



United States Department of the Interior
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE
Interior Regions 3, 4, 5
601 Riverfront Drive
Omaha, NE 68102

DRS8.B.(MWR/LWCF)

FINDING OF NO SIGNIFICANT IMPACT

**Sharon Woods Park
Environmental Assessment
Sharonville, Ohio**

November 2023

BACKGROUND

In compliance with the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA), this Finding of No Significant Impact (FONSI) documents the decision of the National Park Service (NPS) to approve a Land and Water Conservation Fund (LWCF) grant application for the development of enhanced public outdoor recreation at the existing Sharon Woods Park, of the Great Parks of Hamilton County District (Great Parks), in Sharonville, OH. The NPS is providing up to 50% of the funding for this public outdoor recreation development project. The approval of the grant application is a federal action, and as such, NPS and the Ohio Department of Natural Resources (ODNR) have developed an Environmental Assessment (EA) dated July 25, 2023, that evaluates the impacts of the NPS decision to approve this grant application.

The statements and conclusion reached in this FONSI are based on the documentation and analysis provided in the EA and associated decision file. To the extent necessary, relevant sections of the EA and Appendices are incorporated by reference below. Except where noted, references can be found in the EA.

SELECTED ALTERNATIVE AND RATIONALE FOR DECISION

Five alternatives were analyzed: 1) The No-Action Alternative which is that NPS LWCF Program does not approve the grant application for funding and therefore, no federal funds would be utilized for improvements to the park, 2) Mechanical Dredging, 3) Hydraulic Dredging, 4) Combination Dry/Hydraulic Dredging, and 5) Dry Dredging.

After careful analysis of resource impacts, consultation with agencies, and review of stakeholder and public comments, alternative five (5), Dry Dredging, was selected by the NPS and ODNR. The selected alternative will enhance the overall visitor experience and protect natural and cultural resources. The NPS will approve the LWCF grant application submitted by ODNR to assist with the development of

Sharon Woods Park for public outdoor recreation. ODNR will implement the selected alternative. A detailed description of the selected alternative can be found within Section 3 of the EA.

SIGNIFICANCE CRITERIA REVIEW

Potentially Affected Environment

The potentially affected environment covers the approximately thirty-five-acre Sharon Lake and associated three miles of shoreline including an estimated four acres of wetlands, all of which are park lands located south of I-275 and northeast of the intersection of Highbanks and Buckeye Falls Drive in Sharonville, Hamilton County, Ohio (39.2889, -84.3860).

Degree of Effects of the Action

NPS considered the following actual or potential project impacts in evaluating the degree of the effects (40 Code of Federal Regulations [CFR] 1501.3(b)(2)) for the selected alternative.

a. Beneficial and adverse, and short- and long-term effects of the proposed action.

Water Quality/Quantity

Increased runoff from construction of impervious surfaces within the Park's watershed has resulted in eroded streambanks and shorelines which has increased sedimentation within Sharon Lake. Sedimentation and nutrient enrichment have led to growth of dense mats of vegetation and has impaired water quality, fish health, and outdoor recreation functions. Federal LWCF funding will be used to dredge an estimated 85,000 cubic yards of sediment that has accumulated in the L-shaped, 35-acre lakebed of Sharon Lake reservoir within Sharon Woods Park. Currently, shallow wetlands associated with Sharon Lake consist mainly of low-quality, non-native plant species. As part of the project, dredged material will be placed in isolated areas along the lakeshore and planted with a diverse mix of native plant species.

The selected alternative will have a short-term negative impact on water quality and quantity throughout dewatering and dredging operations. However, the selected alternative will have long-term beneficial effects on water quantity by increasing the lake's capacity for water volume. Additionally, there are anticipated long-term beneficial effects as removing nutrient-heavy sediments across the lakebed that will result in an increase in dissolved oxygen.

Water Resources

The selected alternative will have short-term adverse impacts to the hydrology of low-quality wetlands that have developed on the accumulated sediment within Sharon Lake. However, the selected alternative will have a net benefit to water resources including creation of over four acres of wetlands which will be planted with native species. No impacts to isolated wetlands or floodplains are anticipated to occur.

Wildlife Habitat and Biological Resources

Throughout the dewatering process the selected alternative will have short-term adverse impacts to aquatic flora and fauna within the lake, as well as any avian and terrestrial species that may visit. However, aquatic habitats associated with Lake Sharon are anticipated to function at a higher level through the removal of over accumulated, nutrient-rich sediments. These actions will likely minimize the future growth of duckweed, which has impacted aquatic health in the lake's current state. To avoid adverse impacts to bat species, felling of trees greater than 3-inches in diameter will be conducted between October 1 and March 31, as dictated by regional United States Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) staff.

Recreation

Negligible short-term adverse impacts to recreation are likely to be incurred throughout dewatering and dredging operations. However, with the removal of nuisance smells and dense-matted duckweed, long-term beneficial effects are anticipated with an improved quality of recreation activities such as fishing, kayaking, paddleboarding, and boating. The selected alternative will improve terrestrial and aquatic habitat creating a more attractive area for bird watchers and other hobbyists.

b. Degree to which the proposed action affects minority and low-income populations.

Pursuant to Executive Order 12898, Environmental Justice in Minority and Low-Income Populations, the selected alternative has been assessed to determine if it would have disproportionately high and adverse human health or environmental effects on minority and low-income populations. Much of the park will remain open throughout the project. However, the Sharon Lake Loop Trail and Sharon Lake Boathouse will be closed during construction. The project will have a beneficial effect by improving recreation opportunities and several environmental conditions. Due to these factors, there is no evidence that there would be any adverse human health or environmental effects on any populations, including minority and low-income populations.

c. Effects that would violate federal, state, tribal, or local law protecting the environment.

The selected alternative does not threaten or violate applicable federal, state, or local environmental laws or requirements imposed for the protection of the environment. A detailed description of consultation and coordination efforts for the project can be found in section 5 of the EA, pages 17 and 18. A brief summary of these efforts is below.

Consultation for compliance with Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act has been carried out with multiple stakeholders including Ohio History Connection (SHPO), Tribal Historic Preservation offices, Federally Recognized tribal governments and the public. No impacts to historic or archaeological resources resulting from the Selected Alternative are anticipated. According to a letter sent from the SHPO dated March 21, 2019, the proposed undertaking will not have an adverse effect to historic properties listed in or eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places.

The NPS is responsible for carrying out government-to-government consultation with all federally recognized Indian Tribes and Native Hawaiian Organizations pursuant to 36 C.F.R. § 800.2(c)(2)(ii)(C). A project description and maps of the Area of Potential Effect were provided to consulting parties. The NPS formally notified the affiliated tribal governments of their opportunity to consult with NPS on this project, requesting responses by June 28, 2019. No concerns were raised by any of the 20 tribes to

whom invitations to consult were sent. NPS provided a determination of no historic properties affected to Ohio SHPO June 2, 2022.

Great Parks actively engaged with community members through a number of public meetings, stakeholder meetings, advisory committee meetings, “Meetings-In-A-Box” – a public engagement tool, a survey campaign, a public comment period of the EA on the Great Parks website, emails to stakeholders and partners, a mailed letter to the surrounding community, QR code signs posted around the park, and social media posts. The project is well supported in the community and there were no substantial comments received during the public comment period (August 1st, 2023, to August 30th, 2023) of the EA.

To comply with Section 404 of the Clean Water Act (CWA), Great Parks obtained two U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE) Nationwide Permits for the proposed project, Nationwide Permit 27 – Aquatic Habitat Restoration, Enhancement, and Establishment (issued May 3, 2023, Permit Number LRH-2021-591-OHR-Sharon Lake) and Nationwide Permit 42 – Recreational Facilities (issued March 31, 2023, Permit Number LRH-2021-591-OHR-Sharon Lake). A copy of the two Nationwide Permits and specific mitigation measures associated with the permits can be found in the EA, Attachment 2, pages 55 – 64.

FINDING OF NO SIGNIFICANT IMPACT

- Based on the information contained in the EA, I have determined that the proposed action does not constitute a major federal action having a significant effect on the human environment. Therefore, an environmental impact statement will not be required.
- This finding is based on consideration of the Council on Environmental Quality criteria for significance (40 CFR 1501.3 [b] [2020]), regarding the potentially affected environment and degrees of effects of the impacts described in the EA.

Recommended by:

Neal Bedlan
Mid-West Regional Program Manager
State and Local Assistance Programs
Land and Water Conservation Fund
Interior Region 3, 4, 5
National Park Service

Date

Reviewed by:

Stephanie Stephens
Associate Regional Director
Cultural Resources, Land and Water Conservation Fund, and
Rivers, Trails, and Conservation Assistance
Interior Region 3, 4, 5
National Park Service

Date

Approved by:

Bert Frost
Regional Director
Interior Region 3, 4, 5
National Park Service

Date