

**ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT GRANT FOR ACCESS ROAD
EXTENSION AND SITE DRAINAGE STUDY
SUPPLEMENTAL ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT**
Alcorn County, Mississippi

Prepared by:
TENNESSEE VALLEY AUTHORITY
Knoxville, Tennessee

June 2016

This page intentionally left blank

Purpose and Need for Action

In March 2015, Tennessee Valley Authority (TVA) completed an environmental assessment (EA, TVA 2015) to document the potential environmental effects of providing an economic development grant to The Alliance, an economic development partnership between the City of Corinth and Alcorn County, Mississippi, for the purpose of conducting preliminary site improvements on a portion of a 141-acre parcel in Alcorn County, Mississippi. The scope of the 2015 EA included site preparations (clearing, grubbing, and stump removal), construction of an access road and an on-ground topographic survey (Attachment A). TVA has subsequently granted an economic grant for The Alliance to conduct the proposed improvements to the site.

In December 2015, The Alliance requested another TVA economic grant to help tie the industrial development site access to the newly built Kimberly-Clark Road and County Road 220. The new proposal includes expanding the first phase of access improvements by constructing 2,000 feet of access road beginning from the Kimberly-Clark Access Road, extending through County Road 220 onto the Railhub South Industrial Site (Attachment B). The newly proposed access road is located outside the 2015 EA project area. The improvements would include approximately 250 feet of paved roadway and approximately 1,750 feet of gravel roadway (crushed stone surfacing). The proposed grant would also help fund a site grading and drainage study, which would be used to map the topography following completion of the access road expansion.

An integral part of TVA's mission is to promote the economic development of the TVA service area. Pursuant to the TVA Economic Development Program Guidelines, TVA provides financial assistance for projects within the TVA area of service for economic development. The multi-year economic development program is designed to bring to market new/improved sites and facilities within the TVA area and position communities to compete successfully for new jobs and investment.

This industrial site, in Alcorn County, Mississippi, is located between the Norfolk Southern mainline and Pioneer Rail short line railroads (Attachment A). It is east of Corinth, north of U.S. Highway 72 and east of the new Kimberly Clark Parkway.

As noted above, the proposed grant to The Alliance would help expand access to the Alcorn industrial site to increase its attractiveness to potential industrial or commercial tenants. TVA needs to make a decision about providing a grant to The Alliance for the access road expansion for the site. TVA is preparing a supplemental EA (SEA) to evaluate the environmental impacts of the proposal.

Permits, Licenses, and Approvals

The provision of financial assistance to The Alliance for the proposed activities is not subject to any TVA permits or licenses. Only internal approval by TVA management would be required to provide the requested assistance. However, the actions that would be taken by The Alliance to construct an expansion of the site's access road could require a construction permit issued by local governments.

Scope of the Environmental Assessment

TVA has prepared this SEA in accordance with the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) and implementing regulations. TVA considered the possible environmental effects

of the proposed action and determined that potential effects to the environmental resources listed below are relevant to the decision to be made. Thus, potential effects to vegetation, wildlife, endangered and threatened species, cultural resources, transportation, aesthetic resources, wetlands, floodplains, surface water, and aquatic ecology are addressed in this SEA.

Alternatives

This supplemental EA evaluates two alternatives: the No Action and Proposed Action Alternative. These alternatives are described below.

Alternative A - No Action Alternative

Under the No Action Alternative, TVA would not provide funding for the access road expansion. However, the previously funded activities at the industrial site would continue including clearing of the 42-acre site and access road construction as originally planned. The Alliance could seek alternative funding or not complete the road expansion project. If the access road expansion project were not completed, the site could be at a competitive disadvantage for selection by developers. If The Alliance obtained alternative funding, the overall environmental consequences would be similar to those expected under the Action Alternative.

Alternative B – Proposed Action Alternative

Under the Action Alternative, TVA would provide funding for the project and the access road would be expanded by 2,000 feet. The roadway would consist of 7.5 inches of crushed stone that would be used for the base of a future 24 foot wide paved roadway with 4 foot shoulders (Attachment B). The typical section would have 3:1 side slopes to accommodate for drainage and ditches. Typical erosion control efforts would be implemented including seeding, mulching, temporary silt fence, wattles, and riprap check dams. There would be no tree clearing under the proposed action. The proposed grant would also help fund a site grading and drainage study, which would require no ground disturbance.

Preferred Alternative

TVA's preferred alternative is Alternative B - Proposed Action Alternative. This alternative would help expand access to the Alcorn site to increase its attractiveness to potential industrial or commercial tenants, which would also promote TVA's economic development mission.

Affected Environment and Anticipated Impacts

Site Description

The project area is located in southeast of Corinth, Mississippi north of The Alliance industrial site and the previously approved access road. The proposed access road extension runs from County Road 220 to County Road 106 and is adjacent to the Norfolk Southern railway (Attachment B). The site is relatively flat with some sloped areas. In November 2015, the original land owner cleared and graded the project area for timber prior to selling the land to The Alliance. Prior to clearing, the vegetation was a mix of highly fragmented deciduous and evergreen forest in various stages of succession.

Impacts Evaluated

Due to the nature and location of the proposed action, there is no potential for impacts to wild and scenic rivers, parks, and natural areas and therefore these resources are not

discussed further. There are no wetlands present within the project area, thus there would be no impacts to wetlands associated with the proposed action. A May 2016 review of the project area determined that there are no water features (streams, wet weather conveyances, etc.) within the project area. Therefore, there would be no impact on water quality or aquatic species associated with the proposed action. Transportation, socioeconomics and environmental justice, and aesthetic resources are described in the 2015 EA. The potential for impacts to these resources is absent or minor and, as described in the 2015 EA, they are not discussed further. The conditions of several other resources are described in the 2015 EA and these descriptions are incorporated below and supplemented with more current and site-specific information where necessary. The proposed study of site grading and drainage would not require ground disturbance and therefore would have no impact on any of the resources identified in this SEA.

Vegetation and Wildlife

The 2015 EA describes the general ecological setting of the project area. The site has been heavily disturbed by previous land uses and does not contain habitat with conservation value.

Executive Order 13112 serves to prevent the introduction of invasive species and provides for their control to minimize the economic, ecological, and human health impacts that those species potentially cause. In this context, invasive species are non-native species that invade natural areas, displace native species, and degrade ecological communities or ecosystem processes (Miller 2010). Much of the project area is currently dominated by invasive species, which reflects the frequency and magnitude of disturbance that have occurred on site. Disturbances associated with agriculture and timber production can encourage the establishment of invasive plants.

Due to the heavy disturbance at this site, the project footprint is unlikely to be used by any wildlife species, common or rare. Surrounding habitat and wildlife usage would be similar to what is described in the 2015 EA. Cave and colonial wading bird colony records for this SEA are the same as presented in the 2015 EA.

Alternative A - Under the No Action Alternative, TVA would not provide the economic development grant and portions of the proposed access road site would remain in their current condition for some length of time. However, The Alliance could seek alternative funding and the project may continue even if TVA did not participate. Changes to local plant communities resulting from natural ecological processes and human-related disturbance would continue to occur, but the changes would not result from TVA funding the proposed project. The site likely has a high proportion of invasive species and implementation of the No Action Alternative would not change this situation. The previously funded activities at the site, as described in the 2015 EA, would continue, including clearing of the 42-acre site and original access road construction. Impacts to terrestrial wildlife would be the same as described in the 2015 EA.

Alternative B - Adoption of the Action Alternative would not significantly affect the terrestrial ecology of the region. The site does not support native plant communities with conservation value. Portions of the project area would be permanently converted from vegetation to roadway, but these areas do not support unique plant communities. Therefore, implementation of the proposed project would have a negligible impact on the terrestrial ecology of the region.

Endangered and Threatened Species

The Endangered Species Act (ESA) provides broad protection for species of fish, wildlife, and plants that are listed as endangered or threatened in the United States or elsewhere. The Act states that federal agencies must conserve endangered and threatened species and requires federal agencies to determine the effects of their proposed actions on federally-listed endangered and threatened species and their designated critical habitat. The State of Mississippi provides protection for species considered threatened, endangered, or deemed in need of management within the state other than those federally-listed under the ESA.

The 2015 EA (TVA 2015) described 4 listed plant species, 3 aquatic species and 3 listed terrestrial animal species potentially occurring within the vicinity of the project area (Table 1). Since the current access road expansion is adjacent to the original 2015 project area, the species listed in Table 1 would still apply to the current project. Based on aerial photos and photos of the project footprint for the proposed road expansion, no habitat exists for any of the listed aquatic or terrestrial animal species listed in Table 1 and none of the 4 listed plant species occurs in the project area for the proposed road expansion. No areas designated as critical habitat for federally-listed species occurs in the area.

Table 1. State-listed and Federally Listed Species with Potential to Occur Within the Vicinity of the Proposed Project

Common Name	Scientific Name	Federal Status¹	State Status¹ (Rank²)
Plants³			
White turtlehead	<i>Chelone glabra</i>		SLNS (S3)
Monkey-face orchid	<i>Platanthera integrilabia</i>	PT	SLNS (S1)
Pin oak	<i>Quercus palustris</i>		SLNS (S2?)
Mammals			
Northern long-eared bat ⁴	<i>Myotis septentrionalis</i>	LT	TRKD (S1N)
Indiana bat ⁴	<i>Myotis sodalis</i> ³	END	END (S1B)
Insects			
Mitchell's satyr butterfly ⁴	<i>Neonympha mitchellii mitchellii</i>	END	END (S1)
Fishes			
Northern madtom	<i>Noturus stigmosus</i>		END (S1)
Steelcolor shiner	<i>Cyprinella whipplei</i>		TRKD (S2)
Suckermouth minnow	<i>Phenacobius mirabilis</i>		END (S1)

Source: TVA Regional Natural Heritage Database and USFWS Environmental Conservation Online System (<http://ecos.fws.gov/ecos/home.action>) extracted 02/03/2015.

¹ Status Codes: PT= Proposed threatened; END = Endangered; LT = Listed threatened; PE = Proposed Endangered; SLNS = State listed but no status; TRKD = Tracked.

² State Ranks: S1 = Critically Imperiled; S#B = rank of breeding population; S#N = rank of a non-breeding population; ? = Uncertainty in the exact rarity of the species.

³ Mississippi has no status concerning endangered plants.

⁴ USFWS has determined this species has the potential to exist in Alcorn County, Mississippi, although no records are known to date.

Alternative A – Adoption of the No Action Alternative would not impact federal- or state-listed plant, wildlife, or aquatic species because no individual species or habitat capable of supporting listed species occurs in the project area. Changes to local plant communities

resulting from natural ecological processes and human-related disturbance would continue to occur, but the changes would not be the result of a TVA decision. Implementation of the No Action Alternative would not impact state- or federally-listed plant, wildlife or aquatic species or designated critical habitat.

Alternative B – Under the Proposed Action Alternative, TVA would administer a grant that would result in construction of an access road to facilitate development of an industrial development site. However, at the time of this review the project area has been cleared, which removed potential habitat for listed species. Therefore, the proposed action would not impact federal- or state-listed plant, wildlife or aquatic species because no individuals or habitat capable of supporting listed species occurs in portions of the project area where work would occur.

Cultural Resources

Historic and cultural resources, including archaeological resources, are protected under various federal laws. These include the Archaeological Resources Protection Act, the Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act, and the National Historic Preservation Act (NHPA). Section 106 of NHPA requires federal agencies to consult with the respective State Historic Preservation Officer (SHPO) when proposed federal actions could affect these resources.

Archaeological and historic architectural survey was previously conducted in 2013 on the Alcorn site that was subject of the 2015 EA (TVA 2015). The project area that is the subject of this SEA (the access road) was not within the scope of the 2013 phase I survey. For the currently proposed action, TVA determined the area of potential effects (APE) for both archaeological and architectural resources to be the project area that would result in ground-disturbing activities. On March 24, 2016, TVA cultural compliance staff conducted a field reconnaissance review of the proposed access road location. The entirety of the APE had already been cleared and much of the top soil had been removed or relocated from grading the existing slope prior to TVA's involvement. The reviewers encountered 100 percent visibility within the archaeological APE. A pedestrian survey was completed on the entirety of the project area. All but one of the shovel test pits were not excavated due to slope and high visibility. No cultural materials were observed.

Alternative A – Under the No Action Alternative, there would be no project-related effects on historic properties. Likewise, no direct, indirect, or cumulative effects to these resources are expected.

Alternative B – Per the results of the 2016 field reconnaissance review, TVA determined that no historic properties would be affected by the proposed undertaking. TVA consulted with the Mississippi SHPO in a letter dated April 28, 2016 regarding TVA's findings of no effect. In a letter dated May 13, 2016, the Mississippi SHPO responded that they had no comments to the proposed undertaking because the area had been previously disturbed. 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 National Register of Historic Places and received no responses.

Cumulative and Reasonably Foreseeable Long-term Effects

Because of the limited size of the proposed access road expansion and the short duration of the proposed activities, any cumulative effects to biological resources, aesthetic character or the local transportation system are expected to be minor. The cumulative and

reasonably foreseeable long term effects of the future site would be the same as what is described in the 2015 EA.

Mitigation Measures

Similar to the 2015 EA, to minimize or reduce the environmental effects of the proposed project, The Alliance will ensure that its construction contractors are in compliance with storm water permitting requirements, and The Alliance will be responsible for ensuring that applicable BMPs to minimize and control erosion and fugitive dust are implemented during construction. TVA has not determined the need for any non-routine measures to reduce potential environmental effects.

TVA Preparers

Adam J. Dattilo, Botanist – Biological Resources, Terrestrial Ecology and Threatened and Endangered Species

Patricia B. Ezzell, Program Manager – Tribal Relations

Elizabeth Burton Hamrick, Biologist – Terrestrial Animals

Michaelyn S. Harle, Archaeologist – Cultural Resources, National Historic Preservation Act Compliance

Loretta A. McNamee, Contract NEPA Specialist, Document Preparation

Craig L. Phillips, Aquatic Biologist – Biological Resources, Aquatic Ecology

Kim Pilarski-Hall, Wetlands and Natural Areas Specialist, Natural Areas and Wetlands

Agencies and Others Consulted

The following federal and state agencies and Native American Tribes were consulted:

Mississippi Department of Archives and History, Jackson, Mississippi

United States Fish and Wildlife Service, Jackson, Mississippi

Natural Resources Conservation Service, Corinth, Mississippi

Chickasaw Nation

Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma

Jena Band of Choctaw Indians

Mississippi Band of Choctaw Indians

References

Miller, J. H., S. T. Manning, and S. F. Enloe. 2010. *A management guide for invasive plants in the Southern forests*. General Technical Report SRS-131. Asheville, North Carolina. US Department of Agriculture, Forest Service, Southern Research Station.

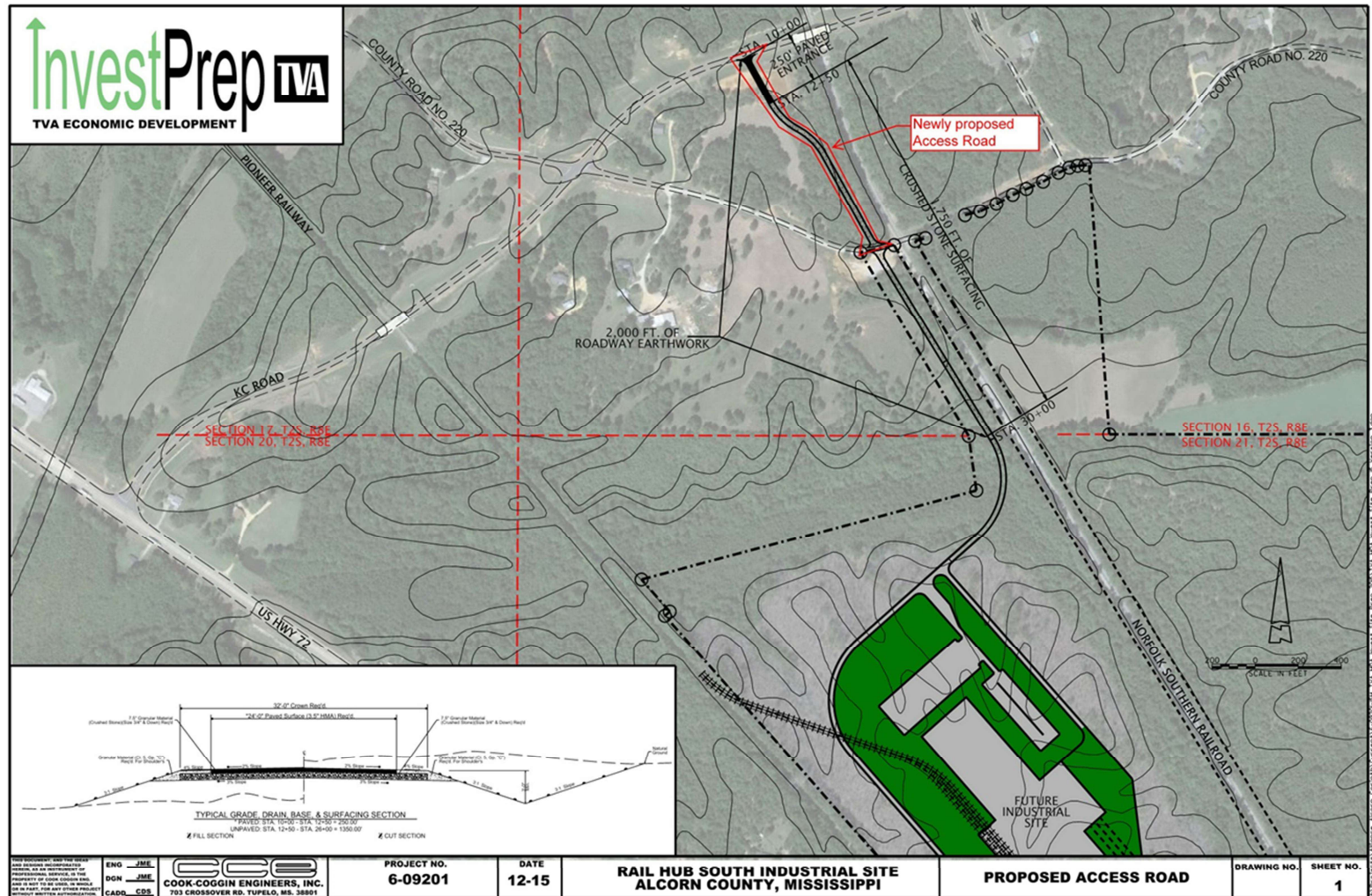
Tennessee Valley Authority. 2015. Economic Development Grant for Site Preparation and Access Road Construction Environment Assessment. March 2015.

Attachments

Attachment A - March 2015 Activities Associated with Industrial Park in Acorn County, Mississippi

Attachment B – Proposed Access road Expansion Location and Engineer Drawing

Attachment A – March 2015 Activities Associated with Industrial Park in Acorn County, Mississippi



Attachment B - Proposed Access road Expansion Location and Engineer Drawing

