

FINDING OF NO SIGNIFICANT IMPACT
TENNESSEE VALLEY AUTHORITY
ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT GRANT PROPOSAL FOR
THE PONTOTOC INDUSTRIAL PARK
Pontotoc County, MS (Pontotoc)

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 and capital investment. TVA proposes to provide an economic development grant through InvestPrep funds to Pontotoc County, Mississippi. The Three Rivers Planning and Development District (TRPDD) would assist with the development of the Pontotoc Industrial Park (PIP). The area of potential effect (APE) for TVA's proposed action (hereafter referred to as the Project Area) comprises approximately 29 acres of the total 98 acres of the PIP located on Magee Drive adjacent to Highway 345/North Main Street, approximately 1.3 miles north of the City of Pontotoc, MS in Pontotoc County. There would be minor impacts as a result of 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 InvestPrep funds to Pontotoc County. TVA would not be furthering its mission of promoting economic development by assisting the local community to compete successfully for new jobs and capital investment through the Proposed Action. The Appalachian Regional Commission (ARC) awarded Pontotoc County a grant for the same Project scope. Pontotoc County may seek alternate supplemental funding (if available) to combine with their existing funds to develop the site. Success in obtaining alternate funding would result in similar impacts and benefits as the Action Alternative. If Pontotoc County was not able to finalize and secure adequate funding and/or the proposed actions were cancelled, the land use at the site would likely remain unchanged, no 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 InvestPrep funds to Pontotoc County, facilitating the improvement of the Project Area within the PIP. TVA funds would be used to assist with tree clearing and grubbing, geotechnical borings, grading and compacting of two building pads, construction of a 300,000 gallon elevated water tower, construction of a gravel access road to the water tower, and the extension of a 10-inch-diameter sewer line to the PIP from an existing 15-inch-diameter interceptor sewer line.

Implementation of the Action Alternative would result in disturbance of the Project Area in preparation for industrial use. Pontotoc County, the TRPDD, and their contractors are expected to implement appropriate measures, such as best management practices (BMPs), to minimize or reduce negative potential environmental impacts of the Action Alternative to insignificant levels. These practices include, but are not limited to, installation of sediment and erosion controls (silt fences, sediment traps, etc.); management of fugitive dust; and a restriction allowing work during daytime work hours only.

TVA has determined that the Proposed Action, subsequent to TVA's selection of the Action Alternative, would have no impact on land use, solid and hazardous wastes, managed or natural areas, recreation, prime farmland, and no adverse effect on archaeology and historic structures and

sites. Minor impacts would occur to a small portion of floodplains that intersect with the proposed sewer line.

Implementing the Action Alternative would result in potential minor impacts to air quality and climate change, groundwater, surface water, wetlands, aquatic ecology, terrestrial zoology, and botany. Implementation of the Action Alternative could create potential impacts to the human environment, including visual effects, noise, socioeconomics and environmental justice, and transportation.

A November 2020 environmental survey identified one wet weather conveyance (BWA01) and two wetlands (WPC01-palustrine scrub-shrub and WPC02-palustrine emergent) within the Project Area. BWA01 is ephemeral in nature. When water is present, this feature flows into the pond in the southeast corner of the PIP outside of the Project Area. It is anticipated that this wet weather conveyance would be considered a non-jurisdictional waters of the United States (WOTUS) under the 2020 Navigable Waters Protection Rule. Wetland WPC01 is part of a large wetland that extends beyond the Project Area to the northwest, and it is anticipated that the USACE would consider this wetland to be a jurisdictional WOTUS. Wetland WPC02 is an isolated wetland, and it is anticipated the USACE would consider this wetland to be a non-jurisdictional WOTUS. Coordination with the United States Army Corps of Engineers (USACE) Vicksburg District would be necessary to confirm the jurisdictional status of these resources. Impacts to WOTUS would require a Clean Water Act (CWA) Section 404 permit from the USACE and a CWA Section 401 Water Quality Certification issued by the Mississippi Department of Environmental Quality (MDEQ).

The environmental survey also identified summer roosting habitat (one potential roost tree) for northern long-eared bat (NLEB). No winter bat habitat was observed within the Project Area. Low value foraging habitat for NLEB occurs over, alongside, and through forest fragments and the wet weather conveyance in the Project Area. A number of activities associated with the Action Alternative, including tree removal and burning, were addressed in TVA's programmatic consultation with the United States Fish and Wildlife Service on routine actions and federally listed bats in accordance with ESA Section 7(a)(2) and completed in April 2018. For those activities with potential to affect bats, TVA committed to implementing specific conservation measures. These activities and associated conservation measures are identified on page 5 of the TVA Bat Strategy Project Screening Form (Attachment 2 of EA, which is incorporated herein by reference) and must be reviewed/implemented as part of the Action Alternative. With implementation of these conservation measures, no significant impacts are expected to NLEB. However, the single potential roost tree may be removed during the non-winter season. For those activities with potential to affect bats, TVA committed to implementing specific conservation measures. These measures are identified on page 5 of the TVA Bat Strategy Project Screening Form.

A Phase I cultural resources investigation was performed in January 2021 that included both an assessment of standing structures as well as archaeological survey of the project APE. The architectural survey identified 15 newly recorded structures of over 50 years in age. The Browning House was considered eligible for listing on the National Register of Historic Places (NRHP), but the project was determined to have No Adverse Effects on the historic property due to distance and extant vegetation. The archaeological survey excavated 139 shovel tests on a 30-meter grid across the entire breadth of the project APE. None of these shovel tests yielded any cultural material. No archaeological artifacts or resources were identified as a result of the Phase I survey. No further archaeological work is recommended in the Project Area. TVA consulted with the MS State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO) in a letter dated March 8, 2021 regarding TVA's findings and recommendations. In a letter dated March 29, 2021 the MS SHPO concurred with TVA's findings of no effect. Pursuant to 36 CFR 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 be eligible for the NRHP. TVA received two responses from the federally-recognized Indian tribes indicating no opposition to the proposed undertaking.

Mitigation

To minimize or reduce the environmental effects of site activities associated with the Action Alternative, Pontotoc County, the TRPDD, or their contractors are expected to ensure all clearing and grading activities conducted comply with stormwater permitting requirements and utilize applicable BMPs to minimize and control erosion and fugitive dust during these actions. Should onsite burning activities occur, these actions would be conducted in compliance with local burn permits, the requirements in the Mississippi Department of Environmental Quality Rule 1.3 (G), and conservation measures identified on page 5 of the TVA Bat Strategy Project Screening Form (Attachment 2 of EA).

Operations involving chemical or fuel storage or resupply and vehicle servicing are expected to be handled outside of riparian areas and in such a manner as to prevent these items from reaching a watercourse. Earthen berms or other effective means are expected to be installed to protect nearby surface waters from direct surface runoff. Servicing of equipment and vehicles is expected to be done with care to avoid leakage, spillage, and subsequent surface or ground water contamination. Oil waste, filters, and other litter are expected to be collected and disposed of properly.

Unavoidable impacts to the wet weather conveyance and the two wetlands (along with associated impacts to low quality aquatic habitats) would require consultation and permitting with the USACE Vicksburg District and MDEQ if determined to be jurisdictional. If determined jurisdictional, impacts to the wet weather conveyance and the two wetlands may require a CWA Section 404 permit and a CWA Section 401 authorization, which would include mitigation measures and possibly compensatory mitigation (e.g., purchase of mitigation credits or implementation of a permittee responsible mitigation plan).

Specific avoidance and conservation measures would be implemented as a part of the Action Alternative to reduce effects to NLEB. These measures are identified in the TVA Bat Strategy Project Screening Form (Attachment 2 of EA).

Conclusion and Findings

Based on the findings listed above and the analyses in the EA, we conclude that the Proposed Action of TVA funding the improvement of the Project Area within the PIP 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.



Dawn Booker
NEPA Manager
Federally Mandated Environmental Compliance
Tennessee Valley Authority

04/12/2021

Date Signed