

**FINDING OF NO SIGNIFICANT IMPACT**  
**TENNESSEE VALLEY AUTHORITY**  
ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT GRANT PROPOSAL FOR  
PROPOSED INDUSTRIAL SITE PURCHASE AND TREE CLEARING

An integral part of Tennessee Valley Authority's (TVA) mission is to promote economic development within the TVA service area. TVA provides financial assistance to help bring to market new/improved sites and facilities within the TVA service area and position communities to compete successfully for new jobs. The Proposed Action is comprised of TVA providing an economic development grant through TVA InvestPrep™ funds to Smith County, Tennessee, to assist in the purchase of an approximately 119-acre tract of land for use as a proposed industrial site and for associated tree clearing within the tract of land. The site of the Proposed Action is located adjacent to Highway 53 (Gordonsville Highway) in Gordonsville, Smith County, Tennessee and is comprised of one approximately 102-acre parcel (Baker Parcel) and an approximately 17-acre portion of an adjacent parcel (Gordonsville Development Parcel). The Baker Parcel and the portion of the Gordonsville Development Parcel are collectively referred to as the Project Site.

The primary purpose of the Proposed Action is to enable Smith County to purchase the Project Site for future use as an industrial park and to clear designated trees to provide improved visibility of the Project Site from adjacent roads. Smith County has committed to allocate approximately 75 percent of the total cost of the Project Site, but does not have sufficient funds for the remainder of the cost or for the associated tree clearing. TVA is proposing to fund approximately 25 percent of the cost of the property purchase and tree clearing and would, therefore, partially facilitate the purchase of the Project Site under the Proposed Action.

The proposal is the subject of an Environmental Assessment (EA) prepared by TVA, which is incorporated herein by reference. In the EA, TVA evaluated potential impacts of the Proposed Action (i.e., the Action Alternative) as well as the alternative of not implementing the action (i.e., the No Action Alternative). Under the No Action Alternative, TVA would not provide TVA InvestPrep™ funds to Smith County. TVA would not satisfy its mission of promoting economic development within the TVA service area at this specific site and would not position this specific community to compete successfully for new jobs through the Proposed Action. Smith County would presumably seek alternate funding (if available) to complete the purchase of the Project Site and associated tree clearing, which would result in similar impacts and benefits of the Action Alternative. If Smith County were not able to secure the remaining funding for the purchase of the tract of land and associated tree clearing, the land use at the site would likely remain unchanged, no direct environmental impacts would be anticipated, and the economic benefits associated with the Action Alternative would not be realized.

Under the Action Alternative, TVA would provide TVA InvestPrep™ funds to Smith County to support the purchase of the Project Site for future use as an industrial park. Approximately 8.25 acres of trees would be removed within three separate mixed-deciduous forest areas of the Project Site, totaling 18.32 acres. The one onsite residence, outbuildings, barns, sheds, utilities, and cell tower would be left in place and would not be impacted. Smith County or its contractors would take appropriate feasible measures, such as implementing best management practices (BMPs) and best construction practices, to minimize or reduce the potential environmental impacts of the Action Alternative to insignificant levels. These practices would include but are

not limited to installation of sediment and erosion controls (silt fences, sediment traps, etc.); management of fugitive dust; and day time work hours.

TVA has determined that the Proposed Action, subsequent to TVA's selection of the Action Alternative, would have no impact on wetlands, floodplains, prime farmland, natural areas, public recreation opportunities, managed areas, solid and hazardous wastes, Nationwide Rivers Inventory streams or Wild and Scenic Rivers.

Implementing the Action Alternative would result in minor impacts to air quality and climate change, vegetation, water resources and water quality, wildlife, land use, visual resources, noise, socioeconomics, transportation, and safety.

A January 2018 environmental survey identified waterbodies within the Project Site including 8 intermittent stream channels, 13 wet weather conveyances or ephemeral streams, and 4 open water ponds. Waterbodies were examined to determine if they were Jurisdictional Waters of the United States (WOTUS) and Jurisdictional Waters of the State of Tennessee (WOST). The eight intermittent streams were considered relatively permanent waters and would be Jurisdictional WOTUS and WOST. Given the proximity of the four open water ponds to the intermittent streams, these waterbodies would also be potentially Jurisdictional WOTUS and WOST. The thirteen ephemeral streams were considered non-relatively permanent waters, but all have a direct connection to relatively permanent waters and would be potentially Jurisdictional WOTUS. Ephemeral waterbodies were also classified as wet weather conveyances and would not be Jurisdictional WOST. If impacts to waterbodies located within the tree clearing areas cannot be avoided, consultation and permitting with the United States Army Corps of Engineers (USACE) Nashville District and Tennessee Department of Environment and Conservation (TDEC) would be required. Impacts to Jurisdictional WOTUS would require Section 404 Clean Water Act authorization. Impacts to Jurisdictional WOST would require an Aquatic Resource Alteration Permit (ARAP) from the TDEC which would also serve as the Section 401 Water Quality Certification for the project.

The January 2018 environmental survey of the Project Site did not identify occurrences of or suitable habitat for federally or state-listed plant and aquatic species. The survey identified potential roost trees and suitable foraging habitat for the federally listed Indiana bat and northern long-eared bat within the proposed tree clearing areas. Tree removal in these areas would include clearing 42 potential roost trees for bats representing 3.78 acres of potential summer roosting habitat.

Removal of these potential bat roost trees, as well as other activities (grading, grubbing, burning and woody debris) that may affect Indiana bat, northern long-eared bat and gray bat, are included in a programmatic consultation under Section 7 of the Endangered Species Act that addresses TVA routine actions and federally listed bats that occur in the TVA region. Activities associated with the Action Alternative will be adequately addressed by the consultation. Implementation of these activities would include avoidance and minimization measures.

A January 2018 Phase I cultural resources investigation of the Project site identified one isolated find, two archaeological sites (40SM239 and 40SM240), four previously undocumented structures (IS-1, IS-2, IS-3, and IS-4) more than 50 years in age and the two previously identified structures (SH-796 and SH-1421) with unimpeded views of the Project Site. These findings are not recommended for listing in the National Register of Historic Places (NRHP). Accordingly, TVA determined that no historic properties would be affected by the Action Alternative. In a letter dated February 26, 2018 the Tennessee SHPO concurred with TVA's finding of no effect. Pursuant to 36 CFR Part 800.3(f) (2), TVA also consulted with federally

recognized Indian tribes regarding properties that may have religious and cultural significance to their tribe and eligible for the NRHP. TVA received concurrence with its finding of no effect from the Shawnee Tribe and the Absentee-Shawnee Tribe of Oklahoma on February 22, 2018 and February 26, 2018, respectively.

Resources that could be cumulatively impacted by future development of the industrial park and subsequent construction are water resources, biological resources, visual resources, transportation, socioeconomics, noise, and air quality. Cumulative impacts to these resources are anticipated to be minor. The eventual development of the site for commercial purposes would create additional jobs and would likely have long-term beneficial impacts to the local economy. Although it would have a somewhat greater impact than the No Action Alternative, the Action Alternative would result in a minimal impact on the environment and improve local economy when the proposal was completed. Therefore, TVA has determined that cumulative impacts of the Action Alternative would be insignificant.

### **Mitigation**

To minimize or reduce the environmental impacts of tree clearing activities associated with the Action Alternative, Smith County or its contractors would ensure all clearing activities are conducted in compliance with the 2016 General NPDES Permit for Storm Water Discharges Associated with Construction Activity (TNR100000) and would utilize applicable BMPs to minimize and control erosion and fugitive dust during these actions.

Project-specific avoidance and minimization measures will be implemented to reduce effects to Indiana bat and northern long-eared bat species and will include the following:

- If burning of wood piles needs to occur between April 1 and November 14, burns will only be conducted if the air temperature is 55° Fahrenheit or greater, and preferably 60° Fahrenheit or greater.
- Removal of potentially suitable summer roost trees will occur in winter months (between November 15 and March 30) and not exceed the acreage estimates as quantified in the EA.

Further detail of these mitigation, avoidance, and minimization measures are described in Section 4 and Attachment 2 of the EA.

### **Conclusion and Findings**

Based on the findings listed above and the analyses in the EA, we conclude that the Proposed Action of TVA providing approximately 25 percent of the cost of the property purchase to Smith County for purchase of the Project Site and associated tree clearing, would not be a major federal action significantly affecting the environment. This finding is dependent on implementation of the mitigation measures described above. Accordingly, an environmental impact statement is not required.



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03/19/2018

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Date Signed