Alternatives 2 and Alternatives 2a through 2d, as described below. The Selected Alternative would result in land classifications of 1,926.7 acres of High Density lands, 7,254.7 acres of Low Density, 6,872.7 acres of Environmentally Sensitive, 3,249.1 acres of Wildlife Management and 232 acres of Project Operations lands. The increase in Environmentally Sensitive acreage is primarily due to reclassification of previously unclassified lands lying adjacent to US Forest Service lands. Some lands which were previously classified as Natural Area have been converted to Environmentally Sensitive Lands due to a terminology change in policy guidance. In response to the public’s feedback to keep the lake natural and

scenic, areas which fall within the definition above have been retained or converted to Environmentally Sensitive for preservation of the land and aesthetic purposes. Project Operations lands are proposed to decrease by 161 acres, representing land previously classified for appurtenant works. This acreage is no longer being used for project operations purposes, leaving a total of 232 acres for project operations. Wildlife Management acres are proposed to increase from 232 acres to 3,249.1 acres, due to a 1999 Forest Service land exchange wherein USACE obtained the Cow Creek area of the lake. These acreages are similar to those of the Balanced Use Alternative, but with a reduction of 59.9 acres of High Density Land classification, a 67.4 acre increase in the Low Density Recreation lands, a 4.7 acre decrease in Environmentally Sensitive lands, and a 2.9 acre decrease in Wildlife Management lands.

The Selected Alternative will not include the Vegetative Management Area requirements for any land classifications. The Corps determined that if all current policies were enforced approximately 66% of Table Rock Lake's shoreline would have an area that would exhibit the same environmental benefits as the Vegetative Management Area land classification. In order to address comments received opposing the addition of more High Density classification areas, the Selected Alternative will convert areas to High Density which were only within existing lease areas and LDA classified as Low Density. This reclassification would create High Density areas at Still Waters, Indian Point Resorts, Big Cedar (including Big Cedar subsets) and Chateau at the Lake.

During the public review period, members of the public raised concerns over lands which were originally classified as Low Density Development in the 1976 Master Plan, but were reclassified by the Project Delivery Team as Environmentally Sensitive Areas (ESA). Landowners, who commented during the public review period, requesting their lands remain Low Density, were given consideration and a portion of the land will remain low density while the remaining lands will convert to ESA.

**Slow Growth Alternative** –The Slow Growth alternative focuses on platted subdivisions with at least half of adjacent lots developed with homes. These areas were originally considered Environmentally Sensitive because they lacked the proper vegetation modification permits that residents could obtain under Low Density Classifications. Residents in these areas have been mowing into Corps fee-land boundaries without permits, so this reclassification under Low Density is designed to keep the residents in compliance with the shoreline management plan permitting process. There are 22 areas around the lake that fall in this category, and Low Density acreage will increase from 7,254.7 to 7,419.9—a 165.2 acre increase, while Environmentally Sensitive acreage will decrease from 6,872.7 to 6,644.8, which represents a 229.9 acre reduction in this land classification. Of the 7,419.9 acres of Low Density lands, 5,339 acres will be Low Density alone, and 2,080.9 will be Low Density with a Vegetative Management Area requirement.

**Maintain High Density Alternative** – The Maintain High Density alternative includes areas that would remain as High Density. Under this alternative, 73.6 acres of High Density lands would maintain as High Density (under Alternative 2, these 73.6 acres are under consideration to convert 33 acres to Low Density lands and 40.6 acres to Wildlife Management lands). These areas are under consideration to remain as High Density because, similar to the situation with partially closed USACE parks, if an interested entity, such as another federal agency, state/local

agency, or city/township could partner with USACE to take over management of these areas, then they could be retained as High Density for future development. These areas include the James River Park (undeveloped campground), Swiss Villa, Christ in Youth, Jellystone, Sunset Cove, and Kimberling Cove Resort.

**No New High Density Alternative** –The No New High Density alternative include areas that would not convert from Low Density and Environmentally Sensitive areas to High Density. In Alternative 2, these areas are under consideration for conversion from Low Density/Environmentally Sensitive to High Density. This alternative would keep these areas as Low Density (94.2 acres) and Environmentally Sensitive (1 acre). The areas include Dogwood Canyon, StoneCroft Property, Paradise Point, Outdoor Academy, Kimberling City, Still Waters, and Big Cedar Resort, for a total of 95.2 acres.

**No Vegetative Management Area Alternative** –This alternative, while similar to Alternative 2, would remove the Vegetative Management Area requirement from all land classifications, rather than the proposed Vegetative Management Area in Alternative 2.

**Conservative Alternative** – This alternative is the most conservative of the evaluated alternatives. High Density lands are reduced by 78 acres from the current classification of 1,984.2 acres, resulting in 1,906.6 acres. All current Low Density lands are proposed to be reclassified to Environmentally Sensitive lands, which increases that acreage to 14,144.7, representing a 49% increase in this classification. Project operations lands and Wildlife Management lands remain the same acreages as noted in the preferred Selected Alternative.

**Extreme Development Alternative** – This alternative would allow for much more development than all other evaluated alternatives, due to the 14,144.7 acres of Environmentally Sensitive lands of Alternative 3 being reclassified as Low Density lands. Of this total, 10,229 acres would have no vegetative management area requirement, while 3,915.7 acres would require a vegetative management area. Project operations lands and Wildlife Management lands would retain the same acreage as in the Selected Alternative and Alternative 3.

**Balanced Use Alternative** – This alternative allows for a 59.9 acre increase in High Density recreation over the Selected Alternative, totaling 1,986.6 acres. Low Density lands total 7,187.3 acres (67.4 acres less than the Selected Alternative), which consist of 5,183.6 acres of Low Density alone, and an additional 2,003.7 acres of Low Density lands requiring a vegetative management area. Environmentally Sensitive lands are proposed to increase by 2,238 acres from the existing acreage of 4,639.4 acres totaling 6,877.4 acres in ESA classification.

**ANTICIPATED ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACTS:** Consideration of the effects disclosed in the EA, and a finding that they are not significant, is necessary to prepare a FONSI. This determination of significance is required by 40 CFR 1508.13. Additionally, 40 CFR 1508.27 defines significance at it relates to consideration of environmental effects of a direct, indirect or cumulative nature.

Criteria that must be considered in making this finding are addressed below, in terms of both context and intensity. The significance of both short and long term effects must be viewed in

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

- 1. The degree to which the action results in both beneficial and adverse effects. A significant effect may exist even if the Federal agency believes that on balance the effect will be beneficial.** The EA indicates that there will be beneficial effects from implementation of the Selected Alternative to terrestrial and aquatic resources. The Selected Alternative would also allow for the continued potential development in low density and high density land classifications, yielding a balanced approach.
- 2. The degree to which the action affects public health or safety.** No adverse effects to public health or safety will result from the Selected Alternative. Possible adverse environmental effects may occur from implementation of the No Action Alternative and High Development alternative due to potential increased development resulting in more people and watercraft on the lake. Possible adverse economic and socioeconomic effects may occur from implementation of Alternative 3, the Conservative alternative.
- 3. The degree to which the action affects unique characteristics of the potentially affected area, such as proximity to historic or cultural resources, park lands, prime farmlands, wetlands, wild and scenic rivers, or ecologically critical areas.** The Selected Alternative does not directly threaten impact to any historic properties. Coordination with Federal, State, and local agencies and Federally Recognized Tribes will continue to be required to avoid, minimize or mitigate potential unforeseen impacts. Park lands, prime farm lands, wetlands, wild and scenic rivers, or ecologically critical areas will not be impacted by implementation of the preferred alternative.
- 4. The degree to which effects on the quality of the human environment are likely to be highly controversial.** The project will benefit the public through a balance of terrestrial and aquatic resource preservation with recreation provision. Therefore the Little Rock District; Corps of Engineers does not regard this activity as controversial.
- 5. The degree to which the possible effects on the human environment is highly uncertain or involves unique or unknown risks.** The uncertainty of the impacts of this action is low since land reclassification around the lake shoreline results in a projection of known and regulated activities as a result of the implementation of the preferred alternative.
- 6. The degree to which the action may establish a precedent for future actions with significant impacts.** Because the proposed action involves updating the existing Table Rock Lake Master Plan, which provides checks and balances on future lakeshore activities, the action should not establish a precedent for significant future impacts.

**7. Whether the action is related to other actions with individually insignificant but cumulatively significant impacts.** There are no other known individual actions associated with this project, therefore there are no cumulatively significant impacts identified with this action.

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

**9. The degree to which the action may adversely affect an endangered or threatened species or its critical habitat.** The proposed action will not adversely affect any Threatened & Endangered (T&E) species as areas with known T&E species and species habitat was classified as Environmentally Sensitive lands. The only listed T&E species in the area is the Gray Bat which is a cave- hibernating and roosting species. Land classifications to Environmentally Sensitive land should not impact the Gray Bat due to limited to no development on this land classification type.

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

**CONCLUSIONS:** The impacts identified in the prepared EA have been thoroughly discussed and assessed. No impacts identified in the EA would cause any significant adverse effects to the human environment. Therefore, due to the analysis presented in the EA and comments received from a 30-day public review period that began on July 26<sup>th</sup>, 2013 and ended on August 30<sup>th</sup>, 2013, it is my decision that the preparation of an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) as required by the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) is unwarranted and a "Finding of No Significant Impact" (FONSI) is appropriate. The signing of this document indicates the Corps final decision of the proposed action as it relates to NEPA. The EA and FONSI will be held on file in the Environmental Branch, Planning and Environmental Division of the Little Rock District, Corps of Engineers for future reference. Consultation with regulatory agencies will be ongoing to ensure compliance with all federal, state, regional, and local regulations and guidelines.

14 Feb 2014  
Date



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