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FINDING OF NO SIGNIFICANT IMPACT TENNESSEE VALLEY AUTHORITY

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT GRANT FOR SITE CLEARING AND BUILDING DEMOLITION PANOLA COUNTY, MISSISSIPPI

The Tennessee Valley Authority (TVA) proposes to provide an economic development grant to the Panola Partnership, an economic development corporation in Panola County, Mississippi. The Panola Partnership plans to develop approximately 202.6 acres of a 294-acre property adjacent to its existing Airport Industrial Complex. The grant, along with matching funds from the Partnership, would be used to clear approximately 22.6 acres of trees and brush, demolish and remove several abandoned farm buildings, and remove abandoned farm equipment. These actions would allow the Panola Partnership to expand the Airport Industrial Complex and recruit additional commerce and industry to the Batesville area.

The proposed action is the subject of an environmental assessment (EA) prepared by TVA. The EA is incorporated by reference.

Two viable alternatives were available for consideration in the EA. Under the No Action Alternative, TVA would not provide the requested funds to the Panola Partnership. Under the Action Alternative, TVA would provide the requested economic development grant to the Panola Partnership. Consequently, approximately 22.6 acres of the subject property would be cleared, and several abandoned farm buildings and a house would be demolished. Woody debris from clearing would likely be burned onsite. Demolition debris and abandoned farm equipment would be removed and disposed in landfills approved to receive such waste. Metals would be recycled as appropriate. The Action Alternative is TVA's preferred alternative.

Although the proposed industrial park is adjacent to the Little Tallahatchie River, the proposed site preparations would not affect any navigation interests, Wild and Scenic Rivers, streams on the Nationwide Rivers Inventory or recreational facilities or opportunities. Because the site is currently zoned for industrial use, no prime farmlands would be converted to non-agricultural uses as a result of TVA's action. The site is adjacent to Interstate 55, and access to the Interstate is via a state highway; thus, any effects to local traffic conditions would be minor and insignificant.

Appropriate best management practices (BMPs) as indicated by the required Stormwater Pollution Prevention Plan by would be employed during earth-disturbing activities. Thus, potential effects to local surface water quality or to groundwater supplies or quality are expected to be temporary and insignificant.

The proposed clearing and building demolitions are not expected to affect common local terrestrial or aquatic life to any noticeable extent. Because the proposed site improvements are not likely to increase the spread of invasive plants or animals, the proposed project is consistent with Executive Order 13112 (Invasive Species).

No federally listed species have been documented as occurring on the 294-acre property or in the immediate vicinity. However, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service has determined that the federally endangered Indiana bat and the northern long-eared bat, which was recently listed as

threatened, both have the potential to occur in the northern portion of Mississippi. Field surveys indicated that suitable bat foraging habitat exists at the proposed site and in adjacent areas. However, the proposed clearing would not have any measurable effects on foraging bats. Based on the field surveys, TVA determined that forested habitat within the project area does not provide suitable summer roosting habitat for either the Indiana bat or the northern long-eared bat. Buildings proposed for demolition did not show evidence of bat use. Although the state-listed steelcolor shiner is known to occur in Panola County, no suitable habitat for this fish occurs on the subject property. Thus, the proposed actions would not affect any federally listed or state-listed species.

A large area of wetlands on the north side of the proposed industrial site is not within the developable portion of the property and would be avoided. A site reconnaissance revealed the presence of a 4.4-acre forested wetland within the area to be cleared. The Panola Partnership subsequently decided to exclude this wetland from clearing and eliminate the wetland from the developable area. Thus, the project is consistent with Executive Order 11990 (Protection of Wetlands). Because BMPs would be implemented in accordance with stormwater permitting requirements and because future actions would be subject to applicable federal, state, and local laws and regulations, any direct, indirect, and cumulative effects to wetlands are expected to be minor and insignificant.

Defined floodplains occur on the 294-acre property; however, the developable portion of the property contains no floodplains. Additionally, BMPs would be employed to prevent erosion and sedimentation. Panola County participates in the National Flood Insurance Program, and any development must be consistent with these regulations. Thus, no adverse effects to floodplains are anticipated, and the project is consistent with Executive Order 11988 (Floodplain Management).

With respect to cultural resources, TVA defined the Area of Potential Effects (APE) to be the 27-acre area originally proposed for clearing and demolitions. Surveys of the APE indicated the presence of one newly documented architectural resource, a house constructed about 1940. TVA determined that this house is not eligible for inclusion on the National Register of Historic Places. A portion of a previously-recorded archaeological feature (site 22PA1146) within the APE was re-visited. TVA finds that the portion of site 22PA1146 within the APE has little additional research value and no additional investigations are recommended for this portion of the site. The remainder of site 22PA1146 falls outside the APE, and its boundary would be marked. To avoid any inadvertent effects to that portion, the Panola Partnership will not conduct any clearing or ground-disturbing activities within the marked portion of site 22PA1146. TVA found that no historic properties would be affected by the proposed undertaking and consulted with the Mississippi State Historic Preservation Officer (SHPO) and federally recognized Indian tribes. The SHPO responded that the project would have no adverse effect to eligible cultural resources, provided that the portion of site 22PA1146 outside the APE is avoided. A response was received from the Chickasaw Nation. No other federally recognized tribes responded. Therefore, TVA's responsibilities under Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act are fulfilled.

A limited workforce would be required, and work is expected to take approximately 6 months. Thus, the proposed actions are expected to have minor effects to the local economy. No disproportionate effects to any minority or economically disadvantaged populations are expected.

Once clearing and demolition operations are complete, the visual character of the site would be comparable to other nearby agricultural areas. Noise levels associated with the proposed work

are not expected to be excessive, and the work would be conducted during normal daytime hours. Therefore, noise-related effects would be minor and insignificant. No noxious odors are expected. The eventual development of the site would be consistent with the visual character of nearby industrial and commercial areas and would constitute a minor cumulative long-term effect to the visual characteristics of the area.

Minor amounts of air pollutants in the form of fugitive dust and engine exhausts would be generated during the proposed site preparations. Any open burning of debris would be conducted in accordance with applicable regulations and laws. Because of the short duration and localized nature of the work, potential air quality effects would be minor and insignificant. Future activities on the site would be subject to applicable air quality laws and regulations. Thus, foreseeable long-term effects to local air quality, including cumulative effects, are expected to be insignificant.

Disposal of debris and other materials, including any special wastes or hazardous wastes, would be accomplished in an environmentally responsible manner consistent with all applicable local, state, and federal regulations. Thus, potential effects related to wastes from the proposed clearing and demolitions are expected to be insignificant. Because producers of industrial, manufacturing, and commercial solid and hazardous wastes are regulated under the Resource Conservation and Recovery Act (RCRA) and EPA's regulations implementing RCRA, any long-term foreseeable effects related to waste production are expected to be minor and insignificant.

In accordance with the National Historic Preservation Act, TVA consulted with the Mississippi SHPO regarding potential effects to cultural resources. TVA also contacted the Choctaw Nation, the Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma, the Jena Band of Choctaw Indians, and the Mississippi Band of Choctaw Indians.

Mitigation

To minimize or reduce the environmental effects of the proposed project, the Panola Partnership will ensure that the proposed clearing and demolitions will be conducted in compliance with storm water permitting requirements and that applicable BMPs will be utilized to minimize and control erosion and fugitive dust during these actions.

The Panola Partnership is responsible for marking the borders of that portion of archaeological site 22PA1146 situated outside the APE defined by TVA. To avoid any inadvertent effects to that portion, the Panola Partnership will ensure that no clearing or ground-disturbing activities occur within the marked portion of site 22PA1146.

Conclusion and Findings

Based on the findings listed above and the analyses in the EA, we conclude that the proposed action of providing funding to the Panola Partnership would not be a major federal action significantly affecting the environment. Accordingly, an environmental impact statement is not required.



5/13/15

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Date Signed