FINAL
ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT

OF THE ACQUISITION, DEVELOPMENT, AND OPERATION OF THE

NATIONAL VETERANS BURIAL GROUND

ELKO COUNTY, NEVADA

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS

425 I STREET, NW

WASHINGTON, DC 20001

PREPARED BY:

TTL Associates, Inc.

March 10, 2021

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This Environmental Assessment (EA) has been prepared to identify, analyze, and document the potential physical, environmental, cultural, and socioeconomic impacts associated with the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs' (VA's) proposed acquisition of approximately 10 to 15 acres of land located in the vicinity of Elko, Nevada for the development and operation of a National Veterans Burial Ground. This EA has been prepared as required in accordance with the National Environmental Policy Act of 1969 ([NEPA]; 42 United States Code 4321 et seq.), the President's Council on Environmental Quality (CEQ) Regulations Implementing the Procedural Provisions of NEPA (40 Code of Federal Regulations [CFR] 1500-1508), *Environmental Effects of the Department of Veterans Affairs Actions* (38 CFR Part 26), and in accordance with *VA NEPA Interim Guidance for Projects* (U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs 2010).

Proposed Action

VA's Proposed Action is to acquire approximately 10 to 15 acres of land located in the vicinity of Elko, Nevada to develop, operate, and maintain as a new National Veterans Burial Ground.

The proposed National Veterans Burial Ground would be open to the public every day throughout the year. VA estimates that the cemetery, once fully established, would receive approximately 20 visitors per day. VA anticipates approximately 1 to 3 funeral processions per week at the cemetery, averaging approximately 20 cars per procession. VA estimates there would be approximately 50 interments per year at the proposed cemetery.

Purpose and Need

The purpose of the Proposed Action is to provide a National Cemetery of sufficient size and capacity to serve the projected needs of Veterans in northern Nevada for the next 100 or more years. The Proposed Action would provide burial facilities for Veterans and eligible family members in northern Nevada and the surrounding area who are currently not served by a National Cemetery or a VA-funded State Veterans Cemetery.

A new National Cemetery is needed to better serve Veterans and their families in northern Nevada. There are currently no National Cemeteries in Nevada. The nearest State Veterans Cemeteries are the Northern Nevada Veterans Memorial Cemetery in Fernley, Nevada and the Utah Veterans Memorial Cemetery in Bluffdale, Utah, both located approximately 250 miles away from Elko. The new cemetery would provide improved access to Veterans and their families to a National Cemetery and would balance the current unequal geographic distribution of National Cemeteries in this region.

VA established the Rural Veterans Burial Initiative to establish a National Cemetery presence in rural areas where Veterans populations are less than 25,000 Veterans within a 75-mile radius of their residences. The goal of the program is to build small National Cemeteries (National Veterans Burial Grounds) in certain rural areas where the Veteran population has been identified by VA to be unserved. The Rural Initiatives program targets states with no National Cemeteries open for first interments and areas that are not currently served by either a VA-funded State Veterans Cemetery or a National Cemetery in another state. Elko, Nevada is one of eight areas targeted by VA under the Rural Initiatives program. Over 4,000 Veterans in the northern Nevada area are currently unserved by a VA burial option.

Alternatives

This EA examines in-depth three alternatives, the implementation of the Proposed Action at one of two Action Alternative Sites (Site 1 or Site 2) and the No Action Alternative, defined as follows:

- **Site 1 Alternative:** Site 1 is approximately 10 acres of unimproved, grassy and brushy land located north of Cattle Drive, east of Western Way, and west of Rocky Road in a relatively undeveloped area of Elko County, northwest of the City of Elko. Site 1 is part of an approximately 1,457-acre parcel of land owned by the federal government and managed by the U.S. Department of Interior Bureau of Land Management (BLM). Site 1 has been undeveloped land with grassy and brushy vegetation since at least 1953. The Site is part of a cattle grazing allotment managed by BLM but has not been grazed in many years.
- **Site 2 Alternative:** Site 2 is approximately 15 acres of unimproved, grassy and brushy land located at the southeast corner of Jennings Way and Rocky Road, in a relatively undeveloped area in the northwestern portion of the City of Elko. Site 2 is part of an approximately 38-acre parcel of land owned by the City of Elko and has ben unimproved grassy and brushy land since at least 1953.
- **No Action Alternative:** VA would not implement the Proposed Action as identified (would not establish a new National Veterans Burial Ground in the vicinity of Elko, Nevada). Veterans and their families residing in northern Nevada would continue to be unserved by a proximate National Cemetery or VA-funded State Veterans Cemetery and would continue to be required to travel a substantial distance to a National or State Veterans Cemetery. The distribution of National Cemeteries throughout the region would continue to be unbalanced. The sites likely would remain unimproved land.

The Action Alternatives effectively provide a suitable combination of land, location, and existing access and meet the regional National Cemetery requirements of VA. The No Action Alternative would not enable VA to provide adequate National Cemetery facilities in northern Nevada, and thus, would not meet the purpose of or need for the Proposed Action. However, the No Action Alternative is assessed in this EA to provide a comparative baseline analysis, as required under the CEQ Regulations.

Affected Environment and Environmental Consequences

The affected environment of the Action Alternative Sites and their immediate surroundings, or the region of influence of the Proposed Action, is discussed in Section 3 of this EA.

The three considered alternatives, the two Action Alternatives and the No Action Alternative, are evaluated in this EA to determine their potential direct or indirect impact(s) on the physical, environmental, cultural, and socioeconomic aspects of the Proposed Action's region of influence. Technical areas evaluated in this EA include:

- *Aesthetics*
- *Air Quality*
- *Cultural and Historic Resources*
- *Geology and Soils*
- *Hydrology and Water Quality*
- *Wildlife and Habitat*
- *Noise*
- *Land Use*
- *Floodplains, Wetlands, and Coastal Zone Management*
- *Socioeconomics*
- *Community Services*
- *Solid Waste and Hazardous Materials*
- *Traffic, Transportation, and Parking*
- *Utilities*
- *Environmental Justice*
- *Cumulative Impacts*
- *Potential for Generating Substantial Controversy*

Potential Effects of the Proposed Action Alternatives

The Action Alternatives would result in the impacts identified throughout Section 3 and summarized in the table below. These include potential short-term and/or long-term adverse impacts to aesthetics, air quality, soils, hydrology and water quality, wildlife and habitat, noise, land use, solid waste and hazardous materials, transportation, and utilities. All these potential impacts are less than significant and would be further reduced through careful implementation of the general best management practices (BMPs), management and minimization measures, and compliance with regulatory requirements as identified in Section 4.

The Proposed Action would establish a new National Cemetery in unserved northern Nevada, a significant beneficial socioeconomic effect to the Veterans and their families in the region.

Potential Effects of the No Action Alternative

Under the No Action Alternative, the Proposed Action would not be implemented. Veterans and their families in northern Nevada would continue to reside greater than 75 miles from the nearest National or VA-funded State Veterans Cemetery. No positive impacts attributable to the Proposed Action would occur. Veterans and their families in the area would have to travel much longer distances to the nearest National or State Veterans Cemetery for interment and subsequent visits, at increased cost and time.

Summary of Impact Analysis

Resource Area	Action Alternatives		No Action
	Site 1	Site 2	
Aesthetics	**Minor short-term and long-term, direct adverse impacts.**		No impact.
	Minor short-term direct adverse visual impacts during cemetery construction (heavy machinery, land disturbance, and dust). Minor long-term direct adverse aesthetic impacts as a result of the cemetery development. Cemetery would be designed in concert with the natural topography and features and would have low visual impact, generally consistent with surrounding land uses. Cemetery design would include unimproved buffers and/or berms along boundaries with adjacent residences.		
Air Quality	**Minor short-term and negligible long-term, direct adverse impacts.**		Minor indirect long-term impacts associated with vehicular air emissions as Veterans travel greater distances to national cemeteries.
	Minor short-term adverse impact due to construction dust and particulate matter managed through BMPs and negligible long-term local adverse impacts due to vehicle emissions.		
Cultural and Historic Resources	**No/negligible impact.**		No impact.
	No National Register of Historic Places-listed or eligible historic properties present at or near the Sites. Nevada State Historic Preservation Office concurred no historic properties would be affected.		

Resource Area	Action Alternatives		No Action
	Site 1	Site 2	
Geology and Soils	**Minor short-term, direct adverse impact.**		No impact.
	Minor short-term direct adverse soil erosion and sediment impacts during cemetery construction managed through BMPs. Negligible direct adverse farmland soil impact. Sites contain farmland of statewide importance, if irrigated. VA would complete form AD-1006 (Farmland Conversion Impact Rating).		
Hydrology and Water Quality	**No/negligible impact.**	**Negligible impact.**	No impact.
	No surface water on or near Site 1. Stormwater runoff during construction managed through BMPs. Cemetery would include on-site stormwater retention.	Drainageway crosses the northern portion of Site 2 that likely only contains water after large storms or fast snowmelt. Drainageway would be retained during cemetery design. Stormwater runoff during construction managed through BMPs. Cemetery would include on-site stormwater retention.	
Wildlife and Habitat	**Minor short-term direct adverse impact.**		No impact.
	Minor short-term direct adverse impact during construction. Sagebrush at the Sites provides potential nesting habitat for three migratory birds protected by the Migratory Bird Treaty Act. Vegetation clearing would not be conducted during the nesting season (April to August) or the selected site would be surveyed for active nests by a biologist prior to clearing.		

Resource Area	Action Alternatives		No Action
	Site 1	Site 2	
Noise	**Minor short-term and long-term, direct adverse impacts.**		No impact.
	Short-term direct adverse noise impacts during cemetery development controlled through construction BMPs. Minor long-term direct adverse operational noise impacts associated with vehicle traffic and ceremonial rifle fire (approximately once per week) during weekday business hours. Nearby sensitive noise receptors would be considered during the cemetery design.		
Land Use	**Minor long-term, direct adverse impact.**		No impact.
	Minor long-term direct adverse impact as a result of the Site's conversion from undeveloped land into a cemetery. Cemetery would be generally consistent with surrounding land use (mostly unimproved rural area with scattered residences).	Minor long-term direct adverse impact as a result of the Site's conversion from undeveloped land into a cemetery. Cemetery would be generally consistent with surrounding land use (partially developed rural area with some adjacent residences). Site has been offered to VA for use as a cemetery by the City of Elko. VA is not subject to local zoning.	
Wetlands, Floodplains, and Coastal Zone Management	**No/negligible impact.**		No impact.
	No wetlands or floodplains on Site 1 or adjacent properties. Not located in a Coastal Management Zone.	The drainageway (ephemeral stream) that crosses Site 2 is not a wetland or a jurisdictional Water of the U.S. Drainageway would be retained during the cemetery design. No floodplains on-site. Easterly located off-site floodplain would not be impacted by Site 2 development. Not located in a Coastal Management Zone.	

Resource Area	Action Alternatives		No Action
	Site 1	Site 2	
Socioeconomics	**Minor short-term and significant long-term beneficial impacts.**		Inadequate VA cemetery options – adverse direct, long-term impact to local Veterans.
	Minor short-term beneficial impacts to local economy as a result of temporary construction jobs. Significant long-term beneficial impact as proposed cemetery would provide a regionally proximate National Cemetery to Veterans and their families.		
Community Services	**No/negligible impact.**		No impact.
	Proposed cemetery would put negligible additional load on local community services.		
Solid Waste and Hazardous Materials	**Minor short-term and long-term, direct adverse impacts.**		No impact.
	Potential minor short-term and long-term direct adverse impacts from petroleum/hazardous substance storage and handling during cemetery construction and operation managed through standard BMPs.		
Traffic, Transportation, and Parking	**Minor short-term and long-term, direct adverse transportation impacts.**		No impact.
	Minor short-term direct adverse impacts associated with cemetery construction traffic on local roads. Minor long-term direct adverse traffic impacts during cemetery operation. The additional daily traffic associated with the Proposed Action (estimated 40 to 80 one-way vehicle trips/day) would be a minimal. No parking impact, the proposed cemetery would include adequate on-site parking.		

Resource Area	Action Alternatives		No Action
	Site 1	Site 2	
Utilities	**Negligible impact.**		No impact.
	Overhead electrical utility service would be extended approximately 1,070 feet to Site 1. Electrical use by the cemetery would be minimal. The City of Elko has agreed to extend the municipal potable water service approximately 2,400 feet to Site 1 for cemetery irrigation. Drought tolerant species suited to northern Nevada would be planted to minimize irrigation needs.	Utilities adequate for the cemetery already service the Site 2 area. The City of Elko has agreed to provide municipal water service to VA to irrigate the cemetery irrigation. Drought tolerant species suited to northern Nevada would be planted to minimize irrigation needs.	
Environmental Justice	**No/negligible impact.**		No impact.
	No short-term or long-term local environmental justice impacts; the Sites are not located in an area with a larger than average low-income or high minority population. Regional low-income and minority Veterans and their families would benefit from the closer cemetery, a minor long-term beneficial impact.		

Cumulative Impacts

This EA also examines the potential cumulative effects of implementing each of the considered alternatives. This analysis finds that the Action Alternatives, with the implementation of BMPs and the management and minimization measures specified in this EA, would not result in significant adverse cumulative impacts to onsite or regional, natural or cultural resources, and would maintain or enhance the socioeconomic environment of the area through long-term provision of required National Cemetery facilities in the region. The No Action Alternative would not produce these potential positive socioeconomic gains.

Agency and Public Involvement

Agencies consulted for this EA include:

- U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
- U.S. Environmental Protection Agency
- U.S. Army Corps of Engineers
- U.S. Department of Agriculture Natural Resources Conservation Service
- Nevada Division of Environmental Protection (various bureaus)
- Nevada Department of Conservation and Natural Resources (various divisions)
- Nevada Department of Wildlife
- Nevada Department of Transportation
- Nevada State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO)
- Northeastern Nevada Regional Development Authority
- Elko County (various departments)
- City of Elko (various departments)

Responses were received from U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, U.S. Department of Agriculture Natural Resources Conservation Service, Nevada Department of Environmental Protection (NDEP) Bureau of Safe Drinking Water, NDEP Bureau of Air Pollution Control, Nevada Department of Conservation and Natural Resources (NDCNR) Division of Water Resources, NDCNR Division of Forestry, NDCNR Natural Heritage Division, Nevada Department of Wildlife (NDOW), Nevada SHPO, Elko County Roads Department, and the City of Elko. Input provided by these agencies is summarized in Section 5. Agency information and comments have been incorporated into this EA, as and where appropriate. Copies of relevant correspondence can be found in Appendix B.

Nine federally recognized Native American Tribes were identified as having possible ancestral ties to the area of the sites. VA invited each of these Tribes to provide input regarding the Proposed Action. No Tribal responses were received. Tribal consultation is summarized in Section 5. Tribal correspondence is provided in Appendix C.

VA published and distributed the Draft EA for a 30-day public comment period as announced by a Notice of Availability (NOA) published in the Elko Daily Free Press, a local newspaper of general circulation on January 8, 9, and 12, 2021. A copy of the Draft EA was made available for public review on the VA Office of Construction and Facilities Management Environmental Program website (https://www.cfm.va.gov/environmental/index.asp). VA also emailed notification of the Draft EA for review and comment, with a link to the Draft EA on VA's website, to each of the government agencies that were contacted during the NEPA scoping. The U.S. EPA and one member of the public provided comments on the Draft EA. These comments were considered in preparing the Final EA, as appropriate, and are summarized in Section 5.4.

Conclusions

This EA concludes there would be no significant adverse impact, either individually or cumulatively, to the human environment associated with either of the Proposed Action Alternatives, provided the management, minimization and regulatory compliance measures described in this EA are implemented.

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ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

AADT	annual average daily traffic
BLM	U.S. Department of Interior Bureau of Land Management
BMP	best management practice
CEQ	President's Council on Environmental Quality
CFR	code of federal regulations
dBA	decibels, A-weighted scale
DNH	Nevada Division of Natural Heritage
EA	environmental assessment
ECO	City of Elko Code of Ordinances
FBO	federal business opportunity
FEMA	Federal Emergency Management Agency
GET	Greater Elko Transit
ICRIP	Initial Cultural Resources Impact Prediction
IPaC	USFWS Information for Planning and Conservation
LOS	level of service
NAAQS	National Ambient Air Quality Standards
NBMG	Nevada Bureau of Mines and Geology
NCA	National Cemetery Administration
NDCNR	Nevada Department of Conservation and Natural Resources
NDEP	Nevada Department of Environmental Protection
NDOT	Nevada Department of Transportation
NDOW	Nevada Department of Wildlife
NEPA	National Environmental Policy Act
NNRDA	Northeastern Nevada Regional Development Authority
NOA	notice of availability
NPDES	National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System
NRCS	Natural Resources Conservation Service
NRHP	National Register of Historic Places
SHPO	Nevada State Historic Preservation Office
TTL	TTL Associates, Inc.
USACE	U.S. Army Corps of Engineers
USDA	U.S. Department of Agriculture
USEPA	U.S. Environmental Protection Agency
USFWS	U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
USGS	U.S. Geological Survey
VA	U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs

1.0 INTRODUCTION, INCLUDING PURPOSE OF AND NEED FOR THE ACTION

1.1 Introduction

This Environmental Assessment (EA) has been prepared as required in accordance with the National Environmental Policy Act of 1969 ([NEPA]; 42 United States Code 4321 et seq.), the President's Council on Environmental Quality (CEQ) Regulations Implementing the Procedural Provisions of NEPA (40 Code of Federal Regulations [CFR] 1500-1508), *Environmental Effects of the Department of Veterans Affairs Actions* (38 CFR Part 26), and *VA's NEPA Interim Guidance for Projects* (U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs 2010). Federal agencies are required to consider the environmental and related social and economic effects of their proposed actions. This EA is required to determine if VA's Proposed Action would have significant environmental impacts.

This EA has been prepared to identify, analyze, and document the potential physical, environmental, cultural, and socioeconomic impacts associated with VA's proposed acquisition of approximately 10 to 15 acres of land located in the vicinity of Elko, Nevada to develop, operate, and maintain as a new National Veterans Burial Ground. The regional location of the proposed cemetery is shown on Figure 1-1.

In accordance with the above cited regulations, this EA allows for public input into the federal decision-making process; provides federal decision-makers with an understanding of potential environmental effects of their decisions, before making these decisions; identifies measures the federal decision-maker could implement to reduce potential environmental effects; and documents the NEPA process.

1.2 Background

One of the primary objectives of the VA burial program is to ensure that burial needs of Veterans and eligible family members are met. National Cemetery Administration (NCA) further defines this objective on the assumption that the burial needs of a Veteran are met if they have reasonable access to burial option (whether for caskets, remains or cremated remains, either in-ground or in a columbarium) in a National or VA-funded State Veterans Cemetery within 75 miles of the Veteran's place of residence.

In 2011, NCA revised existing policy to establish a Veteran population threshold of 80,000 for developing new National Cemeteries where Veterans are not served with a VA burial option within 75 miles of their residence. In areas of the country that do not have Veteran populations that meet these criteria, NCA seeks to meet the burial needs of Veterans by funding the establishment or expansion of state and tribal organization Veterans cemeteries. However, many rural areas of the country with sparse concentrations of Veterans remain unserved.

In 2013, VA established the Rural Veterans Burial Initiative, which is intended to establish a National Cemetery presence in rural areas where Veterans populations are less than 25,000 Veterans within a 75-mile radius of their residence. The goal of the program is to build small National Cemeteries (National Veterans Burial Grounds) in certain rural areas where the Veteran population has been identified by VA to be unserved. The Rural Initiatives program targets states with no National Cemeteries open for first interments and areas that are not currently served by either a VA-funded State Veterans Cemetery or a National Cemetery in another state. Elko, Nevada is one of eight areas targeted by NCA under the Rural Initiative program. Over 4,000 Veterans in the northern Nevada area are currently unserved by a VA burial option.

Figure 1-1 Regional Location Map

1.3 Purpose and Need

The purpose of the Proposed Action is to provide a National Cemetery of sufficient size and capacity to serve the projected needs of Veterans in northern Nevada for the next 100 or more years. The Proposed Action would provide burial facilities for Veterans and eligible family members in northern Nevada and the surrounding area who are currently not served by a National Cemetery or a VA-funded State Veterans Cemetery.

A new National Cemetery is needed to better serve Veterans and their families in northern Nevada. There are currently no National Cemeteries in Nevada. The nearest State Veterans Cemeteries are the Northern Nevada Veterans Memorial Cemetery in Fernley, Nevada and the Utah Veterans Memorial Cemetery in Bluffdale, Utah, both located approximately 250 miles away from Elko. The new cemetery would provide improved access to Veterans and their families to a National Cemetery and would balance the current unequal geographic distribution of National Cemeteries in this region.

1.4 Decision-Making

This EA has been prepared to identify, analyze, and document the potential physical, environmental, cultural, and socioeconomic effects associated with VA's proposed acquisition, development, operation, and maintenance of approximately 10 to 15 acres of land in the vicinity of Elko, Nevada as a new National Veterans Burial Ground.

VA, as a federal agency, is required to incorporate environmental considerations into their decision-making process for the actions they propose to undertake. This is done in accordance with the regulations identified in Section 1.1.

Ultimately, VA will decide, in part based on the analysis presented in this EA and after having taken potential environmental, cultural, and socioeconomic effects into account, whether VA should implement the Proposed Action at either of the considered Action Alternative Sites, and, as appropriate, carry out mitigation and management measures to reduce effects on the environment.

2.0 DESCRIPTION OF THE PROPOSED ACTION AND ALTERNATIVES

2.1 Introduction

This Section provides information regarding the Proposed Action and its alternatives, including those that VA initially considered, but eliminated, and the reasons for eliminating them. The screening criteria and process developed and applied by VA to hone the number of viable sites is described, providing the reader with an understanding of VA's rationale in ultimately analyzing two Action Alternatives and the No Action Alternative in this EA.

2.2 Proposed Action

VA's Proposed Action is to acquire approximately 10 to 15 acres of unimproved land in the vicinity of Elko, Nevada, to develop, operate, and maintain as a new National Veterans Burial Ground under the VA National Cemetery Administration's Rural Initiative Program.

The proposed National Veterans Burial Ground would be open to the public every day throughout the year. VA estimates that the cemetery would receive approximately 20 visitors per day, once fully established. VA anticipates approximately 1 to 3 funeral processions per week, averaging approximately 20 cars per procession. VA estimates there would be approximately 50 interments per year at the proposed cemetery.

Design plans for the proposed National Veterans Burial Ground will follow the same in-kind as sites recently opened such as Fargo National Cemetery in Harwood, ND and Snake River Canyon in Buhl, ID. VA would follow the NCA Facilities Design Guide in developing the proposed cemetery, which would include preplaced crypts, columbarium niches, and in-ground burial sections. VA is seeking to acquire the Site in early 2021, would design the cemetery in 2021/2022, and would initiate construction in 2022.

It is anticipated that the proposed cemetery would include the following components:

- Provide a full range of burial options and control the operation and maintenance to the same "national shrine" standards as other larger VA National Cemeteries.
- The standard for NCA design is to achieve on-site cut-and-fill soil balance as much as practical. Proposed development would follow natural contours to the extent possible. Areas may be minimally leveled to develop a consistent grade.
- Development would include the installation of grave sites, which would consist of gravel base, drainage piping, and a pre-placed concrete vault/crypt system. Approximately 20-22 inches of soil would be placed on top of each vault/crypt. This design would provide the most space-efficient option. Each grave site would be marked with a small, upright marble headstone.
- Columbarium niches in a columbarium wall.
- In-ground 4-foot by 4-foot cremation gravesites.
- A committal shelter with wind screening (there are no grave-side ceremonies at national cemeteries).
- A gateway entrance sign and flag poles.
- On-site parking.
- Perimeter fencing.

- The utilized portions of the site would be developed to within 20 feet of the site boundaries.
- A connection to the City of Elko municipal water system and a cemetery irrigation system.

A small restroom building is being considered to be incorporated into the cemetery design. The possible restroom building would include connection to the City of Elko municipal sewer system, if available, or installation of a septic system or holding tank.

Prior to construction, VA would obtain all applicable federal, state, and local permits for the proposed cemetery development from appropriate government authorities.

2.3 Alternatives Development

NEPA, CEQ Regulations, and 38 CFR Part 26 require reasonable alternatives to be explored and objectively evaluated. Alternatives that are eliminated from detailed study must be identified along with a brief discussion of the reasons for eliminating them. For purposes of analysis, an alternative was considered "reasonable" only if it would enable VA to accomplish the primary mission of providing a suitable cemetery site that meets the purpose of and need for the Proposed Action, including availability at a price consistent with the fair market value based on an independent appraisal, or donation. "Unreasonable" alternatives would not enable VA to meet the purpose of and need for the Proposed Action.

After identifying a need for a National Veterans Burial Ground in northern Nevada, VA considered various alternatives for establishing a small National Cemetery in the region. VA published Solicitations for Federal Business Opportunity (FBO) three times from 2013 to 2018, soliciting offers for approximately ten acres of land suitable for a cemetery development located in the Elko County, Nevada area.

VA received responses to each advertisement. Through a comprehensive screening process, VA narrowed the number of viable sites based on analyses of site-specific attributes, including: topography and natural aesthetics, soil/geology, environmental issues, site configuration, availability of utilities, existing structures and obstructions, site adjacencies, aesthetic quality and zoning, proximity to catchment area, and accessibility. Through this analysis, VA initially identified sites that met most of the screening criteria; however, upon further evaluation, all offered sites other than one property owned/managed by U.S. Department of Interior Bureau of Land Management (BLM) were eliminated due to disagreeable fair market value negotiations, soil/geology, environmental issues, and/or site adjacencies. As a result, VA was left with a single location, the BLM property (Site 1), which met all the screening criteria and fair market value negotiations.

In 2018, VA initiated due diligence activities for the acquisition and development of the proposed cemetery at the BLM property (Site 1).

In late 2019, the City of Elko offered approximately 15 acres of land located in the northwestern portion of the City to establish the proposed cemetery (Site 2). The City of Elko's property met all of VA's established screening criteria and became a second alternative for the proposed cemetery. Site 2 is located approximately one-half mile east of Site 1.

2.4 Alternatives Evaluated in this EA

This EA examines in-depth two Action Alternatives for implementation of the Proposed Action (Site 1 and Site 2) and the No Action Alternative.

2.4.1 Action Alternatives

Site 1 Alternative: Site 1 is approximately 10 acres of unimproved, grassy and brushy land located north of Cattle Drive, east of Western Way, and west of Rocky Road in a relatively undeveloped area of Elko County, northwest of the City of Elko. Site 1 is part of an approximately 1,457-acre parcel of land owned by the federal government and managed by BLM. Site 1 has been undeveloped land with grassy and brushy vegetation since at least 1953. The Site is part of a cattle grazing allotment managed by BLM but has not been grazed in many years. The location and features of Site 1 are depicted on Figures 2-1 through 2-4.

Site 2 Alternative: Site 2 is approximately 15 acres of unimproved, grassy and brushy land located at the southeast corner of Jennings Way and Rocky Road, in a relatively undeveloped area in the northwestern portion of the City of Elko. Site 2 is part of an approximately 38-acre parcel of land owned by the City of Elko. Site 2 has been undeveloped land with grassy and brushy vegetation (sagebrush) since at least 1953. The location and features of Site 2 are depicted on Figures 2-1, 2-5, 2-6 and 2-7.

The Proposed Action would be implemented at Site 1 or Site 2 as described in Section 2.2.

The Action Alternatives effectively provide a suitable combination of land, location, and existing access and meet the purpose of and need for the Proposed Action.

2.4.2 No Action Alternative

Under the No Action Alternative, the Proposed Action would not be implemented. Veterans and their families residing in northern Nevada would continue to be unserved by a proximate National Cemetery or VA-funded State Veterans Cemetery and would continue to be required to travel a substantial distance to a National or State Veterans Cemetery. The distribution of National Cemeteries throughout the region would continue to be unbalanced. The Action Alternative Sites likely would remain unimproved land.

The No Action Alternative would not enable VA to provide adequate National Cemetery facilities in northern Nevada, and thus, would not meet the purpose of or need for the Proposed Action. However, the No Action Alternative was retained to provide a comparative baseline analysis as required under the CEQ regulations.

2.5 Alternatives Eliminated from Further Consideration

VA considered other offered sites in the Elko, Nevada region for the development of the new cemetery. However, as discussed in Section 2.3, based on fair market value negotiations, soil/geology, environmental issues, site adjacencies, and/or logistical issues, VA was left with only the two Action Alternative Sites and the remaining sites were eliminated from further consideration.

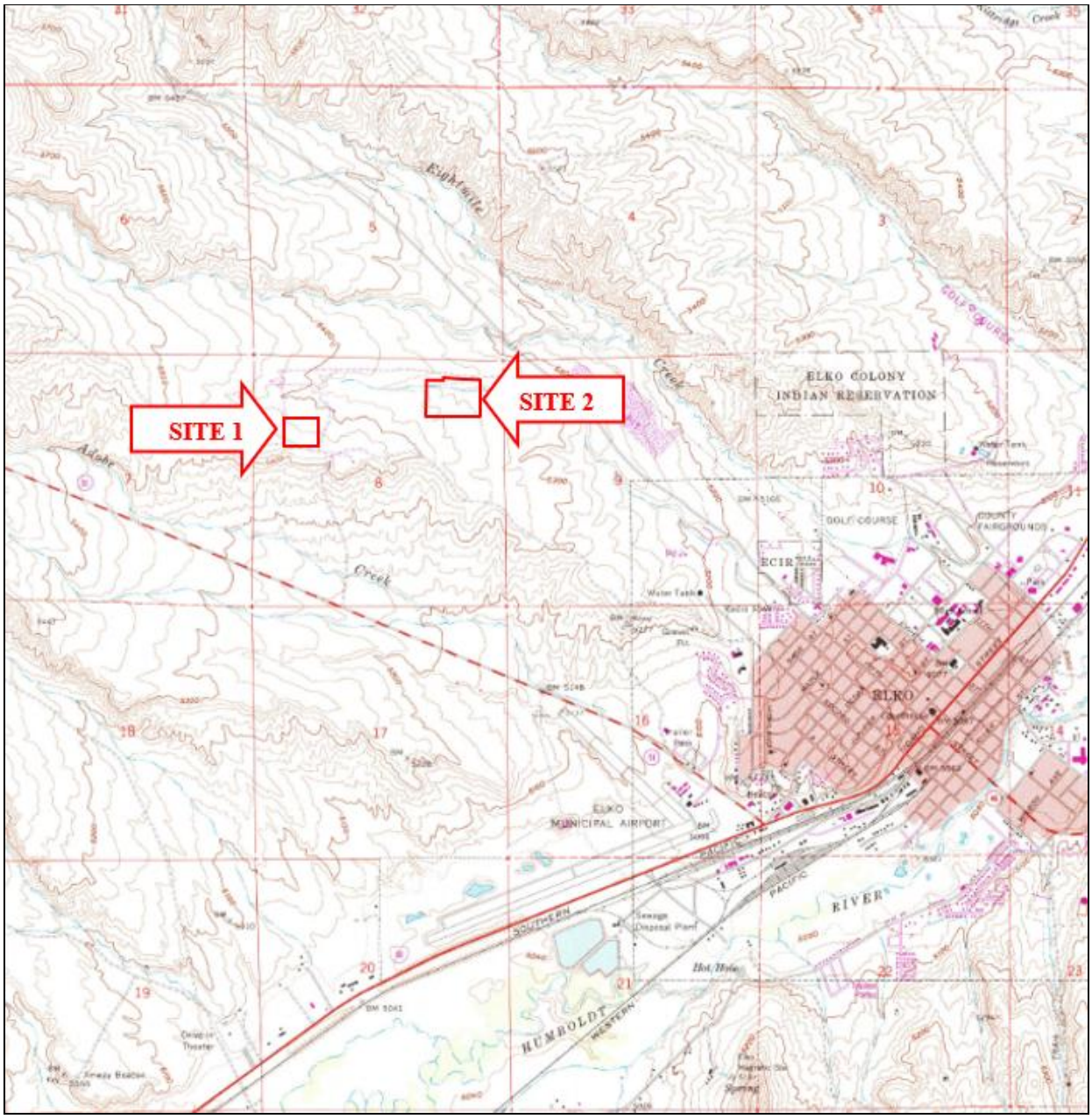

Figure 2-1 Regional Topographic Map

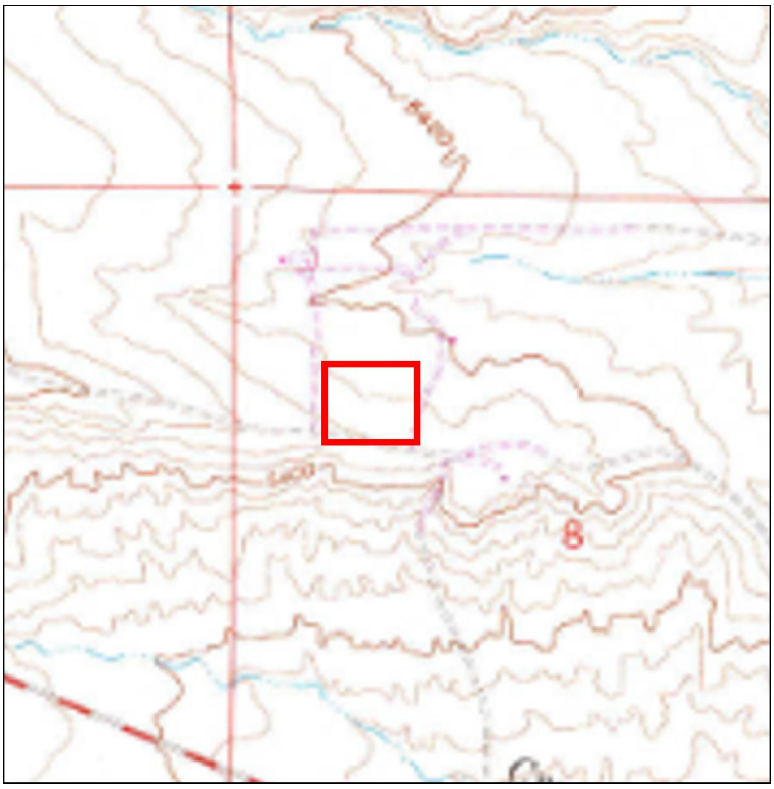

Figure 2-2 Site 1 Topographic Map

Figure 2-3 Site 1 Area Aerial Photograph

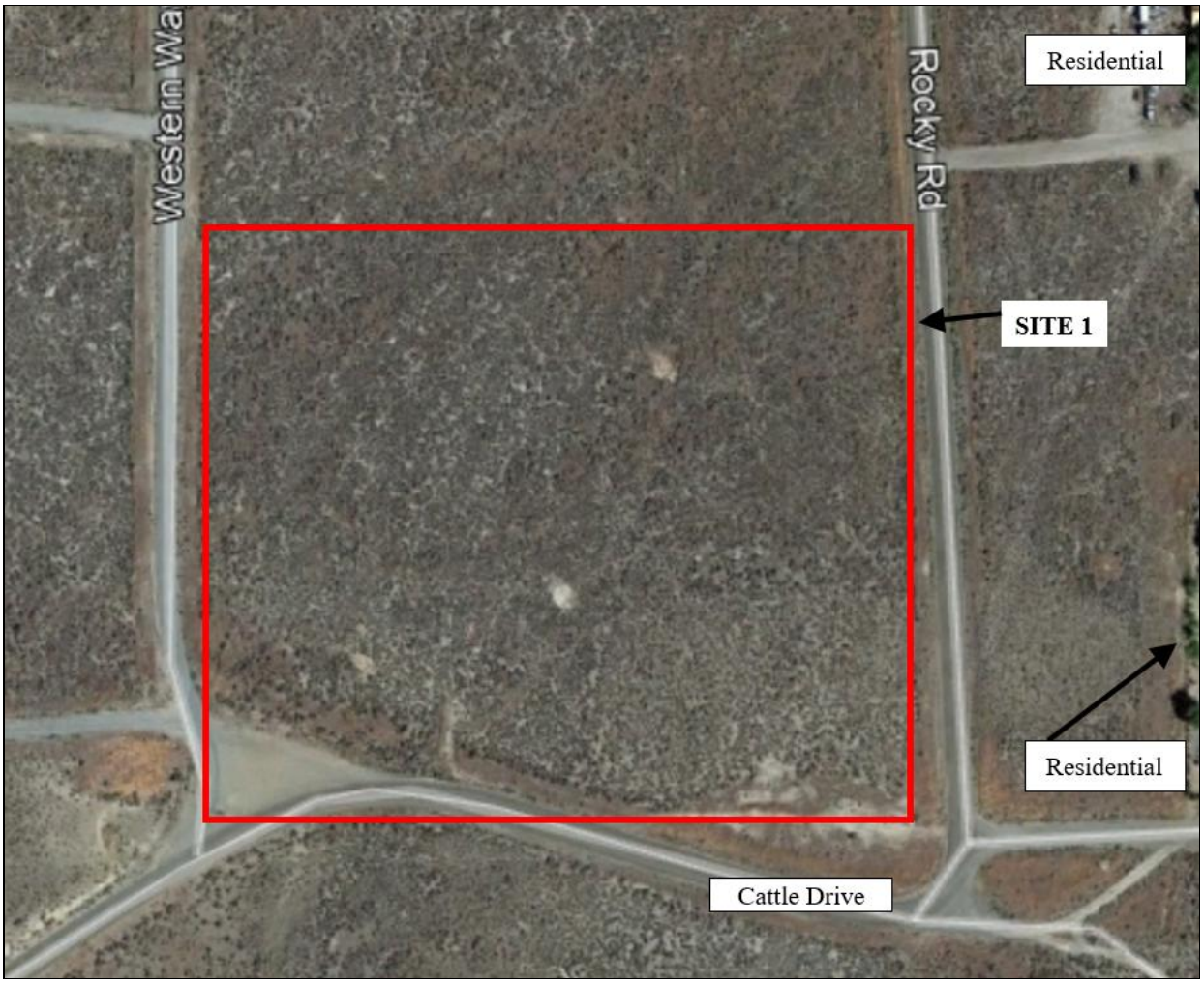

Figure 2-4 Site 1 Aerial Photograph

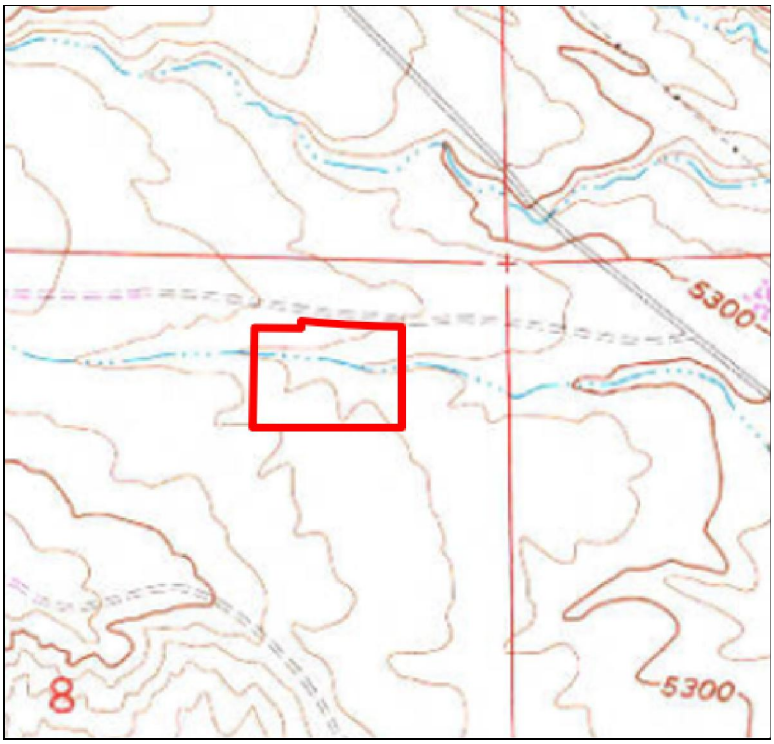

Figure 2-5 Site 2 Topographic Map

Figure 2-6 Site 2 Area Aerial Photograph

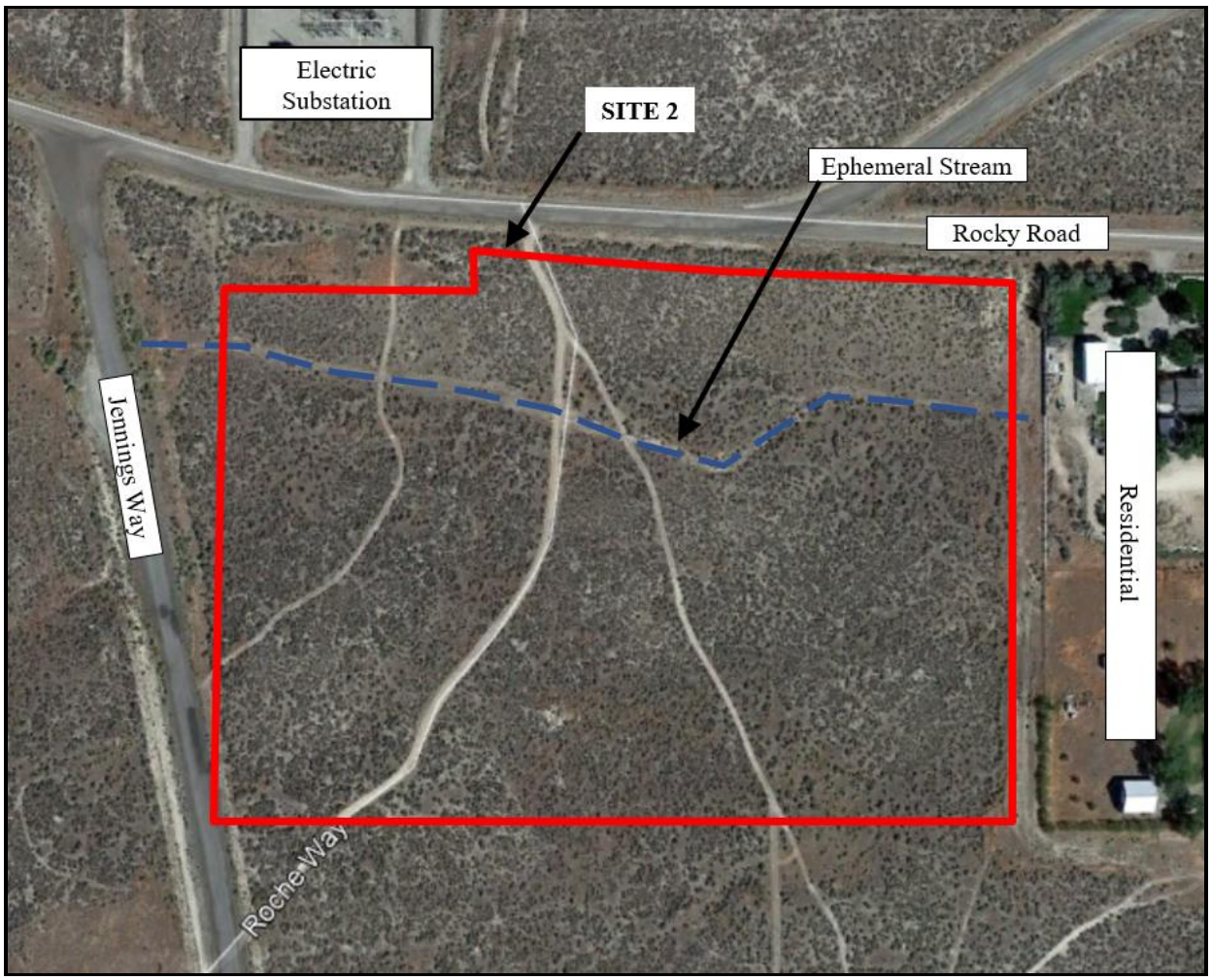

Figure 2-7 Site 2 Aerial Photograph

3.0 AFFECTED ENVIRONMENT AND ENVIRONMENTAL CONSEQUENCES

3.1 Introduction

This Section describes the baseline (existing) physical, environmental, cultural, and socioeconomic conditions of the two Action Alternative Sites (see Figures 2-1 through 2-7) and their general vicinities (i.e., the Proposed Action's region of influence), with emphasis on those resources potentially affected by the Proposed Action. Appendix D contains photographs of the Sites and the surrounding areas. Under each resource area (Sections 3.3 through 3.17), the potential direct and indirect effects of implementing the Proposed Action at the two Action Alternative Sites and the No Action Alternative are identified. Potential cumulative impacts are discussed in Section 3.18.

Resource areas considered in this EA are as follows:

- *Aesthetics*
- *Air Quality*
- *Cultural and Historic Resources*
- *Geology and Soils*
- *Hydrology and Water Quality*
- *Wildlife and Habitat*
- *Noise*
- *Land Use*
- *Floodplains, Wetlands, and Coastal Zone Management*
- *Socioeconomics*
- *Community Services*
- *Solid Waste and Hazardous Materials*
- *Traffic, Transportation, and Parking*
- *Utilities*
- *Environmental Justice*
- *Cumulative Impacts*
- *Potential for Generating Substantial Controversy*

3.2 Criteria for Analysis of Impacts

Each alternative was evaluated for its potential impacts on physical, biological, and socioeconomic resources in accordance with the CEQ regulations at 40 CFR 1508.8. The specific criteria for evaluating the potential environmental impacts of the implementation of the Proposed Action at the two Action Alternative Sites and the No Action Alternative are described in the following sections. The significance of an action is also measured in terms of its context and intensity. The potential environmental impacts are described in terms of duration, whether they are direct or indirect, the magnitude of the impact, and whether they are adverse or beneficial, as summarized in the following paragraphs:

Short-term or long-term: In general, **short-term** impacts are those that would occur only with respect to a particular time-lined activity, for a finite period, or only during the time required for construction or installation activities. **Long-term** impacts are those that are more likely to be persistent and chronic.

Direct or indirect: A **direct** impact is caused by an action and occurs around the same time at or near the location of the action. An **indirect** impact is caused by an action and might occur later in time or be farther removed in distance but still be a reasonably foreseeable outcome of the action.

Less than significant (negligible, minor, moderate), or significant: These relative terms are used to characterize the magnitude or intensity of an impact. **Negligible** impacts are generally those that might be perceptible but are at the lower level of detection. A **minor** impact is slight, but detectable. A **moderate** impact is readily apparent. **Significant** impacts are those that, in their context and due to their magnitude (severity), have the potential to meet the thresholds for significance set forth in the CEQ regulations (40 CFR 1508.27) and, thus, warrant heightened attention and examination for potential means for mitigation to fulfill the policies set forth in NEPA.

Adverse or beneficial: An **adverse** impact is one having unfavorable or undesirable outcomes on the man-made or natural environment. A **beneficial** impact is one having positive outcomes on the man-made or natural environment.

3.3 Aesthetics

Site 1

Site 1 is located approximately one-half mile northwest of the City of Elko in Elko County. The federal government currently owns Site 1 and surrounding unimproved land to the north, south, east, and west, which is managed by BLM. Site 1 has been unimproved land with brushy vegetation since at least 1953 and formerly was used for cattle grazing. Site 1 slopes gently down to the northeast.

The area surrounding Site 1 is mostly undeveloped, with some scattered residential development. The areas located to the east, south, and west of Site 1, beyond adjacent gravel roadways, are unimproved land with brushy vegetation. The nearest residences are located approximately 300 feet east and northeast, approximately 400 feet southeast, approximately 500 feet south, approximately 750 feet west, and approximately 700 feet northwest of Site 1. Site 1 and the surrounding land uses are depicted are on Figures 2-3 and 2-4.

Site 2

Site 2 is located in an unimproved and residential area in the northwestern portion of the City of Elko, approximately two miles northwest of the center of Elko. Site 2 is nearly rectangular and is part of an approximately 38-acre parcel of land owned by the City of Elko. Site 2 is undeveloped, with grassy and brushy vegetation (sagebrush), unimproved roads/trails, and a drainageway that runs west-east across the northern portion. Site 2 slopes slightly from west to east and towards the drainageway in the northern portion of the site. Site 2 has been unimproved grassy and brushy land since at least 1953.

The area surrounding Site 2 is mostly undeveloped, with residential properties located adjacent to the east and three residences approximately 350 feet to the south and southwest. An electrical substation is located approximately 250 feet to the north beyond Rocky Road. Site 2 and surrounding land uses are depicted on Figures 2-6 and 2-7.

3.3.1 Effects of the Action Alternatives

Development and operation of the selected site as a National Veterans Burial Ground would produce visual changes, including maintained grassy burial areas, a columbarium wall, a committal shelter, a small parking area, and perimeter fencing. VA would develop the selected site in concert with the site's natural topography and features with no major grading. No buildings would be constructed at the selected site. Given the low visual impact of the cemetery development, aesthetics impacts would be less than significant.

3.3.2 Effects of the No Action Alternative

Under the No Action Alternative, no development or changes to the Sites by VA would occur. The Sites would likely remain unimproved land and no aesthetics impacts would result.

3.4 Air Quality

3.4.1 Ambient Air Quality

The ambient air quality in an area can be characterized in terms of whether or not it complies with the primary and secondary National Ambient Air Quality Standards (NAAQS). The Clean Air Act requires the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (USEPA) to set NAAQS for pollutants considered harmful to

public health and the environment. NAAQS are provided for the principal pollutants, called “criteria pollutants”, which include carbon monoxide, lead, nitrogen oxides, ozone, particulate matter, and sulfur dioxide.

Areas are designated by the USEPA as “attainment”, “non-attainment”, “maintenance”, or “unclassified” with respect to the NAAQS. Regions in compliance with the standards are designated as “attainment” areas. In areas where the applicable NAAQS are not being met, a “non-attainment” status is designated. Areas that have been classified as "non-attainment” but are now in compliance can be re-designated "maintenance" status if the state completes an air quality planning process for the area.

According to the USEPA Green Book (September 2020), Elko County is currently a full attainment area (USEPA 2020).

3.4.2 State and Local Regulations

The Nevada Department of Environmental Protection (NDEP) Bureaus of Air Pollution Control and Air Quality Planning are responsible for air quality planning and permitting for the Elko/Elko County area.

3.4.3 Sensitive Receptors

The Sites are located in a partially developed area. Scattered residences are located approximately 300 to 750 feet and farther from Site 1. Two residences are located easterly adjacent and a residential neighborhood is located approximately 400 feet east of Site 2. Scattered additional residences are located farther south and west of Site 2. Adobe Middle School is located approximately 1,900 feet southeast of Site 1 and approximately 2,000 feet south-southwest of Site 2. No additional sensitive air quality receptors were identified within 0.5-mile of the Sites.

3.4.4 Effects of the Action Alternatives

Air emissions generated from the proposed cemetery would be expected to have less than significant direct and indirect, short-term and long-term adverse impacts to the existing air quality environment around the Site. Impacts would include short-term and long-term increased air emission levels as a result of construction activities and operation of the proposed cemetery.

Construction activities would be performed in accordance with federal, state and local air quality requirements. Construction-related emissions are generally short-term, but may still have adverse impacts on air quality, primarily due to the production of dust. Dust can result from a variety of activities, including excavation, grading, and vehicle travel on paved and unpaved surfaces. Dust from construction can lead to adverse health effects and nuisance concerns, such as reduced visibility on nearby roadways. The amount of dust is dependent on the intensity of the activity, soil type and conditions, wind speed, and dust suppression activities used. Implementing dust control measures [best management practices (BMPs)] greatly reduce dust emissions from construction. Construction-related emissions also include the exhaust from the operation of construction equipment, including diesel particulate matter. The use of newer construction equipment with emissions controls and minimizing the time that the equipment is idling (BMPs) reduce construction equipment exhaust emissions. Implementation of BMPs, discussed in Section 4, would minimize these anticipated less-than-significant adverse, short-term, construction-related, air quality impacts.

During operation of the cemetery, there would be vehicular emissions associated with Site visits by Veterans and their families. A minor long-term increase in local vehicle miles (and negligible associated emissions) is anticipated, as visitors would travel to the selected site. However, overall vehicle emissions would decrease because regional Veterans and their families would not be required to travel greater distances to other National Cemeteries and State Veterans Cemeteries.

3.4.5 Effects of the No Action Alternative

Under the No Action Alternative, no air quality impacts associated with VA's Proposed Action would result. The additional driving required by area Veterans and their families to visit more distant National and State Cemeteries, which would contribute to increased regional air emissions, would be a less-than-significant long-term adverse impact under the No Action Alternative. The likely continued unimproved use of the Sites would have no air quality impacts.

3.5 Cultural and Historic Resources

Site 1

Row 10 Historic Preservation Solutions, LLC (Row 10) prepared an Initial Cultural Resource Impact Prediction Study (ICRIP) report on behalf of VA for Site 1 in March 2019 (Row 10 Historic Preservation Solutions 2019). The ICRIP included a walking survey of the site, a limited pedestrian survey and windshield survey of areas within one mile of the site, and a records and literature search of Nevada State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO) files for the site and surrounding area. In addition, Row 10 researched the history of the development of Elko, and BLM land ownership in Nevada. The ICRIP indicated Site 1 does not possess any buildings, objects, or structures that are eligible for inclusion in the National Register of Historic Places (NRHP) and no identified National Historic Landmarks or NRHP-listed properties are located within one mile of the site. The ICRIP noted that the Nevada SHPO did not have any record of previous archaeological investigations in the immediate Site 1 area; however, eight archaeological sites have been identified within one mile of Site 1 and only one of those sites (located over one-half mile south of Site 1) was eligible for the NRHP.

VA submitted the ICRIP report and other information regarding the Proposed Action at Site 1 to the Nevada SHPO in March 2019. Nevada SHPO responded in April 2019 with a request for an archaeological inventory of Site by 1 a qualified archaeologist.

BLM archaeologists conducted a Class III Survey of Site 1 and prepared a Cultural Resources Inventory Negative Report (dated June 5, 2019) indicating no cultural resources were encountered during the survey (U.S. Department of the Interior, Bureau of Land Management 2019).

Site 2

PRESERVE/scapes Consulting, LLC conducted an ICRIP for the development of the proposed cemetery at Site 2 on behalf of VA in June 2020. The ICRIP included a records and literature search of Nevada SHPO files and a review of historical maps and aerial photographs for the Site and immediate surrounding area.

The ICRIP indicated that Site 2 is undeveloped and does not possess any buildings, objects, or structures that are eligible for inclusion in the NRHP. The closest NRHP-listed or Nevada-listed resource is located approximately two miles from the site. No buildings/structures 50 years old or older are located within 0.25-mile of the site. The ICRIP indicated an archaeological survey of Site 2 was conducted in 1998 and no archaeological resources were found. Nevada SHPO records did not identify any archaeological sites eligible for listing on the NRHP within 0.5-mile of Site 2. The ICRIP concluded that the Proposed Action would have no adverse effect on historic properties (PRESERVE/scapes Consulting, LLC 2020).

3.5.1 Effects of the Action Alternatives

Based on the findings of the March 2019 ICRIP and June 2019 Class III Survey for Site 1, and the June 2020 ICRIP for Site 2, no historic properties listed on the NRHP or eligible for listing on the NRHP are known to be present at the Sites or would be impacted by the Proposed Action.

In March 2019, VA initiated National Historic Preservation Act (NHPA) Section 106 consultation with the Nevada SHPO for Site 1. VA submitted information detailing the cultural resources identification efforts and findings and requested Nevada SHPO's concurrence that the implementation of the Proposed Action at Site 1 would have no effect on historic properties listed or eligible for listing on the NRHP. In response, in April 2019, Nevada SHPO recommended an archaeological inventory of the site be completed. In August 2019, VA provided the results of the June 2019 Class III Cultural Resources Survey to Nevada SHPO. On September 13, 2019, Nevada SHPO concurred with VA's finding of No Historic Properties Affected for the Proposed Action at Site 1 (Appendix C).

In July 2020, VA initiated NHPA Section 106 consultation with the Nevada SHPO for Site 2. VA submitted information detailing the cultural resources identification efforts and findings to the Nevada SHPO and requested their concurrence that the implementation of the Proposed Action at Site 2 would have no effect on historic properties listed or eligible for listing on the NRHP. On August 7, 2020, the Nevada SHPO responded that they concurred with VA's determination of No Historic Properties Affected for Site 2 (Appendix C).

In January 2019 (Site 1) and July 2020 (Site 2), VA sent Section 106 consultation letters to the following Native American tribes, identified as having possible ancestral ties to the Elko area, requesting concurrence that no historic properties would be affected by the Proposed Action:

- Confederated Tribes of the Goshute Reservation, Nevada and Utah
- Confederated Tribes of the Warm Springs Reservation of Oregon
- Shoshone Tribe of the Wind River Reservation, Wyoming
- Shoshone-Bannock Tribes of the Fort Hall Reservation
- Shoshone-Paiute Tribes of the Duck Valley Reservation, Nevada
- South Fork Band of the Te-Moak Tribe of Western Shoshone Indians of Nevada
- Te-Moak Tribe of Western Shoshone Indians of Nevada
- Wells Band of the Te-Moak Tribe of Western Shoshone Indians
- Yomba Shoshone Tribe of the Yomba Reservation, Nevada

Additionally, the Elko Band of the Te-Moak Tribe of Western Shoshone Indians of Nevada was contacted for Site 1. Tribal correspondence is included in Appendix C. No Tribal responses were received.

3.5.2 Effects of the No Action Alternative

Under the No Action Alternative, no cultural resources impacts associated with VA's Proposed Action would occur. The Sites would likely remain unimproved and no cultural resources impacts would occur.

3.6 Geology and Soils

Nevada is located within the Great Basin physiographic region. Characterized by internal drainage, this region's surface water sources evaporate or percolate into the ground before they can flow to the ocean. The Great Basin lies between the Sierra Nevada range of mountains to the west and Snake and Deep Creek Mountains to the east on the Utah border. The area is characterized by north/south trending mountains and intervening, broad, arid valleys creating tremendous elevational relief. Drainages flow into the valley floors containing ancient dry playas that are remnants of Pleistocene lakes. The Humboldt River, located 2 to 3 miles southeast of the Sites, flows from the east across much of Nevada, terminating in Humboldt Sink in north central Nevada. Most of the state's rivers run only during the wet season (December through June) and discharge into lakes with no outlets or flow into wide, shallow alkali sinks. When the water evaporates in the summer, the sinks become mud flats or dry lakes (Hunt 1967).

Elko area hills and mountains consist mainly of Tertiary volcanic extrusive, Devonian limestone and Cretaceous granite. Valleys consist of consolidated and unconsolidated Tertiary and Pleistocene alluvial deposits of ash, tuff and clastic material. Floodplains are of recent unconsolidated Holocene alluvium.

Typical soils found in the mountains and hills are steep, very gravelly, medium textured and moderately deep to bedrock. Valley soils are gently sloping, medium textured and are moderately deep to a hardpan. Soils on floodplains are nearly level, salt and alkali affected, fine textured and very deep (Elko County Board of Commissioners 2017).

Nevada is ranked third in the United States for having the largest earthquakes. Although earthquakes do not occur at regular intervals, the statistical average of magnitude 6 or greater earthquakes in Nevada has been about one every 6 years, while magnitude 7 and greater earthquakes average approximately one every 30 years. Earthquakes occur throughout Nevada, but are mostly concentrated in three seismic belts located in the southwestern, central, and southern portions of the state (NBMG 1999). The Sites are located in the northern portion of the Nevada. The closest faults to the Sites are located along the crest of the Adobe Range, located approximately 4 miles northwest of the Sites and along the crest of the Piñon Range, located at least 4.9 miles south of the City of Elko. No faults are located on or adjacent to the Sites. Faults in the general vicinity of the Sites are depicted on Figure 3-1. The most recent earthquake in the Elko area registered 2.7 magnitude and occurred approximately 18 kilometers south-southwest of the City of Elko (Piñon Range) on June 14, 2018 (USGS 2020).

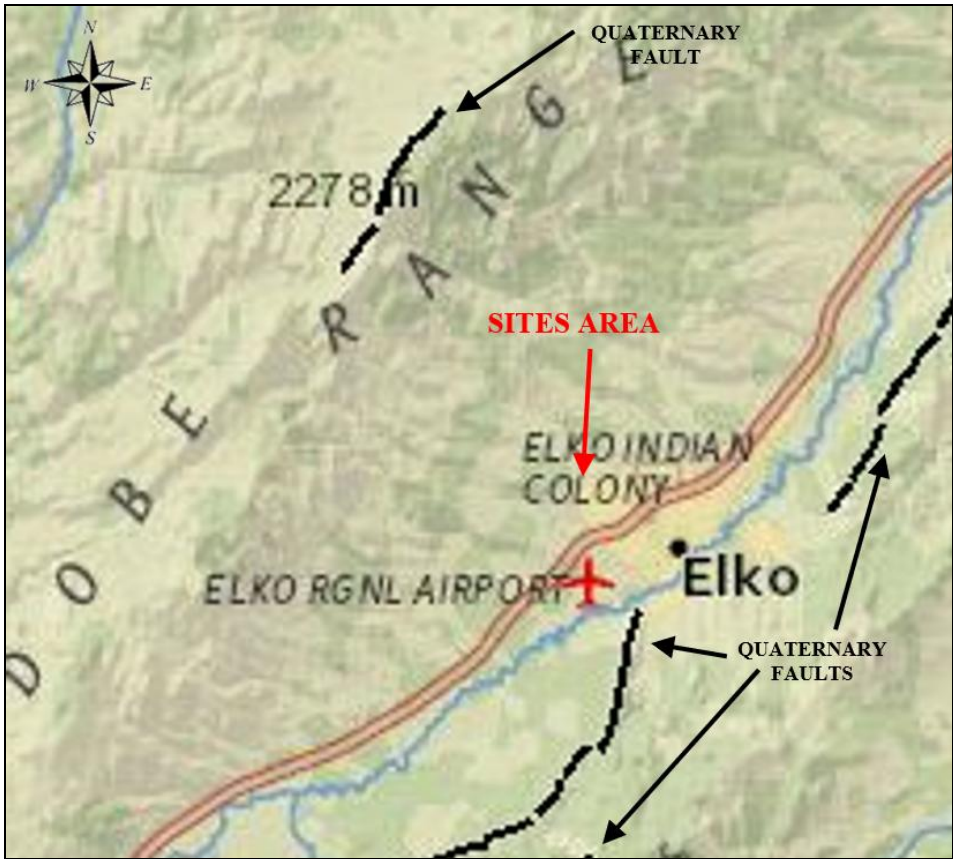

Figure 3-1 Elko Area Fault Line Map

An interactive oil and gas well map available from the Nevada Bureau of Mines and Geology (NBMG), indicates no oil and gas wells are located on the Sites. One oil and gas well constructed in 1924 and installed at a depth of 3,337 feet below ground surface, is located approximately one mile east-northeast of Site 2 (NBMG 2020). The site vicinities are reported to have a moderate potential for oil and gas (NBMG 2019).

Site 1

The Elko West, Nevada United States Geological Survey (USGS) Topographic Quadrangle (dated 1962 and photo revised 1975) indicates that surficial topography at Site 1 (elevation ranging from approximately 5,440 to 5,410 feet above mean sea level) slopes gently to the northeast (Figure 2-2). Site 1 is located on the east side of the Adobe Mountain Range, located northwest of the site. A dry stream bed (tributary to intermittent Eightmile Creek) is located approximately 400 feet north of the site.

Summit Engineering Corporation completed a geotechnical investigation of Site 1 in July 2018. Ten test pits were excavated in a grid pattern across the site to a maximum depth of 14 feet below ground surface (bgs). Soils were generally characterized as silty sand with gravel and sandy silt. The material was slightly dense with some rock (less than 4 inches in diameter) at 5 feet bgs and denser beyond 10 to 12 feet bgs. Groundwater was not encountered in any of the test pit excavations (Summit Engineering Corporation 2018).

According to the U.S. Department of Agriculture Natural Resources Conservation Service (USDA NRCS) Web Soil Survey, the soil at Site 1 was identified as Hunnton-Wieland-Gance Association (480), which consists of alluvium derived from mixed rocks, loess and volcanic ash. These soils generally consist of well drained loam, clay loam, gravelly clay, cemented material and very gravelly loamy sand. Site 1 soils are depicted on Figure 3-2.

Figure 3-2 Site 1 Soils Map

Site 2

The Elko West, Nevada USGS Topographic Quadrangle (dated 1962 and photo revised 1975) indicates that surficial topography at Site 2 (elevation ranging from approximately 5,360 to 5,320 feet above mean sea level) slopes gently to the east (Figure 2-5). Site 2 is located on the east side of the Adobe Mountain Range. A dry drainageway (depicted on the USGS topographic map as an ephemeral stream) crosses the northern portion of Site 2 from west to east and continues to the southeast toward Humboldt River, located approximately 2.3 miles southeast of the site.

Summit Engineering Corporation conducted a geotechnical investigation of Site 2 in May 2020 by excavating nine test pits. Soils encountered during the geotechnical investigation generally consisted of silty sand with gravel and silty sand to a depth of at least 15 feet bgs. Groundwater was not encountered in any of the test pit excavations (Summit Engineering Corporation 2020).

According to the USDA NRCS Web Soil Survey, the soil at Site 1 was identified as Hunnton-Wieland-Gance Association (480), which consists of alluvium derived from mixed rocks, loess and volcanic ash. These soils generally consist of well drained loam, clay loam, gravelly clay, cemented material and very gravelly loamy sand. Site 2 soils are depicted on Figure 3-3.

Figure 3-3 Site 2 Soils Map

3.6.1 Prime and Unique Farmland Soils

Prime and Unique Farmlands are regulated in accordance with the Farmland Protection Policy Act (FPPA) to ensure preservation of agricultural lands that are of statewide or local importance. Soils designated as prime farmland are capable of producing high yields of various crops when managed using modern farming methods. Prime farmland is land that has the best combination of physical and chemical characteristics for producing food, feed, fiber, forage, oilseed, and other agricultural crops with minimum inputs of fuel, fertilizer, pesticides, and labor, and without intolerable soil erosion. Unique farmlands are also capable of sustaining high crop yields and have special combinations of favorable soil and climate characteristics that support specific high-value foods or crops.

According to the USDA NRCS, the Site 1 and Site 2 soils are characterized as farmland of statewide importance, if irrigated, but are not prime and unique farmland.

3.6.2 Effects of the Action Alternatives

The Proposed Action is anticipated to have less-than-significant geology and soils effects. No major changes to topography or drainage are expected at the selected site due to the development of the cemetery. The cemetery development would be designed in concert with the natural topography. No significant cutting or filling is anticipated.

Negligible impacts to geology would be anticipated. Minor fault lines are located in the vicinity of Elko; however, no mapped faults are located within three miles of the Sites and no permanently habitable structures are anticipated for the cemetery development; as such, no significant impacts associated with seismic hazards are identified. No significant impacts to mineral resources are anticipated, as the proposed cemetery would not involve the commercial extraction of mineral resources, nor affect mineral resources considered important on a local, state, national, or global basis.

Site 1 and Site 2 contain farmland soil of statewide importance, if irrigated; however, neither site is irrigated or farmed. Farmland soil impacts would be less than significant. VA would complete form AD-1006 (Farmland Conversion Impact Rating) in conjunction with USDA NRCS, as required under the FPPA.

During construction of the National Veterans Burial Ground, less-than-significant, direct and indirect, short-term soil erosion and sedimentation (E&S) impacts could occur as roads, parking areas, grave sites, and other cemetery improvements are constructed. Construction activities would remove the current vegetative cover, disturb the soil surface, and compact the soil. The soil would then be susceptible to erosion by wind and surface runoff. Exposure of the soils during construction has the potential to result in offsite discharges of sediment-laden runoff. However, such potential adverse E&S effects would be prevented through utilization of appropriate BMPs (Section 4) and adherence to the terms of an approved NDEP National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System (NPDES) permit, including the development and implementation of a site-specific Stormwater Pollution Prevention Plan (SWPPP). Permit standards would be adhered to during all construction activities.

No long-term E&S impacts would be anticipated due to the nature of the Proposed Action. There would be limited impervious surfaces associated with the cemetery development and long-term soil erosion impact would be managed by maintaining appropriately designed on-site stormwater management features associated with the proposed cemetery and with the addition of landscaped covered areas.

3.6.3 Effects of the No Action Alternative

Under the No Action Alternative, no construction by VA would occur. The Sites would likely remain unimproved and no impacts to soils, topography, or geology would occur.

3.7 Hydrology and Water Quality

3.7.1 Surface Waters

The Sites are located in the Humboldt River Watershed (Upper Humboldt River Basin). The Elko West, Nevada USGS Topographic Quadrangle indicates that the nearest permanent surface water body is the Humboldt River, located approximately 2 to 3 miles southeast of the Sites.

Site 1

A dry stream bed (tributary to intermittent Eightmile Creek) is located approximately 400 feet north of Site 1. An erosional drainage ditch is present in the south-central portion of Site 1 from Cattle Drive to the site interior. Additionally, an erosional drainage ditch was observed in the area northerly adjoining the site.

Site 2

The USGS topographic map depicts an ephemeral stream crossing the northern portion of Site 2 from west to east. The depicted stream is a typically dry drainageway that likely only contains water following large storm or after a fast snowmelt.

3.7.2 Groundwater

USGS National Water Information System data indicate the depth to groundwater in the region ranges from approximately 300 to 420 feet bgs west of the Sites near the Adobe Mountain Range to approximately 150 feet bgs to the south of the Sites in the vicinity of the Humboldt River. The Humboldt River flow systems flow through the basin-fill aquifer sediments and are likely hydrologically linked to the carbonate-rock aquifer below. The water in both aquifers occurs at approximately the same depth (USGS 1998). The NDEP Bureau of Safe Drinking Water indicated water levels in the closest permitted public water supply wells to Site 1 (approximately one mile from the site) are approximately 362 to 420 feet bgs. Groundwater was not encountered in the geotechnical test pits completed at Site 1 and Site 2, which extended to approximately 14 to 15 feet bgs.

3.7.3 Effects of the Action Alternatives

Construction-related surface water impacts associated with the Proposed Action (associated with soil erosion and sedimentation) would be minor as no major grading of the selected site is anticipated. The ephemeral drainageway located in the northern portion of Site 2 would not be substantially altered. VA would implement BMPs described in Section 4 to control construction-related impacts of soil erosion and sedimentation and would provide onsite stormwater management following the development of the cemetery. Based on available published information, groundwater is greater than 100 feet bgs in the site areas and would not be encountered or adversely impacted during the cemetery construction activities.

No significant long-term groundwater impacts are anticipated as a result of the Proposed Action. Based on standard modern burial practices, it is unlikely that toxic embalming fluid or other decomposition byproducts would be released into the soil and/or groundwater. The standard NCA design incorporates (for full casket burials) sub-surface concrete crypts, an entire section of which would be installed during site construction, above the water table. Using this technique, the caskets are not buried directly in the soil, but are rather set in a pre-placed concrete crypt (established turf and soil temporarily removed, crypt lid removed, casket placed, followed by the reverse process to complete). In addition, modern embalming fluids are markedly less toxic as the primary active ingredients are no longer arsenic based. Modern embalming fluids are commonly biodegradable. Additionally, as selection of either cremains interment or columbaria placement increase, and green burials increase, the potential for soil or groundwater contamination commensurately decreases as no embalming fluids are used.

VA anticipates that the cemetery would be irrigated using municipal water supplied by the City of Elko. Consequently, the proposed cemetery would have a negligible impact on groundwater resources in the selected site area. In addition, NCA's modern cemetery development practices include the use of native grasses and drought tolerant vegetation species, to the extent possible, thereby reducing the need for irrigation.

3.7.4 Effects of the No Action Alternative

Under the No Action Alternative, no impacts to hydrology or water quality by VA would occur. The Sites would likely remain unimproved and no hydrology or water quality impacts would be anticipated.

3.8 Wildlife and Habitat

3.8.1 Vegetation and Wildlife

The Site are unimproved land containing native grassy and brushy (sagebrush) vegetation. Areas immediately surrounding the Sites are occupied by the same natural vegetation with the exception of the residential properties located east of Site 2. Such vegetation communities support wildlife species associated with rural areas in Nevada.

3.8.2 Threatened and Endangered Species

As part of the preparation of this EA, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) and various state natural resources agencies were contacted to identify the potential for the presence of state or federally listed species on or in the vicinity of the Sites.

USFWS indicated, based on the Site 2 location, they had no threatened and endangered species concerns for Site 2. USFWS did not respond to the request for information for Site 1.

The USFWS Information for Planning and Conservation (IPaC) official species lists generated for the Sites identified two federally listed threatened, endangered or candidate species for the sites, including the proposed to be listed endangered gray wolf and the listed threatened lahontan cutthroat trout. No critical habitats for protected species were identified in the vicinity of the Sites. Table 3-1 provides a summary of the federally protected and candidate species listed in the IPaC reports, their habitat requirements, and the potential presence of their required habitat at the Sites.

Table 3-1 Federally Listed Species in the Vicinity of the Action Alternative Sites

Species	Status	Habitat	Potential Habitat Present at the Sites
Mammals			
Gray wolf (*Canis lupus*)	Proposed Endangered	Habitat generalist with expansive territories (50 to 1,000 square miles). Require ungulate prey and human-caused mortality rates that are not excessive.	No
Fish			
Lahontan cutthroat trout (*Oncorhynchus clarkii henshawi*)	Threatened	Clear, cold water streams with silt-free substrate.	No

The Sites contain grassy vegetation and may occasionally be occupied by grazing animals such as antelope and deer that are preyed upon by the gray wolf. However, any gray wolf presence at the Sites would be incidental and of very short duration and is unlikely due to the relatively developed nature of the site areas compared with much of northern Nevada.

The Sites and surrounding properties do not contain flowing streams needed to support cutthroat trout. The nearest permanent stream, the Humboldt River, is located approximately 2.3 miles from the Sites.

The IPaC reports identified eight species of birds protected by the Migratory Bird Treaty Act (MBTA) that may be present in the site areas during various times of the year. The birds identified include the following: bald eagle, golden eagle, green-tailed towhee, long-billed curlew, olive-sided flycatcher, sage thrasher, Virginia's warbler, and willow flycatcher. There are no cliffs, trees, or open water located at the

Sites; therefore, the bald eagle, golden eagle, olive-sided flycatcher, Virginia's warbler, and willow flycatcher are not likely to be present at the Sites. The green-tailed towhee, long-billed curlew, and sage thrasher use sagebrush as their habitat and may be present in the vicinity of the Sites during the spring and/or summer.

Site 1

The Nevada Department of Conservation and Natural Resources (NDCNR) Division of Natural Heritage (DNH) identified no recorded at-risk taxa within a 2-kilometer radius of Site 1. DNH indicated habitat at Site 1 may be available for the big brown bat, silver-haired bat, and western burrowing owl, which are Nevada BLM Sensitive Species. DNH also noted Site 1 may contain habitat for the Nevada viceroy (butterfly), a Natural Heritage Program Critically Imperiled species. Based on the habitat requirements of the big brown bat and silver-haired bat (in trees, buildings, caves, mine shafts, or rock crevasses), and the Nevada viceroy (not found far from water and reproduce on willow trees), these species are not likely to be present at Site 1. The western burrowing owl nests underground using abandoned burrows dug by other animals. No prairie dog burrows or similarly sized burrows suitable for burrowing owls were observed on Site 1 during the September 2018 site reconnaissance.

The Nevada Department of Wildlife (NDOW) provided information regarding wildlife resources within a four-mile radius of Site 1. NDOW indicated big game in the Site 1 area include mule deer, pronghorn antelope and elk. The Site 1 area is classified as general habitat for greater sage-grouse. There is one known greater sage-grouse lek site (strutting grounds where grouse gather to mate in the spring) in the vicinity of Site 1 that was inactive when last surveyed in 2016. NDOW also noted that various species of raptors may reside in the Site 1 vicinity and several raptor nests have been identified within 10 miles of the site over the past 40 years.

Site 2

The NDCNR DNH identified no recorded at-risk taxa within a 2-kilometer radius of Site 2. DNH indicated the site may contain habitat for the western small-footed myotis (bat), silver-haired bat, the canyon bat, the Nevada viceroy (butterfly), and the pallid sylvinus hairstreak (butterfly). These species were identified as Nevada BLM Sensitive Species, DNH critically imperiled, or DNH vulnerable listed species. Based on the habitat requirements of the western small-footed myotis, silver-haired bat, and canyon bat (in trees, buildings, caves, mine shafts, or rock crevasses) and the Nevada viceroy and pallid sylvinus hairstreak butterflies (not found far from water and reproduce on willow trees), these species are not likely to be present at the site. No habitat for these species is present at Site 2.

The NDCNR Division of Forestry conducted a reconnaissance review of Site 2 in June 2020. The Division of Forestry indicated Site 2 contains vegetation that is common to the Elko area and has characteristics of land that has been historically overgrazed and has low value as wildlife habitat and no potential for endangered, threatened, or any other special status plant species. The Division of Forestry identified no issues of environmental concern for the site.

3.8.3 Effects of the Action Alternatives

The Proposed Action would not likely have adverse effects on listed protected species or their critical habitats. No federally or state-protected species were identified at the Sites. The Sites do not provide suitable habitat for federally or state protected species that may be present in the area.

Three birds protected under the MBTA (green-tailed towhee, long-billed curlew, and sage thrasher) use sagebrush as their habitat and may be present in the site vicinities during the spring and/or summer. It is anticipated that the clearing for the cemetery would be conducted outside of the nesting seasons (April through August) of the three protected migratory birds. If site clearing cannot be conducted outside of the nesting season, a qualified biologist would survey the selected site for active nests prior to clearing. Active nests would not be disturbed.

The cemetery development has the potential to introduce invasive species/noxious weeds as the selected site is graded and the natural vegetation community is disturbed/removed. VA anticipates cemetery burial areas would include maintained, low-moisture tolerant turf grass. Other areas that are disturbed by cemetery construction activities would be quickly revegetated with native species, to the extent practicable, to prevent invasive species from becoming established at the site.

3.8.4 Effects of the No Action Alternative

Under the No Action Alternative, no impacts to vegetation or wildlife habitat by VA would occur. The Sites would likely remain unimproved with no biological resource impacts.

3.9 Noise

The existing noise environment at and around the Sites is relatively quiet with minor noise associated with light vehicle traffic along the adjacent roadways. No other notable noise-generating sources are present in the immediate vicinity of the Sites. The noise environment of Site 1 can be characterized as that typical of a mostly undeveloped, rural area with scattered residences. The noise environment of Site 2 can be characterized as that typical of a partially developed, mostly rural area located near a residential area.

3.9.1 Sensitive Receptors

The Sites are located in partially developed areas. Scattered residences are located approximately 300 to 750 feet and farther from Site 1. Two residences are located on the easterly adjacent properties and a residential neighborhood is located approximately 400 feet east of Site 2. Scattered additional residences are located farther south and west of Site 2. Adobe Middle School is located approximately 1,900 feet southeast of Site 1 and 2,000 feet south-southwest of Site 2. No additional sensitive noise receptors were identified within 0.5-mile of the Sites.

3.9.2 Effects of the Action Alternatives

The Proposed Action would have short-term adverse impacts to the existing noise environment of the selected site due to the cemetery construction activities. Noise generating sources during the cemetery construction would be associated primarily with standard construction equipment and construction equipment transportation. These increased noise levels could directly affect the neighboring area, including nearby sensitive receptors. As more residences are located closer to Site 2 than Site 1, noise impacts would be greater at Site 2 than Site 1.

Construction activities generate noise by their very nature and are highly variable, depending on the type, number, and operating schedules of equipment. Construction projects are usually executed in stages, each having its own combination of equipment and noise characteristics and magnitudes. Construction activities are expected to be typical of other similar construction projects and would include mobilization, site preparation, excavation, placing foundations, utility development, heavy equipment movement, and paving roadways and parking areas.

The most prevalent noise source at typical construction sites is the internal combustion engine. General construction equipment using engines includes, but is not limited to: heavy, medium, and light equipment such as excavators; roller compactors; front-end loaders; bulldozers; graders; backhoes; dump trucks; water trucks; concrete trucks; pump trucks; utility trucks; and lube, oil, and fuel trucks.

Peak noise levels vary at a given location based on line-of-sight, topography, vegetation, and atmospheric conditions. In addition, peak noise levels would be variable and intermittent because each piece of equipment would only be operated when needed. However, peak construction noise levels would be considerably higher than existing noise levels. Relatively high peak noise levels in the range of 93 to 108 dBA (decibels, A-weighted scale) would occur within the active construction site, decreasing with

distance from the construction areas. Table 3-2 presents peak noise levels that could be expected from a range of construction equipment during proposed construction activities.

Generally speaking, peak noise levels within 50 feet of active construction areas and material transportation routes would most likely be considered "striking" or "very loud", comparable to peak crowd noise at an indoor sports arena. At approximately 200 feet, peak noise levels would be loud - approximately comparable to a garbage disposal or vacuum cleaner at 10 feet. At 0.25-mile, construction noise levels would generally be quiet enough so as to be considered insignificant, although transient noise levels may be noticeable at times.

Combined peak noise levels, or worst-case noise levels when several loud pieces of equipment are used in a small area at the same time as described in Table 3-2, are expected to occur rarely, if ever, during the project. However, under these circumstances, peak noise levels could exceed 90 dBA within 200 feet of the construction area, depending on equipment being used.

Although noise levels would be quite loud in the immediate area, the intermittent nature of peak construction noise levels would not create steady noise level conditions for an extended duration that could lead to hearing damage. Construction workers would follow standard Federal Occupational Safety and Health Administration requirements to prevent hearing damage.

Areas that could be most affected by noise from construction include those closest to the construction footprint, including nearby residences. Indoor noise levels would be expected to be 15-25 decibels lower than outdoor levels. In addition, construction noise impacts would be temporary and minimized through BMPs outlined in Section 4.

Indirect impacts include noise from workers commuting and material transport. Area traffic volumes and noise levels would increase slightly as construction employees commute to and from work at the project area, and service vehicles (including trucks of various sizes) transit to and from the selected site. Because trucks are present during most phases of construction and leave and enter the site via local thoroughfares, truck noises tend to impact more people over a wider area. For this Proposed Action, persons in the residential areas near the selected site would experience temporary increases in traffic noise during day-time hours. These effects are not considered significant because they would be temporary and similar to existing traffic noise levels in the area.

Table 3-2 Peak Noise Levels Expected from Typical Construction Equipment

Peak Noise Level (dBA, attenuated)								
Source	**Distance from Source (feet)**							
	0	**50**	**100**	**200**	**400**	**1,000**	**1,700**	**2,500**
Heavy Truck	95	84-89	78-93	72-77	66-71	58-63	54-59	50-55
Dump Truck	108	88	82	76	70	62	58	54
Concrete Mixer	108	85	79	73	67	59	55	51
Jack-hammer	108	88	82	76	70	62	58	54
Scraper	93	80-89	74-82	68-77	60-71	54-63	50-59	46-55
Bulldozer	107	87-102	81-96	75-90	69-84	61-76	57-72	53-68
Generator	96	76	70	64	58	50	46	42
Crane	104	75-88	69-82	63-76	55-70	49-62	45-48	41-54
Loader	104	73-86	67-80	61-74	55-68	47-60	43-56	39-52
Grader	108	88-91	82-85	76-79	70-73	62-65	58-61	54-57
Pile driver	105	95	89	83	77	69	65	61
Forklift	100	95	89	83	77	69	65	61

Combined Peak Noise Level (Bulldozer, Jackhammer, Scraper)					
Combined Peak Noise Level	Distance from Source				
	50 feet	100 feet	200 feet	¼ mile	½ mile
	103	97	91	74	68
Source: (Tipler 1976)					

Proposed operational activities at the National Veterans Burial Ground would include vehicle traffic to and from the selected site, use of powered equipment for grave site preparation, maintenance, and upkeep, and periodic (approximately once per week) ceremonial rifle discharges (during day-time hours). These activities would not produce excessive noise and would not produce significant adverse noise impact on surrounding land uses. The facility would be a relatively quiet cemetery.

VA would consider the location of nearby sensitive noise receptors and the placement and orientation of the committal shelter during the cemetery design. The cemetery would be designed to minimize noise impact to nearby sensitive receptors, to the extent practicable.

3.9.3 Effects of the No Action Alternative

Under the No Action Alternative, the noise environment surrounding the Sites would not be altered by VA. The Sites would likely remain unimproved with no noise impacts.

3.10 Land Use

Site 1

Site 1 has been unimproved land with grassy and brushy vegetation since at least 1953. Site 1 is owned by the federal government, managed by BLM, and was formerly used for cattle grazing.

The area immediately surrounding Site 1 is also undeveloped grassy and brushy land. Scattered residences are located 300 to 750 feet east, south, west, and northwest of the site.

The Elko County Zoning map indicates the approximately 1,457-acre parcel that includes Site 1, immediately adjacent areas, and much of the surrounding area, is zoned Public land (P). The scattered residential properties in the Site 1 area are zoned Agricultural-Residential (AR). The zoning classifications for Site 1 and surrounding area are shown on Figure 3-4.

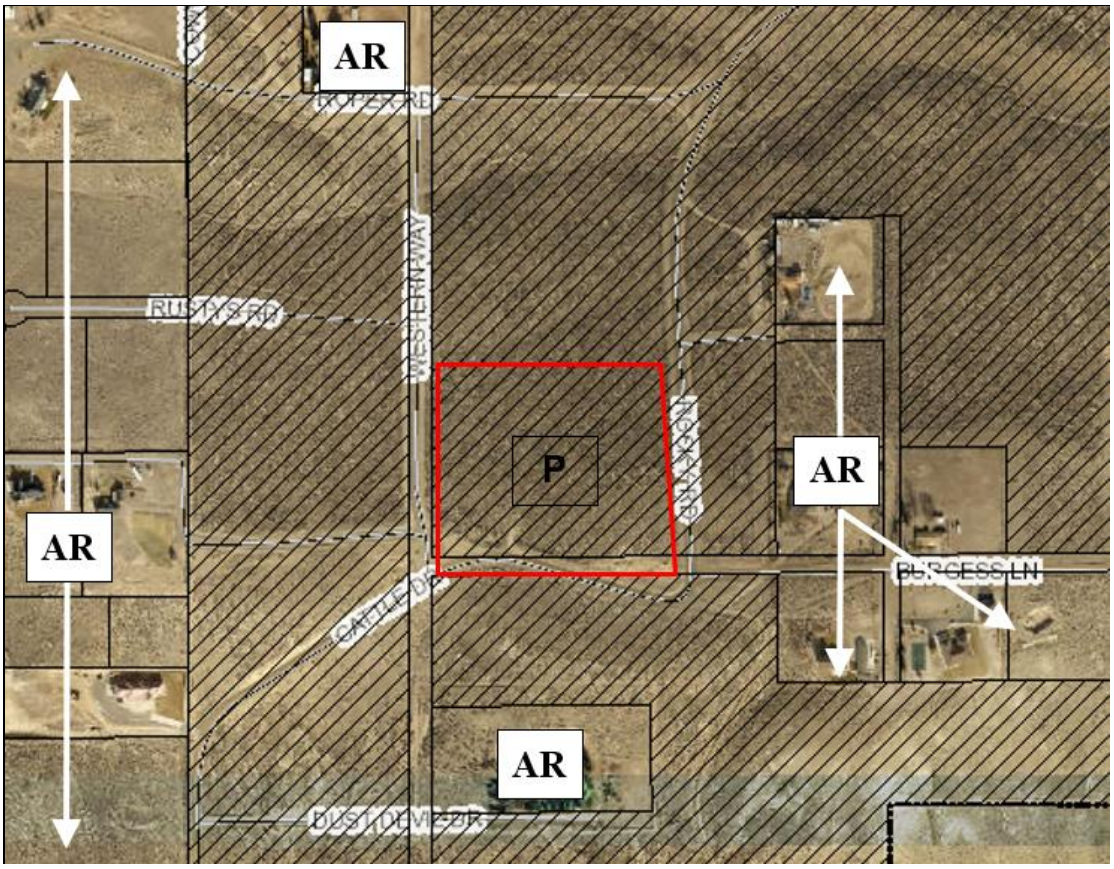

Figure 3-4 Site 1 Zoning Map

Site 2

Site 2 has been unimproved grassy and brushy land since at least 1953. Site 2 is currently owned by the City of Elko.

The areas immediately surrounding Site 2 to the west, south, and northeast are also undeveloped grassy and brushy land. The area to the northwest is occupied by an electrical substation. The area adjoining to the east is occupied by two residential properties, beyond which is a residential subdivision. Additional residential properties are located approximately 350 feet south and southwest of Site 2.

The City of Elko Zoning map indicates the approximately 38-acre parcel that includes Site 2 is zoned Agricultural (ZA). The residential properties easterly adjoining and approximately 350 feet to the south and southwest are outside of the Elko City limits and zoned Agricultural-Residential (AR) by Elko County. The residential subdivision located farther east (within Elko City limits) is zoned Residential (ZR). The electrical substation located to the northwest of the Site is zoned Open Space (OS) and the areas to the west and southwest, owned by BLM, are zoned Public Lands (P). The zoning classifications for Site 2 and surrounding area are shown on Figure 3-5.

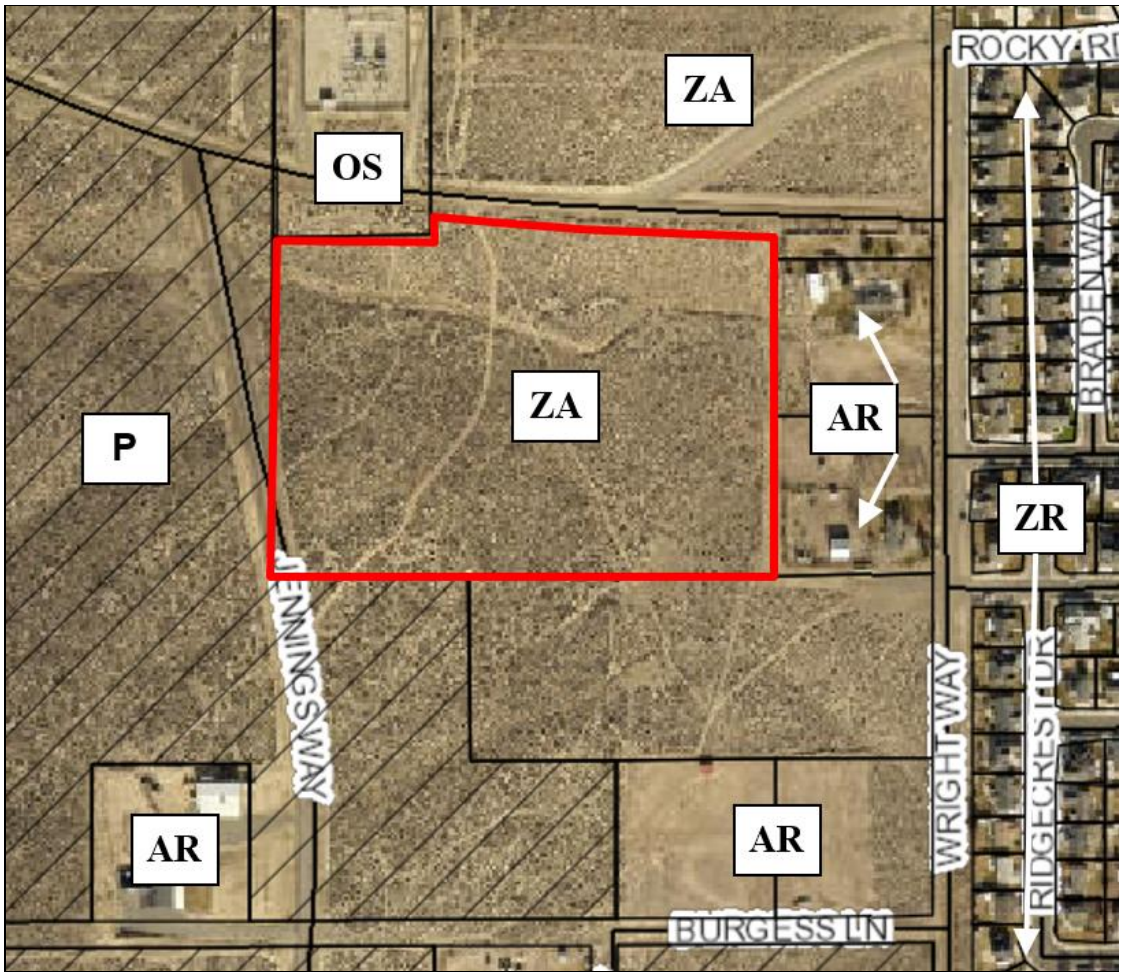

Figure 3-5 Site 2 Zoning Map

3.10.1 Effects of the Action Alternatives

The Proposed Action would have land use effects as the selected site is converted from unimproved grassy and brushy land into a cemetery. The Elko County Code of Ordinances does not include cemeteries as a specific permitted use for its Public land use zoning district and the City of Elko Code of Ordinances (ECO) Zoning Regulations do not specifically include cemeteries as a specific permitted use for its agriculture land use zoning district. However, the proposed cemetery would be generally consistent with the low impact development of the area and generally compatible with surrounding land uses. In addition, as a federal agency, VA is not subject to local zoning regulations. Land use impacts would be less than significant.

3.10.2 Effects of the No Action Alternative

Under the No Action Alternative, no land use impacts due to VA's Proposed Action would occur. The Sites would likely remain unimproved.

3.11 Wetlands, Floodplains, and Coastal Zone Management

3.11.1 Wetlands

This section discusses wetlands at or near the Sites and surface waters (streams) as they pertain to wetlands. Additional information regarding surface waters is provided in Section 3.7.

Site 1

The USFWS National Wetland Inventory (NWI) Online Wetland Mapper indicates that no mapped wetlands are located on or near Site 1. In addition, no wetlands were identified at Site 1 or surrounding properties during the site reconnaissance or from topographic maps, aerial photographs or soil survey maps for the site. The NWI map for Site 1 and surrounding area is shown as Figure 3-6.

Figure 3-6 Site 1 National Wetlands Inventory Map

Site 2

The USFWS NWI Online Wetland Mapper depicts a riverine wetland crossing the northern portion of Site 2 from west to east in the location where an ephemeral stream was depicted on the USGS topographic map. No additional wetlands were identified at Site 2 or surrounding properties on the NWI map. The NWI map for Site 2 and surrounding area is shown as Figure 3-7.

Figure 3-7 Site 2 National Wetlands Inventory Map

NDCNR Division of Forestry conducted a reconnaissance review of Site 2 in June 2020. The Division of Forestry indicated the ephemeral stream identified on the northern portion of the site on the USGS topographic map (and the NWI map) is a normally dry drainageway and does not possess hydric soils or wetland vegetation. The Division of Forestry stated the drainageway would only carry water in a thunderstorm or after a fast snowmelt and does not qualify as a jurisdictional wetland. However, the Division of Forestry recommended that the cemetery design be contoured to retain the natural drainageway.

TTL Associates, Inc.'s (TTL's) Site observations of the drainageway, conducted on June 3, 2020, are consistent with the Division of Forestry's observations. The drainageway does not appear to be wetland or Water of the United States (WOTUS) regulated by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers.

3.11.2 Floodplains

According to available Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) floodplain mapping (FEMA Panel No. 32007C5606E dated September 4, 2013), Site 1, Site 2, and most of the surrounding area are Zoned X (area of minimal flood hazard) and are not located in the 100-year or 500-year floodplains. A small area east of Site 2 (between the two houses on the easterly adjoining residential properties) is Zoned A (within the 100-year floodplain). The FEMA floodplain map for Sites and surrounding areas is shown as Figure 3-8.

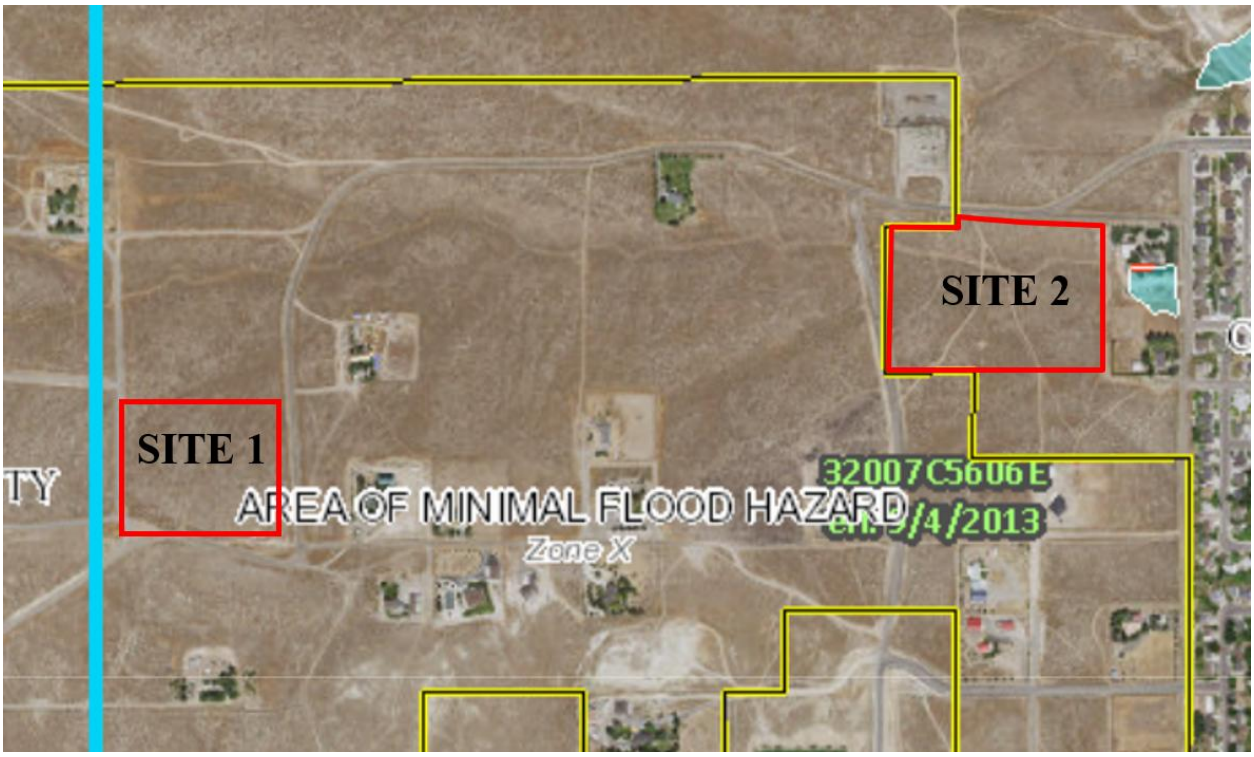

Figure 3-8 Floodplain Map

3.11.3 Coastal Zone

The Coastal Zone Management Act (CZMA) was promulgated to control nonpoint pollution sources that affect coastal water quality. The CZMA encourages states to preserve, protect, develop, and where possible, restore or enhance valuable natural coastal resources such as wetlands, floodplains, estuaries, beaches, dunes, barrier islands, and coral reefs, as well as the fish and wildlife using those habitats. The State of Nevada does not contain any designated coastal zones.

3.11.4 Effects of the Action Alternatives

The Proposed Action would not impact regulated wetlands. No wetlands were identified on or adjacent to Site 1. Based on Site 2 observations, the ephemeral stream that crosses the northern portion of Site 2 likely only contains water after large storms or during fast snowmelt and does not exhibit the characteristics of a wetland or a jurisdictional WOTUS. The NDCNR Division of Forestry confirmed these observations. No other potential wetlands were identified at Site 2 or surrounding properties.

If Site 2 is selected, it is anticipated that the cemetery development would retain the drainageway and that it would continue to function to drain stormwater and snow melt water from the general site area. The cemetery would likely include one or more culverted road crossings of the drainageway. The road crossings would be designed so as not to substantially alter the site and surrounding area hydrology. Water within the drainageway, when present, would continue to flow unimpeded across the site. A vegetative buffer would be maintained along the drainageway outside of the road crossing areas.

The Sites are not located in a 100-year or 500-year floodplain, or a designated coastal zone. A small area to the east of Site 2 is located within the 100-year floodplain; however, the cemetery would be designed with sufficient on-site stormwater management so as not to affect flood elevations on off-site properties. The Proposed Action would result in no impacts to floodplains or coastal zones.

3.11.5 Effects of the No Action Alternative

No impacts to wetlands, floodplains, or coastal zones resources would occur.

3.12 Socioeconomics

The following subsections identify and describe the socioeconomic environment of the City of Elko, Elko County, and the State of Nevada. Presented data provide an understanding of the socioeconomic factors that have developed the area. Socioeconomic areas of discussion include the local demographics of the area, regional and local economy, local housing, and local recreation activities. Data used in preparing this section were collected from the 2010 Census of Population and Housing (U.S. Census Bureau), subsequent U.S. Census Bureau data, and the U.S. Department of Commerce Bureau of Economic Analysis.

3.12.1 Demographics

The City of Elko's estimated population in 2019 was 20,452 residents. Elko County's estimated population in 2019 was 52,778 residents. The estimated population total for Nevada in 2019 was 3,080,156 residents. The City of Elko and Elko County have lower minority and lower over 65 years of age populations than that of the State of Nevada as a whole (Table 3-3). Minority populations specific to the site areas are discussed in Section 3.17 (Environmental Justice). High school graduation rates are generally similar for the City of Elko, Elko County, and the State of Nevada.

Table 3-3 Demographic Data for the City of Elko, Elko County, and Nevada

Area	All Individuals (2019 Estimate)	Population Under 18 Years of Age (2019)	Population Over 65 Years of Age (2019)	Minority (2019)	High School Graduates (2014-2018)	Veterans (2014-2018)
Nevada	3,080,156	22.5%	16.1%	51.8%	86.3%	208,731
Elko County	52,778	27.2%	11.8%	33.5%	85.2%	3,144
City of Elko	20,452	26.0%	9.9%	34.0%	83.5%	1,299

Note: People of Hispanic or Latino origin may be of any race
Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2010 Census, Profile of General Demographic Characteristics, 2014-2018 (U.S. Census Bureau 2020)
N/A – Not Available

3.12.2 Unemployment and Income

The City of Elko and Elko County have similar median household incomes that are higher than the State of Nevada as a whole (Table 3-4). The City of Elko has a higher population below the poverty level than Elko County and the State of Nevada as a whole. Household incomes specific to the site areas are discussed in Section 3.17.

Table 3-4 Regional Income for the City of Elko, Elko County, and Nevada

Area	Number of Households	Median Household Income	Population Below Poverty Level	Unemployment Rate (February 2020)
Nevada	1,075,930	$57,598	12.9%	3.8%
Elko County	17,688	$77,209	8.3%	3.3%
City of Elko	6,932	$77,011	15.1%	3.2%

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2010 Census, Profile of General Demographic Characteristics, 2014-2018 (U.S. Census Bureau 2020) and U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, Unemployment Rate in States and Local Areas (U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics 2020)
N/A – Not Available

3.12.3 Protection of Children

Because children may suffer disproportionately from environmental health risks and safety risks, EO 13045, Protection of Children From Environmental Health Risks and Safety Risks, was introduced in 1997 to prioritize the identification and assessment of environmental health risks and safety risks that may affect children and to ensure that federal agencies' policies, programs, activities, and standards address environmental risks and safety risks to children. This section identifies the distribution of children and locations where numbers of children may be proportionately high (for example, schools, childcare centers, and family housing) in areas potentially affected by the Proposed Action.

Children are not regularly present at the Sites, which are unimproved land and contain no recreation areas. No schools or recreation facilities are located adjacent to the Sites. Children may be present at the residential properties located near the sites. The nearest school, Adobe Middle School, is located approximately 1,900 feet southeast of Site 1 and approximately 2,000 feet south-southwest of Site 2.

3.12.4 Commuting Patterns

Residents of Elko County and the City of Elko are largely dependent on personal automobiles for transportation to and from work. Local commuting times are approximately 29 minutes (one-way). Public transportation is available in the Elko area via the GET (Greater Elko Transit) My Ride Blue Line (bus line). However, no bus lines service the Sites. The nearest bus stop to Site 1 is located approximately 4,500 feet southeast of the site on Jennings Way near Mountain City Highway (State Route 225) in the vicinity of a Home Depot (2955 Mountain City Highway).The nearest bus stop to Site 2 is located approximately 3,500 feet east-southeast of the site near the intersection of Copper Street and 5th Street (GET 2020).

3.12.5 Effects of the Action Alternatives

The development of the proposed National Veterans Burial Ground at the selected site is anticipated to result in minor short-term, beneficial socioeconomic impacts to local employment and personal income by providing temporary construction jobs. However, due to the short-term, finite nature of this construction project, no long-term impacts to the construction labor force are anticipated. The Proposed Action would indirectly benefit the local economy through the spending of business and personal income generated from the construction and operation of the proposed facility, although these impacts would be minor and less than significant. The Proposed Action would result in long-term significant beneficial socioeconomic impacts by providing a regionally proximate National Cemetery to U.S. Veterans and their families.

No adverse health or safety risks to children are anticipated to result from operation of the cemetery at the selected site. Children would only be present at the site as visitors. Construction areas would be secured

to prevent unauthorized access by children from nearby areas. The construction contractor would limit and control construction dust and noise, thereby minimizing adverse effects to children in the area.

3.12.6 Effects of the No Action Alternative

The No Action Alternative would result in no increased short-term or long-term socioeconomic benefit due to VA's action. Under this alternative, no new construction jobs would be created, and no additional incidental spending (e.g., at local restaurants, shops, and hotels) by an increased number of people potentially traveling to the National Veterans Burial Ground would occur.

Most importantly, the inability of VA to provide adequate regional burial sites commensurate with the need for these services would result in a significant adverse, long-term, impact to U.S. Veterans and their families. U.S. Veterans and their families would have to rely on regional cemeteries or travel much longer distances (approximately 250 miles) to the nearest State Veterans Cemeteries, located in Fernley, Nevada and Bluffdale, Utah, for interment and subsequent visits, at increased cost and time. In addition, interment in a distance cemetery would reduce the ability for subsequent visits by Veteran families.

3.13 Community Services

The Sites are located within the Elko County School District. The Elko County School District includes nine elementary schools (kindergarten through eighth grade), three high schools, three middle schools, four combined schools, three rural schools, and three adult learning centers. Adobe Middle School is located approximately 1,900 feet southeast of Site 1 and approximately 2,000 feet south-southwest of Site 2 (ECSD 2020). No other public schools are located with one mile of the Sites.

There are no developed recreational facilities on or in the immediate vicinity of the Sites. Mountain View Park is located approximately 5,900 east-southeast of Site 1 and approximately 2,750 feet southeast of Site 2.

Public transportation in the Elko area is provided by GET My Ride Blue Line. The Blue Line operates one route originating at the 6th and Corridor adjacent to the Elko County District Court in downtown Elko with 21 stops throughout the community. The bus line does not service the Sites; however, the Blue Line offers a flex route on which riders can request door-to-door service within ¾ mile radius of the route.

Site 1

The Elko County Police Department provides police protection to Site 1 and its vicinity. The Elko County Fire Protection District provides fire protection and the Elko County Ambulance Service provides emergency medical services to Site 1 and its vicinity. The Elko County Roads Department provides local road maintenance to Site 1 and its vicinity.

No major medical facilities are located within one mile of Site 1. A small medical clinic is located approximately 5,500 feet southeast and the Elko VA Clinic is located approximately 6,200 feet southeast of Site 1. Northeastern Nevada Regional Hospital is located approximately 4.5 miles southeast of Site 1.

Site 2

The City of Elko Police Department provides police protection to Site 2 and vicinity that are within the Elko city limits. The City of Elko Fire Department provides fire protection and the Elko County Ambulance Service provides emergency medical services to Site 2 and its vicinity. The City of Elko provides local road maintenance to Site 2 and its vicinity that are within the Elko city limits. Elko County Roads Department provides local road maintenance to County roads in the Site 2 vicinity.

No major medical facilities are located within one mile of Site 2. A small medical clinic is located approximately 4,700 feet southeast and the Elko VA Clinic is located approximately 4,200 feet southeast of Site 2. Northeastern Nevada Regional Hospital is located approximately 3.9 miles southeast of Site 2.

3.13.1 Effects of the Action Alternatives

Use of the selected site as a National Veterans Burial Ground would have minimal community services effects. No significant additional load is expected to be placed on the fire or police departments as the result of the Proposed Action. Use of other public or community services as a result of the proposed cemetery would be minor. As such, the Proposed Action is expected to have a negligible impact on local public services.

3.13.2 Effects of the No Action Alternative

Under the No Action Alternative, the Sites would likely remain unimproved with no community services impacts.

3.14 Solid Waste and Hazardous Materials

Hazardous and toxic materials or substances are generally defined as materials or substances that pose a risk (through either physical or chemical reactions) to human health or the environment.

Site 1

TTL conducted a Phase I Environmental Site Assessment (Phase I ESA) of Site 1 on behalf of VA in September 2018. The Phase I ESA included a site visit, interviews with persons knowledgeable about the site, a review of historic information, and review of local, state, and federal regulatory information for the site and surrounding area. Site 1 has been unimproved grassy and brushy land since at least 1953. The site is part of a cattle grazing allotment managed by BLM but has not been grazed in many years. The Phase I ESA identified no significant hazardous substance or petroleum handling or storage at the site and no recognized environmental conditions (RECs) at Site 1. In addition, a review of reasonably ascertainable public documents did not identify evidence of known or reported environmental impacts related to petroleum or hazardous materials in the vicinity of Site 1 that were considered likely to impact the site (TTL Associates, Inc. 2018).

Site 2

TTL conducted a Phase I ESA of Site 2 on behalf of VA in June 2020. Site 2 has been unimproved grassy and brushy land since at least 1953. The Phase I ESA identified no significant hazardous substance or petroleum handling or storage at the site and no RECs at Site 2. In addition, a review of reasonably ascertainable public documents did not identify evidence of known or reported environmental impacts related to petroleum or hazardous materials in the vicinity of Site 2 that were considered likely to impact the site (TTL Associates, Inc. 2020).

3.14.1 Effects of the Action Alternatives

The Proposed Action could result in short-term, less-than-significant impacts due to the increased presence and use of petroleum products and hazardous materials during construction of the cemetery. During construction, a small increase in construction vehicle traffic would increase the possibility of a release of vehicle operating fluids (such as oil, diesel, gasoline, and antifreeze) and maintenance materials. As such, a less-than-significant, short-term adverse impact is possible. Implementation of standard construction BMPs (Section 4) would serve to ensure this impact is further minimized.

No significant adverse long-term impacts during operation are anticipated; long-term operational solid wastes and hazardous materials would be managed in accordance with applicable federal and state laws.

The development and operation of the cemetery at the selected site would not result in a substantial increase in the generation of solid or hazardous substances or wastes, increase the exposure of persons to hazardous or toxic substances, increase the presence of hazardous or toxic materials in the environment, or place substantial restrictions on property use due to hazardous waste, materials, or site remediation. As

noted in Section 3.7.3, based on standard modern burial practices and VA's cemetery design guidance, it is unlikely that embalming fluid would be released into the soil or groundwater.

3.14.2 Effects of the No Action Alternative

Under the No Action Alternative, no actions by VA would occur. The Sites would likely remain unused. No solid waste and hazardous materials use, or effects would be anticipated.

3.15 Traffic, Transportation, and Parking

Traffic in the site areas is regulated by the City of Elko (within the city limits), the Elko County Department of Public Works (outside of the city limits), and the Nevada Department of Transportation (NDOT). Local roads are maintained by the City of Elko and the Elko County Roads Department.

Interstate 80 (I-80), located approximately 1.3 miles southeast of Site 1 and approximately one mile southeast of Site 2, provides access to the City of Elko and the general site areas.

Site 1

Access to Site 1 is currently available from Western Way, Cattle Drive, and Rocky Road, two-lane gravel roads located along the western, southern and eastern site boundaries.

Mountain City Highway (State Route 225) provides primary access to Site 1 from I-80. Mountain City Highway is a four-lane paved highway near I-80 and a two-lane paved highway near Cattle Drive. The intersection of Cattle Drive and Mountain City Highway is located approximately 0.5 mile south-southwest of Site 1. The intersection is unsignalized with a stop sign on Cattle Drive. Annual average daily traffic (AADT) data and Level of Service[1] (LOS) data for the roads in the Site 1 area were generally unavailable, except for Mountain City Highway, which had an AADT of 2,150 near Cattle Drive in 2019 (NDOT 2019). Based on the limited development in the Site 1 area and site observations, it is estimated that the Mountain City Highway and the local gravel roads near Site 1 operate at a LOS of B or better.

Site 2

Access to Site 2 is currently available from Rocky Road and Jennings Way, two-lane gravel roads located along the northern and western site boundaries, respectively.

Mountain City Highway provides primary access to Site 2 from I-80. Mountain City Highway is a four-lane paved highway between I-80 and Jennings Way. The intersection of Jennings Way and Mountain City Highway is located approximately 4,000 feet south of Site 2. The intersection is signalized on Mountain City Highway with stops signs on Jennings Way. The intersection includes dedicated turn lanes for all right-hand and left-hand traffic movements. Jennings Way is a two-lane paved road between Mountain City Highway and Montrose Lane, located approximately 1,000 feet south of the site, where it becomes a gravel road. AADT data and LOS data for the roads in the immediate Site 2 area were generally unavailable; however, data are available for Jennings Way near Mountain City Highway and Mountain City Highway, which have AADTs of 1,550 and 5,000, respectively in 2019 (NDOT 2019). Based on the limited development in the site area and site observations, it is estimated that the Mountain City Highway, Jennings Way, and the local gravel roads near Site 2 operate at a LOS of B or better.

[1] **Level of Service** – LOS represents a set of qualitative descriptions of a transportation system's performance. The Federal Highway Administration Highway Capacity Manual defines levels of service for intersections and highway segments, with ratings that range from A (best) to F (worst). Generally, a LOS of D or higher is considered acceptable by transportation planning agencies.

3.15.1 Effects of the Action Alternatives

Construction traffic associated with VA's proposed cemetery development, consisting of trucks, workers' personal vehicles, and construction equipment, would temporarily increase traffic volumes in the local area, but would not likely cause long delays. Thus, only less than significant, short-term adverse impacts would be anticipated.

During operation, public roadways in the vicinity of the proposed National Veterans Burial Ground would not experience significant additional traffic as a result of the cemetery. VA estimates that the cemetery, once fully established, would be used every day throughout the year by approximately 20 visitors. VA anticipates that there would be approximately 1 to 3 funeral processions per week (averaging approximately 20 cars per procession) with an estimated total of 50 processions per year. Based on the anticipated burial and visitation rates, VA estimates that the proposed National Veterans Burial Ground would generate about 20 to 40 vehicles (40 to 80 one-way vehicle trips) per day.

Given the proposed operational use, traffic generated by the Proposed Action would occur throughout the day, every day. Visitors to the cemetery would travel at various times during the day during daylight hours. No permanent staff would be present at the cemetery. Contracted personnel would periodically travel to the cemetery for general maintenance and operations.

Based on the low estimated burial and visitation rates, operational traffic would not produce a significant adverse impact to local traffic conditions. The additional daily traffic associated with the Proposed Action (estimated 40 to 80 one-way vehicle trips/day) would be a minimal increase over existing traffic conditions on Mountain City Highway (less than five percent) and Jennings Way near Mountain City Highway (approximately five percent), and local roads are currently operating at a good LOS with additional capacity. Although funeral processions could have traffic impacts at peak times, processions would be infrequent (estimated average of one per week) and the overall impacts would be less than significant.

No parking impacts are anticipated. The cemetery would be designed to accommodate all cemetery parking on-site.

3.15.2 Effects of the No Action Alternative

Under the No Action Alternative, the Sites would remain unimproved land with no traffic or parking impacts.

3.16 Utilities

No utilities are currently present at the Sites. The proposed cemetery would require water for irrigation and electrical service. The cemetery would not require natural gas or telecommunication services.

VA is considering the inclusion of a small restroom building in the cemetery design. The restroom building would be connected to the City of Elko municipal water system and the municipal sewer system, if available. A septic system or holding tank would be installed if municipal sewer services are not available. The restroom building, if constructed, its location, and water and wastewater input and output, would be determined during site design. VA would obtain all applicable federal, state, and local permits for the proposed cemetery development from appropriate government authorities.

Site 1

VA would irrigate a cemetery and provide water to Site 1 using potable water provided by the City of Elko. A new water line would be installed from the nearest point of connection to the existing municipal water system, located approximately 2,400 feet south of Site 1. The new water line would be extended along Cattle Drive from the northwest corner of a new housing development located approximately 600

feet north of Mountain City Highway to Site 1. A small pump station would be required to boost the pressure available from the existing water system to the site.

NV Energy supplies the electrical service to the Site 1 vicinity. Based on an Electrical Utility Source Analysis conducted by Farr West Engineering (Farr West Engineering 2018), it is anticipated that NV Energy would extend an aboveground distribution line from Canyon Road (approximately 1,070 feet north of Site 1) along Western Way to the site. VA would coordinate with NV Energy to extend electrical service to the site.

Site 2

Municipal potable water (City of Elko) and electricity services (NV Energy) are available in the Site 2 vicinity.

3.16.1 Effects of the Action Alternatives

The only public utilities necessary for the proposed cemetery are potable water and electricity. The proposed cemetery is anticipated to have minimal electrical service requirements; as such, no electric utility impacts are anticipated. The primary public utility need for the proposed cemetery is irrigation water to maintain the landscaped areas of the cemetery.

Short-term adverse construction-related impacts would occur from the installation of a new water line to Site 1 and the associated pump station. However, these construction activities would be conducted within the Cattle Drive right-of-way using standard construction BMPs. Short-term construction impacts would be less than significant.

The use of municipal water to irrigate the cemetery could reduce the amount of water available for other users. However, the City of Elko has considered its current and potential future municipal water demands and has determined that there is sufficient available water supply for the irrigation of the cemetery. In addition, VA would use native grasses and other drought tolerant vegetation at the cemetery, to the extent possible, to reduce irrigation water needs. Municipal water use at the cemetery would not result in a significant water utility impact.

3.16.2 Effects of the No Action Alternative

Under the No Action Alternative, no utility impacts by VA would occur. No utility use at the Sites would likely occur.

3.17 Environmental Justice

In 1994, EO 12898, *Federal Actions to Address Environmental Justice in Minority Populations and Low-Income Populations*, was issued to focus attention of federal agencies on human health and environmental conditions in minority and low-income communities and to ensure that disproportionately high and adverse human health or environmental effects on these communities are identified and addressed.

According to the USEPA-developed EJSCREEN (an environmental justice mapping and screening internet application), the site vicinities includes a lower minority population (25 percent) than the State of Nevada as a whole (50 percent) and a lower low-income population (21 to 23 percent) than the State of Nevada (35 percent) (USEPA 2019).

3.17.1 Effects of the Action Alternatives

Development of a National Veterans Burial Ground at the selected site would not have adverse environmental justice effects. The Sites are not located in an area with a disproportionately high low-income or minority population and the Proposed Action would have very little impact on the residents in the area.

3.17.2 Effects of the No Action Alternative

Under the No Action Alternative, no development by VA would occur at the Sites, the Sites would likely remain unimproved, and there would be no direct environmental justice effects. However, the continued absence of a National Cemetery in northern Nevada would have a disproportionate effect on low-income Veterans and their families in the region, who are less able to afford travel to a more distant National Cemetery.

3.18 Cumulative Impacts

The CEQ Regulations define cumulative impacts as those which "result from the incremental impact of the Proposed Action when added to other past, present, and reasonably foreseeable future actions, regardless of what agency (federal or non-federal) or person undertakes such other actions," (40 CFR 1508.7). Cumulative impact analysis captures the effects that result from the Proposed Action in combination with the effects of other actions taken before, during, or after the Proposed Action in the same geographic area.

Site 1

Site 1 is situated in a rural, mostly unimproved area of Elko County, located approximately 0.5-mile northwest of the City of Elko. Site 1 is part of an approximately 1,457-acre parcel of unimproved land owned by the federal government and managed by BLM. The area surrounding Site 1 is mostly undeveloped, grassy and brushy land with some scattered residences. Residences have irregularly and slowly been developed in the site area since the 1970s.

The region of influence for Site 1 is mostly unimproved land owned by the federal government and managed by BLM. BLM will occasionally offer unused BLM land for residential development; however, no specific divestment and development plans were identified for the Site 1 vicinity. While there is considerable unimproved land in the Site 1 area for future development, development in the area will likely continue at a relatively slow pace, given its rural setting.

Site 2

Site 2 is situated in a partially developed rural area on the northwestern edge of the City of Elko. The area east of the site contains two residential properties, beyond which is a densely developed residential subdivision. The remaining area surrounding Site 2 is mostly undeveloped grassy and brushy land with scattered residences and an electrical substation to the northwest. The undeveloped areas immediately north and south of Site 2 are located within the City of Elko and are owned by the City and the area west of Site 2 is located in Elko County, outside of the City limits. The land west of Site 2 is mostly owned by the federal government and managed by BLM.

The region of influence for Site 2 includes unimproved land owned by the City of Elko and the federal government (managed by BLM). As previously noted, BLM will occasionally offer unused land for residential development; however, no specific divestment and development plans were identified for the Site 2 vicinity. While there is considerable unimproved land in the Site 2 area for future development, development in the area will likely continue at a relatively slow pace given its mostly rural setting.

3.18.1 Effects of the Action Alternatives

The Proposed Action would result in the impacts to the selected site area identified in Sections 3.3 through 3.17. These include potential short-term and/or long-term adverse impacts to aesthetics, air quality, soils, hydrology and water quality, wildlife and habitat, noise, land use, solid waste and hazardous materials, transportation, and utilities. All these impacts are less than significant and would be further reduced through careful coordination and implementation of the general BMPs and management measures, and compliance with regulatory requirements, as identified in Section 4. Given the nature of the

Proposed Action and the potential other development in the area surrounding the Sites, no significant cumulative adverse effects to any of these resource areas are anticipated. Other potential development in the site areas would be subject to zoning requirements and site plan approval by the City of Elko or Elko County, which would serve to maintain and control regional potentially cumulative impacts.

No significant adverse cumulative impacts to the environment, induced by the Proposed Action, are anticipated within the region. The proposed small cemetery would not have any full-time staff and would have a small number of visitors (approximately 20 per day). Little to no new development in the region is likely to occur as a result of the proposed cemetery development and operation. If Site 1 is selected for the new cemetery, a new water line would be extended approximately 2,400 feet to the site from the nearest existing municipal water main. The extension of the potable water service to the area has the potential to induce development. However, much of the land in the vicinity of Site is owned by BLM and the general area is of rural character. Consequently, development in the area induced by the water service would be expected to be minimal. Close coordination between federal and state agencies, the City of Elko, Elko County, and community representatives would serve to manage and control cumulative effects within the region, including managing regional transportation increases with adequate infrastructure. Implementation of land use and resource management plans would serve to control the extent of environmental impacts, and continued planning would ensure future socioeconomic conditions maintain the local standard of living. Implementation of effective resource management plans and programs should minimize or eliminate any potential cumulative degradation of the natural ecosystem, cultural or human environment within the region of influence of the Proposed Action.

3.18.2 Effects of the No Action Alternative

Under the No Action Alternative, no cumulative impacts are anticipated, as the Sites would likely remain unimproved land.

3.19 Potential for Generating Substantial Public Controversy

As discussed in Section 5, VA has solicited input from various federal, state, and local government agencies regarding the Proposed Action. Several of these agencies have provided input; none of the input has identified opposition or controversy related to the Proposed Action. VA published and distributed the Draft EA for a 30-day public comment period. VA received no public comments expressing opposition or controversy regarding the Proposed Action.

4.0 MANAGEMENT, MINIMIZATION, AND MITIGATION MEASURES

This section summarizes the management and minimization measures that are proposed to minimize and maintain potential adverse effects of the Proposed Action at acceptable, less-than-significant levels.

Per established protocols, procedures, and requirements, VA and its contractors would implement BMPs and would satisfy all applicable regulatory requirements in association with the design, construction, and operation of the proposed National Veterans Burial Ground at the selected site. These "management measures" are described in this EA and are included as components of each of the Action Alternatives. "Management measures" are defined as routine BMPs and/or regulatory compliance measures that are regularly implemented as part of proposed activities, as appropriate, across Nevada. In general, implementation of such management measures would maintain impacts at acceptable levels for all resource areas analyzed. These are different from "mitigation measures," which are defined as project-specific requirements, not routinely implemented as part of development projects, necessary to reduce identified potentially significant adverse environmental impacts to less than significant levels.

The routine BMPs and management and minimization measures in Table 4-1 would be included in the Proposed Action to minimize and maintain adverse effects at less-than-significant levels.

Table 4-1 Best Management Practices and Minimization Measures Included in the Proposed Action

Technical Resource Area	Best Management Practice/Minimization Measure
Aesthetics	Comply, to the extent practicable, with Elko County (Site 1) or City of Elko (Site 2) land development standards during the cemetery design. Use vegetative buffers and/or berms between the developed portion of the cemetery and the adjacent residential properties.
Air Quality	Use appropriate dust suppression methods (such as the use of water, dust palliative, covers, suspension of earth moving in high wind conditions) during onsite construction activities. Stabilize disturbed areas through re-vegetation or mulching if the area would be inactive for several weeks or longer. Implement measures to reduce diesel particulate matter emissions from construction equipment, such as reducing idling time and using newer equipment with emissions controls. Comply with the Nevada Department of Environmental Protection (NDEP) air quality regulations. Secure any required, individual minor air emissions permits from the NDEP Bureau of Air Pollution Control, as appropriate prior to construction.
Cultural and Historic Resources	Should potentially historic or culturally significant items be discovered during project construction, the construction contractor would immediately cease work in the area until VA, a qualified archaeologist, the Nevada SHPO, and Native American tribes with ancestral ties to the site area are contacted to properly identify and appropriately treat discovered items in accordance with applicable state and federal law(s).

Technical Resource Area	Best Management Practice/Minimization Measure
Geology and Soils	Control soil erosion and sedimentation impacts during construction by implementing erosion prevention measures and complying with the NDEP NPDES permitting process. Implement effective controls through a site-specific stormwater pollution prevention plan (SWPPP). The NDEP NPDES permit would require stormwater runoff and erosion management using BMPs, such as earth berms, vegetative buffers and filter strips, and spill prevention and management techniques. The construction contractor would implement the sedimentation and erosion control measures specified in the NPDES permit and SWPPP to protect surface water quality.
Hydrology and Water Quality	Utilize low impact development practices, to the extent practicable, during the cemetery design. Control soil erosion and sedimentation impacts during construction by complying with the NDEP NPDES permit. Design improvements in accordance with the requirements of Energy Independence and Security Act Section 438 with respect to stormwater runoff quantity and characteristics. Maintain the existing drainageway (ephemeral stream) and an associated vegetative buffer (outside of road crossings) in the northern portion of Site 2, if selected. Ensure the site includes sufficient on-site stormwater management so as not to adversely affect the water quantity/quality in receiving water and/or offsite areas. Native, drought tolerant species should be used to the extent practicable when re-vegetating land disturbed by construction to reduce the need for irrigation.
Wildlife and Habitat	Construction activities would be timed to avoid migratory birds protected under the Migratory Bird Treaty Act that may be present on-site. Vegetation removal at the site would be conducted outside the nesting season of migratory birds that nest in sagebrush (April through August). If it is not practical to clear the site outside of this timeframe, a qualified biologist would survey the site prior to vegetation clearing to ensure that no active nests are disturbed. Native species should be used to the extent practicable when re-vegetating land disturbed by construction to avoid the potential introduction of non-native or invasive species. Areas disturbed by cemetery construction should be quickly revegetated with native species to prevent invasive species from becoming established.

Technical Resource Area	Best Management Practice/Minimization Measure
Noise	Limit, to the extent possible, construction and associated heavy truck traffic to occur between 7:00 a.m. and 6:00 p.m. on Monday through Friday. Locate stationary operating equipment as far away from sensitive receptors as possible. Shut down noise-generating heavy equipment when it is not needed. Maintain equipment per manufacturer's recommendations to minimize noise generation. Encourage construction personnel to operate equipment in the quietest manner practicable (e.g., speed restrictions, retarder brake restrictions, engine speed restrictions, etc.). Consider the location of nearby sensitive noise receptors and the placement and orientation of the committal shelter during the cemetery design. Design the cemetery to minimize noise impact to nearby sensitive receptors, to the extent practicable.
Land Use	Comply with Elko County (Site 1) or City of Elko (Site 2) land development standards, to the extent practicable, during the cemetery design.
Wetlands, Floodplains, and Coastal Zone Management	Maintain the existing drainageway (ephemeral stream) and an associated vegetative buffer (outside of road crossings) in the northern portion of Site 2, if selected. Design improvements in accordance with the requirements of Energy Independence and Security Act Section 438 with respect to stormwater runoff quantity and characteristics.
Socioeconomics	Secure construction areas to prevent unauthorized access by children from nearby residential areas.
Community Services	None required.
Solid Waste and Hazardous Materials	Comply with applicable federal and state laws governing the use, generation, storage, and transportation of solid waste and hazardous materials.
Traffic, Transportation, and Parking	Coordinate with the City of Elko, Elko County, and NDOT, as applicable, during the cemetery design to identify and implement roadway improvements in the vicinity of the site, if necessary. Ensure cemetery construction activities do not adversely affect traffic flow on local roadways; construction would be timed to avoid peak travel hours. Ensure debris and/or soil is not deposited on local roadways during the construction of the cemetery.
Utilities	Coordinate with local utility providers to determine connection/extension requirements and implement the necessary requirements. Plant low moisture tolerant species suited to northern Nevada to the extent practicable to minimize irrigation needs.
Environmental Justice	None required.

5.0 AGENCY CONSULTATION AND PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT

VA invites public participation in decision-making on new proposals through the NEPA process. Public participation with respect to decision-making on the Proposed Action is guided by the VA NEPA regulations (38 CFR Part 26). Additional guidance is provided in the VA's NEPA Interim Guidance for Projects (VA 2010). Consideration of the views and information of all interested persons promotes open communication and enables better decision-making. Agencies, organizations, and members of the public with a potential interest in the Proposed Action, such as minority, low-income, and disadvantaged persons, are urged to participate.

5.1 Agency Coordination

Agencies consulted for this EA include:

- U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
- U.S. Environmental Protection Agency
- U.S. Army Corps of Engineers
- U.S. Department of Agriculture Natural Resources Conservation Service
- Nevada Division of Environmental Protection (various bureaus)
- Nevada Department of Conservation and Natural Resources (various divisions)
- Nevada Department of Wildlife
- Nevada Department of Transportation
- Northeastern Nevada Regional Development Authority
- Elko County (various departments)
- City of Elko (various departments)

Two agency consultation efforts were conducted. The first consultation was initiated in July 2018 for the proposed cemetery development at Site 1. Following the identification of Site 2 as a viable alternative for the Proposed Action, a second consultation for the proposed cemetery development at Site 2 was initiated in May 2020.

Responses were received from USFWS, USDA NRCS, NDEP Bureau of Air Pollution Control, NDEP Bureau of Safe Drinking Water, NDCNR Division of Water Resources, NDCNR Division of Forestry, NDCNR Natural Heritage Division, NDOW, Elko County Roads Department, and the City of Elko. Input provided by these agencies is addressed in the appropriate resource sub-sections of Section 3. Written correspondence from the agencies is provided in Appendix B. The following summarizes that input, which VA used to focus this EA's analysis.

- **USFWS** referred VA to the IPaC system to generate a protected species list for the site area and indicated, based on the location of Site 2, there are no concerns over threatened and endangered species at Site 2. USFWS did not respond with specific information for Site 1.
- **USDA NRCS** indicated there are no hydric soils on Site 2 and Site 2 soils are classified as farmland of statewide importance, but not prime and unique farmland. USFWS did not respond with specific information for Site 1.
- **NDEP Bureau of Air Pollution Control** indicated detailed information regarding the proposed cemetery development (not available at this time) would be necessary to assess the project's potential impact on air quality. However, NDEP noted that a surface area disturbance permit would be required if more than five acres would be disturbed. NDEP also noted that, regardless of the size of the disturbed area, fugitive dust emitted from the project must be controlled at all times through the use of BMPs such as paving, chemical stabilization, watering, phased construction, and revegetation.

- **NDEP Bureau of Safe Drinking Water** permits public drinking water systems in the State of Nevada. NDEP indicated the closest permitted public drinking water system to Site 1 is the South Crestview Homeowners Association. The water system has wells that are located cross gradient from Site 1 and the closest well is approximately 5,000 feet from the site. Water depths in the wells range from 362 to 420 feet bgs. Confining layers are reported above the screen intervals. NDEP indicated that they do not believe that the proposed cemetery would adversely affect the area water quality. NDEP indicated that there are residences believed to be served by private wells are closer to Site 1 and potential impact to these wells is beyond the scope of the Bureau of Safe Drinking Water's review.
- **NDCNR Division of Water Resources** indicated Site 2 is located in an area of minimal flood hazard (Zone X). Additionally, the Division of Water Resources provided a map that displays the location of water rights points of diversion and places of use. No water rights points of diversion or places of use were identified at Site 1 or Site 2.
- **NDCNR Division of Forestry** conducted a reconnaissance review of Site 2 in June 2020. The Division of Forestry indicated the "ephemeral stream" identified on the northern portion of Site 2 on the USGS topographic map is better classified as a drainageway as it does not possess characteristic indicators (hydric soils and wetland vegetation) that would classify it as an ephemeral stream. The Division of Forestry stated the drainageway would only carry water in a thunderstorm or after a fast snowmelt and does not qualify as a jurisdictional wetland. Division of Forestry recommended that the cemetery design be contoured to retain the natural drainageway.

  The Division of Forestry also indicated Site 2 contains vegetation that is common to the Elko area and has characteristics of land that has been historically overgrazed and has low value as wildlife habitat and no potential for endangered, threatened, or any other special status plant species. The Division of Forestry identified no issues of environmental concern for Site 2.
- **NDCNR Division of Natural Heritage (DNH)** reviewed their database and maps and identified no recorded at-risk taxa within a 2-kilometer radius around the Sites. The DNH indicated habitat may be available for three Nevada BLM sensitive bat species (silver-haired bat, canyon bat, and western small-footed myotis), one critically imperiled Nevada DNH butterfly species (Nevada viceroy), and one vulnerable Nevada DNH butterfly species (pallid sylvinus hairstreak).
- **Nevada Department of Wildlife (NDOW)** provided information regarding wildlife resources within a four-mile radius of Site 1. NDOW indicated big game in the Site 1 area include mule deer, pronghorn antelope and elk. The Site 1 area is classified as general habitat for greater sage-grouse. There is one known greater sage-grouse lek site (strutting grounds where grouse gather to mate in the spring) in the vicinity of Site 1 that was inactive when last surveyed in 2016. NDOW also noted that various species of raptors may reside in the Site 1 vicinity and several raptor nests have been identified within 10 miles of Site 1 over the past 40 years. NDOW did not provide input regarding Site 2.
- **Elko County Roads Department** indicated they have no objections or concerns about the proposed burial grounds at the Site 2. Elko County Roads Department did not provide input regarding Site 1.
- In August 2018, the **City of Elko** indicated Elko County forwarded them the scoping information request for Site 1 in accordance with a communication policy between the two agencies. The City of Elko letter provided information regarding the potential extension of municipal water service to Site 1, including the approval process, costs, and the need to evaluate its impact on the future growth of the City. Following additional discussions with VA, the City of Elko agreed to extend municipal water to Site 1. The City of Elko also indicated that the following issues would need to addressed prior to implementation of the Proposed Action: ingress/egress development/

improvement of the gravel roads; traffic counts; potential coordination with NDOT regarding access to Cattle Drive from Mountain City Highway (State Route 225); stormwater runoff management; and sanitary sewer management.

The City of Elko indicated Site 2 contains an ephemeral stream and they have no knowledge of environmental concerns associated with the Site 2.

5.2 National Historic Preservation Act Section 106 Consultation

In March 2019, VA initiated NHPA Section 106 consultation with the Nevada SHPO for Site 1. VA submitted information detailing the cultural resources identification efforts and findings and requested Nevada SHPO's concurrence that the implementation of the Proposed Action at Site 1 would have no effect on historic properties listed or eligible for listing on the NRHP. In response, in April 2019, Nevada SHPO recommended an archaeological inventory of the site be completed. BLM completed a Class III Cultural Resources Survey of Site 1 in June 2019 which did not identify any cultural resources at the site. In August 2019, VA provided the results of the Class III Cultural Resources Survey to Nevada SHPO. On September 13, 2019, Nevada SHPO concurred with VA's finding of No Historic Properties Affected for the Proposed Action at Site 1.

In July 2020, VA initiated NHPA Section 106 consultation with the Nevada SHPO for Site 2. VA submitted information detailing the cultural resources identification efforts and findings to the Nevada SHPO and requested their concurrence that the implementation of the Proposed Action at Site 2 would have no effect on historic properties listed or eligible for listing on the NRHP. On August 7, 2020, the Nevada SHPO responded that they concurred with VA's determination of No Historic Properties Affected for Site 2.

The Nevada SHPO responses are provided in Appendix C.

5.3 Native American Consultation

VA consulted with federally recognized Native American tribes as part of the NHPA Section 106 consultation process, in accordance with 36 CFR 800.2 and EO 13175, *Consultation and Coordination with Indian Tribal Governments*. These tribes, identified as having possible ancestral ties to the Elko area, were invited by VA to provide input regarding the Proposed Action and participate in the Section 106 process.

Native American tribes consulted for the Proposed Action:

- Confederated Tribes of the Goshute Reservation, Nevada and Utah
- Confederated Tribes of the Warm Springs Reservation of Oregon
- Shoshone Tribe of the Wind River Reservation, Wyoming
- Shoshone-Bannock Tribes of the Fort Hall Reservation
- Shoshone-Paiute Tribes of the Duck Valley Reservation, Nevada
- South Fork Band of the Te-Moak Tribe of Western Shoshone Indians of Nevada
- Te-Moak Tribe of Western Shoshone Indians of Nevada
- Wells Band of the Te-Moak Tribe of Western Shoshone Indians
- Yomba Shoshone Tribe of the Yomba Reservation, Nevada

Additionally, the Elko Band of the Te-Moak Tribe of Western Shoshone Indians of Nevada was contacted for Site 1. Coordination and consultation letters were sent to the tribes in January 2019 (Site 1) and July 2020 (Site 2). Tribal correspondence is included in Appendix C. No Tribal responses were received.

5.4 Public Review

VA invites public participation in decision-making on new proposals through the NEPA process. Public participation with respect to decision-making on the Proposed Action is guided by 38 CFR Part 26, VA's regulations for implementing NEPA. Additional guidance is provided in VA's NEPA Interim Guidance for Projects. Consideration of the views and information of all interested persons promotes open communication and enables better decision-making. Members of the public with a potential interest in the Proposed Action are encouraged to participate. A record of the public involvement associated with this EA is provided in Appendix F.

VA published and distributed the Draft EA for a 30-day public comment period, as announced by a Notice of Availability published in the Elko Daily Free Press, a local newspaper of general circulation, on January 8, 9, and 12, 2021. A copy of the Draft EA was made available for public review on the VA Office of Construction and Facilities Management Environmental Program website: (https://www.cfm.va.gov/environmental/index.asp). VA also emailed notification of the Draft EA for review and comment, with a link to the Draft EA on VA's website, to each of the government agencies that were contacted during the NEPA scoping. The USEPA and one member of the public provided comments on the Draft EA (Appendix F).

Public and government agency comments regarding the Draft EA are summarized below. Responses to the comments are integrated into the Final EA, as applicable.

Agency and Public Comments on Draft EA		
Comment	**Response**	**Section**
General		
A member of the public supported VA's planned development of a National Cemetery in the region and indicated he agreed with the finding of no significant impacts for the Proposed Action and encouraged the selection of Site 2.	None required.	Not applicable
Invasive Species		
USEPA recommended the Final EA evaluate the potential for the spread of noxious weed species and identify management strategies and control techniques to prevent or minimize the establishment or spread of weed populations during construction. USEPA recommended plans for ongoing monitoring during the operations phase with an early detection/rapid response program to help locate and eliminate new invaders.	A brief evaluation of the potential spread of invasive species/noxious weeds as a result of the proposed cemetery development and management measures VA would use to minimize their establishment/spread has been added to Section 3.8. VA anticipates cemetery burial areas would include maintained, low-moisture tolerant turf grass. Other areas that are disturbed by cemetery construction activities would be quickly revegetated with native species, to the extent practicable, to prevent invasive species from becoming established at the site.	3.8

Agency and Public Comments on Draft EA		
Comment	**Response**	**Section**
Noise		
USEPA recommended the Final EA discuss the differences in the noise impacts for the two prospective sites and noted the ceremonial rifle fire has the potential to disturb nearby sensitive noise receptors. USEPA recommended noise mitigation be incorporated into cemetery design, particularly if Site 2 is selected, and provided several suggestions to reduce noise impacts.	Additional information to differentiate potential noise impacts at each site has been added to Section 3.9. The proposed small cemetery is anticipated to have a low rate of interments and an associated low occurrence of ceremonial rifle fire (approximately one per week) during day-time hours. Nearby sensitive noise receptors, placement and orientation of the committal shelters would be considered during the cemetery design.	3.9
Surface Water		
USEPA indicated the drainageway noted in the northern portion of Site 2 is technically an ephemeral stream and should be noted as such in the Final EA. USEPA also recommended complete avoidance of the ephemeral stream and maintaining a vegetative buffer along the stream as "an environmentally preferable approach" if Site 2 is selected.	The wording was revised to indicted the normally dry drainageway at Site 2 is technically an ephemeral stream. Although the cemetery design has not yet been initiated, it is anticipated that the cemetery may include one or more culverted road crossings of the drainageway. The road crossings would be designed so as not to substantially alter the site and surrounding area hydrology. Water within the drainageway, when present, would continue to flow unimpeded across the site. A vegetative buffer would be maintained along the drainageway outside of the road crossing areas.	3.7 and 3.11
Induced Growth Impacts		
USEPA recommended the Final EA include a discussion of the induced growth potential of the two alternative project sites, including the potential for further development in the area around Site 1 as a result of the extension of municipal potable water service to the site as a result of the cemetery development.	Additional discussion of the potential induced growth impacts of the Action Alternatives has been added to Section 3.18. Based on the mostly rural character of area, the ownership of much of land near Site 1 by BLM, and the small scale of the cemetery development, induced growth impacts would be minimal.	3.18
Tribal Consultation		
USEPA recommended Draft EA statements indicating tribal input was incorporated into the EA be removed since no tribal input was received.	Tribes were contacted and invited to consult on the project as part of VA's Section 106 consultation efforts. No tribal responses were received. The Draft EA statements regarding tribal input were removed from the Final EA as recommended.	5.3

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Years of Experience: 34

7.0 REFERENCES

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8.0 GLOSSARY

100-Year Flood – A flood event of such magnitude that it occurs, on average, every 100 years; this equates to a one percent chance of it occurring in a given year.

Aesthetics – Pertaining to the quality of human perception of natural beauty.

Ambient - The environment as it exists around people, plants, and structures.

Ambient Air Quality Standards - Those standards established under the Clean Air Act to protect health and welfare.

Aquifer - An underground geological formation containing usable amounts of groundwater which can supply wells and springs.

Asbestos - Incombustible, chemical-resistant, fibrous mineral forms of impure magnesium silicate used for fireproofing, electrical insulation, building materials, brake linings, and chemical filters. Asbestos is a carcinogenic substance.

Attainment Area - Region that meets the National Ambient Air Quality Standard (NAAQS) for a criteria pollutant under the Clean Air Act.

Bedrock - The solid rock that underlies all soil, sand, clay, gravel and loose material on the earth's surface.

Best Management Practices (BMPs) - Methods, measures, or practices to prevent or reduce the contributions of pollutants to U.S. waters. Best management practices may be imposed in addition to, or in the absence of, effluent limitations, standards, or prohibitions (AR 200-1).

Commercial land use – Land use that includes private and public businesses (retail, wholesale, etc.), institutions (schools, churches, etc.), health services (hospitals, clinics, etc.), and military buildings and installations.

Contaminants - Any physical, chemical, biological, or radiological substances that have an adverse effect on air, water, or soil.

Council on Environmental Quality (CEQ) - An Executive Office of the President composed of three members appointed by the President, subject to approval by the Senate. Each member shall be exceptionally qualified to analyze and interpret environmental trends, and to appraise programs and activities of the federal government. Members are to be conscious of and responsive to the scientific, economic, social, aesthetic, and cultural needs of the Nation; and to formulate and recommend national policies to promote the improvement of the quality of the environment.

Criteria Pollutants - The Clean Air Act of 1970 required the USEPA to set air quality standards for common and widespread pollutants in order to protect human health and welfare. There are six "criteria pollutants": ozone (O_3), carbon monoxide (CO), sulfur dioxide (SO_2), lead (Pb), nitrogen dioxide (NO_2), and particulate matter.

Cultural Resources - The physical evidence of our Nation's heritage. Included are: archaeological sites; historic buildings, structures, and districts; and localities with social significance to the human community.

Cumulative Impact - The impact on the environment that results from the incremental impact of the action when added to other past, present, and reasonably foreseeable future actions regardless of what agency (federal or non-federal) or person undertakes such other actions. Cumulative impacts can result from individually minor but collectively significant actions taking place over a period of time (40 CFR 1508.7).

Decibel (dB) - A unit of measurement of sound pressure level.

Direct Impact - A direct impact is caused by a Proposed Action and occurs at the same time and place.

Emission - A release of a pollutant.

Endangered Species - Any species which is in danger of extinction throughout all or a significant portion of its range.

Environmental Assessment (EA) - An EA is a publication that provides sufficient evidence and analyses to show whether a proposed system will adversely affect the environment or be environmentally controversial.

Erosion - The wearing away of the land surface by detachment and movement of soil and rock fragments through the action of moving water and other geological agents.

Agricultural land - Cropland, pastures, meadows, and planted woodland.

Fauna - Animal life, especially the animal characteristics of a region, period, or special environment.

Flora - Vegetation; plant life characteristic of a region, period, or special environment.

Floodplain - The relatively flat area or lowlands adjoining a river, stream, ocean, lake, or other body of water that is susceptible to being inundated by floodwaters.

Fugitive Dust - Particles light enough to be suspended in air, but not captured by a filtering system. For this document, this refers to particles put in the air by moving vehicles and air movement over disturbed soils at construction sites.

Geology - Science which deals with the physical history of the earth, the rocks of which it is composed, and physical changes in the earth.

Groundwater - Water found below the ground surface. Groundwater may be geologic in origin and as pristine as it was when it was entrapped by the surrounding rock or it may be subject to daily or seasonal effects depending on the local hydrologic cycle. Groundwater may be pumped from wells and used for drinking water, irrigation, and other purposes. It is recharged by precipitation or irrigation water soaking into the ground. Thus, any contaminant in precipitation or irrigation water may be carried into groundwater.

Hazardous Substance - Hazardous materials are defined within several laws and regulations to have certain meanings. For this document, a hazardous material is any one of the following:

Any substance designated pursuant to section 311 (b)(2)(A) of the Clean Water Act.

Any element, compound, mixture, solution, or substance designated pursuant to Section 102 of Comprehensive Environmental Response, Compensation and Liability Act (CERCLA).

Any hazardous substance as defined under the Resource Conservation and Recovery Act (RCRA).

Any toxic pollutant listed under TSCA.

Any hazardous air pollutant listed under Section 112 of the Clean Air Act.

Any imminently hazardous chemical substance or mixture with respect to which the EPA Administrator has taken action pursuant to Subsection 7 of TSCA.

The term does not include: 1) Petroleum, including crude oil or any thereof, which is not otherwise specifically listed or designated as a hazardous substance in a above. 2) Natural gas, natural gas liquids, liquefied natural gas, or synthetic gas usable for fuel (or mixtures of natural gas and such synthetic gas). A list of hazardous substances is found in 40 CFR 302.4.

Hazardous Waste - A solid waste which, when improperly treated, stored, transported, or disposed of, poses a substantial hazard to human health or the environment. Hazardous wastes are identified in 40 CFR 261.3 or applicable foreign law, rule, or regulation.

Hazardous Waste Storage - As defined in 40 CFR 260.10, ". . . the holding of hazardous waste for a temporary period, at the end of which the hazardous waste is treated, disposed of, or stored elsewhere".

Hydric Soil - A soil that is saturated, flooded, or ponded long enough during the growing season to develop anaerobic (oxygen-lacking) conditions that favor the growth and regeneration of hydrophytic vegetation. A wetland indicator.

Indirect Impact - An indirect impact is caused by a Proposed Action that occurs later in time or farther removed in distance but is still reasonably foreseeable. Indirect impacts may include induced changes in the pattern of land use, population density or growth rate, and related effects on air, water, and other natural and social systems. For example, referring to the possible direct impacts described above, the clearing of trees for new development may have an indirect impact on area wildlife by decreasing available habitat.

Industrial Land Use – Land uses of a relatively higher intensity that are generally not compatible with residential development. Examples include light and heavy manufacturing, mining, and chemical refining.

Isolated Wetland – Areas that meet the wetland hydrology, vegetation, and hydric soil characteristics, but do not have a direct connection to the Waters of the U.S.

Jurisdictional Wetland – Areas that meet the wetland hydrology, vegetation, and hydric soil characteristics, and have a direct connection to the Waters of the U.S. These wetlands are regulated by the USACE.

Listed Species - Any plant or animal designated by a state or the federal government as threatened, endangered, special concern, or candidate species.

Mitigation - Measures taken to reduce adverse impacts on the environment.

Mobile Sources - Vehicles, aircraft, watercraft, construction equipment, and other equipment that use internal combustion engines for energy sources.

Monitoring - A process of inspecting and recording the progress of mitigation measures implemented.

National Ambient Air Quality Standards (NAAQS) - Nationwide standards set up by the USEPA for widespread air pollutants, as required by Section 109 of the Clean Air Act. Currently, six pollutants are regulated by primary and secondary NAAQS: carbon monoxide, lead, nitrogen dioxide, ozone, particulate matter, and sulfur dioxide.

National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) - U.S. statute that requires all federal agencies to consider the potential effects of major federal actions on the human and natural environment.

Non-attainment Area - An area that has been designated by the EPA or the appropriate State air quality agency as exceeding one or more national or state ambient air quality standards.

Parcel - A plot of land, usually a division of a larger area.

Particulates or Particulate Matter - Fine liquid or solid particles such as dust, smoke, mist, fumes, or smog found in air.

Physiographic Region - A portion of the Earth's surface with a basically common topography and common morphology.

Pollutant - A substance introduced into the environment that adversely affects the usefulness of a resource.

Potable Water - Water which is suitable for drinking.

Prime Agricultural land - A special category of highly productive cropland that is recognized and described by the U.S. Department of Agriculture's Natural Resource Conservation Service and receives special protection under the Surface Mining Law.

Remediation - A long-term action that reduces or eliminates a threat to the environment.

Riparian Areas - Areas adjacent to rivers and streams that have a high density, diversity, and productivity of plant and animal species relative to nearby uplands.

Sensitive Receptors - Include, but are not limited to, asthmatics, children, and the elderly, as well as specific facilities, such as long-term health care facilities, rehabilitation centers, convalescent centers, retirement homes, residences, schools, playgrounds, and childcare centers.

Significant Impact - According to 40 CFR 1508.27, "significance" as used in NEPA requires consideration of both context and intensity.

Context. The significance of an action must be analyzed in several contexts such as society as a whole (human, national), the affected region, the affected interests, and the locality. Significance varies with the setting of the Proposed Action. For instance, in the case of a site-specific action, significance would usually depend upon the effects in the locale rather than in the world as a whole. Both short- and long-term effects are relevant.

Intensity. This refers to the severity of impact. Responsible officials must bear in mind that more than one agency may make decisions about partial aspects of a major action.

Soil - The mixture of altered mineral and organic material at the earth's surface that supports plant life.

Solid Waste - Any discarded material that is not excluded by section 261.4(a) or that is not excluded by variance granted under sections 260.30 and 260.31.

Threatened species - Any species that is likely to become an endangered species within the foreseeable future throughout all or a significant portion of its range.

Topography - The relief features or surface configuration of an area.

Toxic Substance - A harmful substance which includes elements, compounds, mixtures, and materials of complex composition.

Waters of the United States - Include the following: Territorial seas and traditional navigable waters; perennial and intermittent tributaries that contribute surface water flow to such waters; certain lakes, ponds, and impoundments of jurisdictional waters; and wetlands adjacent to other jurisdictional waters.

Watershed - The region draining into a particular stream, river, or entire river system.

Wetlands - Areas that are regularly saturated by surface or groundwater and, thus, are characterized by a prevalence of vegetation that is adapted for life in saturated soil conditions. Examples include swamps, bogs, fens, marshes, and estuaries.

Wildlife Habitat - Set of living communities in which a wildlife population lives.