

**FINDING OF NO SIGNIFICANT IMPACT  
AND DECISION**

**CEYLON WILDLIFE MANAGEMENT AREA  
CAMDEN, GEORGIA**

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Southeast Office of Conservation and Investment (OCI) has prepared this document in accordance with the procedures for compliance with the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) of 1969, as amended, and as it applies to the Pittman-Roberson (PR) Wildlife Restoration Act of 1937 (16 U.S.C. 669 et seq.). The Georgia Department of Natural Resources (GDNR) requests PR grant funding to construct a maintenance shop with seasonal quarters, and office space. The Proposed Action (PA) is on the Ceylon Wildlife Management Area (WMA) in southeast Camden County Georgia. The project site is approximately 3.7 miles east-southeast of Woodbine, Georgia, and approximately 18 miles southwest of Brunswick, Georgia.

The purpose of the PA is to build a maintenance facility to provide equipment storage, office space, and a bunkhouse for seasonal prescribed fire personnel. The equipment will be used to maintain the land and facilities, and to conduct land management activities to enhance the recreational opportunities available on the WMA. The office space and bunkhouse are needed for staff that manage the WMA. Currently, there is not a maintenance or office building to support land management and staff at this WMA.

**Proposed Action**

GDNR will build an approximately 3,200 square foot, single-story metal building and an approximately 7,000 square foot helicopter landing pad. The building will include an equipment maintenance facility, several small offices, a bunkhouse for seasonal workers, and a small meeting room. The total project area of approximately 4.5-acres will include the following:

- 1.1- acre of gravel parking area and poured cement building pad.
- 3,200 square foot metal building
- 7,000 square foot helicopter pad with TrueGrid pavers
- Raised septic drain field
- 50-foot poured gravel entrance driveway
- Water well and pump
- Electric service to the building

All use areas will be designed to meet the technical requirements of the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990, as amended (42 U.S.C. 12101 et seq.).

The proposed action alternative was selected over the other alternatives because:

GDNR recently acquired the WMA in 2021, and it does not have maintenance or office facilities on the site. The facility will provide much needed office space, equipment storage, and temporary living quarters for teams conducting prescribed fire. The facility will support management for wildlife recreation enhancement and hunting opportunities.

### **Other Alternatives Considered and Analyzed**

#### **Alternative A— No Action Alternative**

This alternative would be no construction of the maintenance building. The site would continue to see the same minimal use as currently exists. This alternative would not increase recreational use of the WMA. This alternative will result in no new long-term or short-term impacts associated with the proposed construction of the project. The minor impact to air quality would be avoided. This alternative will not enhance recreation opportunities for the public or benefit the local economy.

This alternative was not selected because:

The no action alternative does not meet the purpose and need to support GDNR's mission to manage wildlife habitat and provide hunting related recreational opportunities. The no action alternative would limit the facilities needed to conduct land management and enhance the recreational opportunities available on the WMA.

### **Summary of Effects of the Selected Action**

An Environmental Assessment (EA) was prepared in compliance with NEPA to provide decision-making framework that 1) explored a reasonable range of alternatives to meet project objectives, 2) evaluated potential issues and impacts, resources, and values, and 3) identified mitigation measures to lessen the degree or extent of these impacts. The EA evaluated the effects associated with the proposed action. It is incorporated as part of this finding.

Implementation of the agency's decision would be expected to result in the following environmental, social, and economic effects:

The proposed project is in a rural residential and industrial forest area and construction would result in the loss of 4.5 acres of terrestrial wildlife habitat. The habitat is marginally suitable for the federally listed eastern indigo snake (*Drymarchon couperi*). However, the site does not have gopher tortoise (*Gopherus polyphemus*) burrows, a preferred refugia for the species. The potential for effects to listed species is minimal and measures will be taken to avoid the species during construction.

There are no unique habitats or prime farmland, and the site is not within the 100-year floodplain. A review of the National Wetlands Inventory map identified no jurisdictional waters in the project area. While no water resources are in the project area, sediment-laden runoff from construction activity has the potential to flow off-site to water resources near the project. Other

construction-related short-term effects include increase of noise and potential effects to air quality. These effects are expected to be minor and short in duration.

Ceylon WMA provides socioeconomic benefits to nearby communities. Users and visitors support the local economy by purchasing fishing and hunting supplies, equipment, meals, fuel, and other goods from nearby businesses. The proposed project will have no detrimental effect on the local area economy or disproportionate environmental or economic impacts on minority and low-income populations. There is a limited loss of the recreational area, but that area is not designated as a hunting area at the WMA.

A review of the database of listed sites protected under the National Historic Preservation Act found no listed property in the project area. Before GDNR acquired the property, a Phase I and II Cultural Resources Survey and Testing of 9400 acres at Big Pasture and 1880 acres at Little Pasture was conducted in 2012. There were no positive test shovel sites that overlap the project area. The closest known positive test location is in planted pine, approximately 150 meters to the east of the project and to the west of Boat House Road.

### **Minimization and Mitigation**

Measures to mitigate and/or minimize adverse effects have been incorporated into the selected action. These measures include:

#### *Standard Protection Measures for the Eastern Indigo Snake Plan, May 2024*

The Standard Protection Measures for the Eastern Indigo Snake Plan will be used by GDNR during construction. The implementation will minimize potential construction effects to eastern indigo snakes if the species is present during the construction period.

#### *Erosion, Sedimentation and Pollution Control Plan (ES&PCP)*

An ES&PCP will be developed to minimize potential adverse effects to water resources. This is required under the state's National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System (NPDES) permitting program.

#### *Inadvertent Archaeological or Historical Discoveries Measure*

In the event any archaeological or historic materials are encountered during project activity, work in the immediate area must stop and the following actions taken:

1. Implement reasonable measures to protect the discovery site, including any appropriate stabilization or covering;
2. Take reasonable steps to ensure the confidentiality of the discovery sites; and
3. Take reasonable steps to restrict access to the site of discovery.

The recipient must notify the concerned Tribes and all appropriate county, state, and federal agencies, including the State Historic Preservation Office. Agencies and the Tribe(s) will discuss the possible measures to remove or avoid cultural material and will reach an agreement with the recipient regarding actions to be taken and disposition of material. If Human remains are uncovered, appropriate law enforcement agencies must be notified first, and the above steps followed. If the remains are determined to be Native, consultation with the affected Tribe(s) will take place in order to mitigate the final disposition of said remains.

The selected action will not have a significant impact on resources and uses for several reasons:

- The adverse direct and indirect effects of the proposed action on air, water, soil, habitat, wildlife, aesthetic/visual resources, and wilderness values are expected to be minor and short-term. The facility be beneficial to long-term ecosystem health that these efforts will accomplish far outweigh any of the short-term adverse impacts discussed in this document.
- The action is not in an ecologically sensitive area;
- The action will not impact any threatened or endangered species; or any Federally-designated critical habitat;
- The action will not impact any cultural or historical resources;
- The action will not impact any wilderness areas;
- There is no scientific controversy over the impacts of this action and the impacts of the proposed action are relatively certain.
- The proposal is not expected to have any significant adverse effects on wetlands and floodplains, pursuant to Executive Orders 11990 and 11988.

## **Public Review**

The proposal has been thoroughly coordinated with all interested and/or affected parties. Parties contacted in the preparation of the Draft EA include:

- Kialegee Tribal Town
- The Muscogee Nation
- Poarch Band of Creek Indians
- Seminole Nation of Oklahoma
- Seminole Tribe of Florida
- Thlopthlocco Tribal Town
- U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Georgia Ecological Services
- GDNR Nongame Conservation Section, Social Circle, Georgia
- DCA Historic Preservation Division, Atlanta, Georgia
- GDNR Engineering and Construction Section, Atlanta, Georgia.
- Camden County Manager
- Coastal Regional Commission

Six Tribes were invited to consult on the proposed project and its potential to impact significant archaeological sites and other historic properties of religious and cultural significance. Out of those Tribes contacted, the Seminole Tribe requested more information regarding the shovel test locations near the area of potential impacts. The Service and GDNR provided maps and details from the Phase I and II Cultural Resources Survey and Testing of 9400 acres at Big Pasture and 1880 acres at Little Pasture published in 2012. On July 5, 2024, the Seminole Tribe sent a letter noting that there are no objections or comments. The Tribes will be notified if there are any inadvertent discoveries.

The Service conducted an intra-Service consultation in compliance with Section 7 of the Endangered Species Act, as amended (16 U.S.C. 1531 et seq.) on October 29, 2024, and determined that the proposed action not likely to adversely affect federally listed species or candidate species. The consultation included conservation measures that are incorporated into the action. The Georgia Ecological Services provided concurrence on the intra-Service consultation.

On December 2, 2024, the Service put the Finding of No Significant Impact and draft EA out for 30-day public review and comment on the Ceylon WMA website, no comments were received.

### **Finding of No Significant Impact**

Based upon a review and evaluation of the information contained in the EA as well as other documents and actions of record affiliated with this proposal, the Service has determined that the proposal to build a maintenance shop and office facility does not constitute a major Federal action significantly affecting the quality of the human environment under the meaning of section 102 (2) (c) of the National Environmental Policy Act of 1969 (as amended). As such, an environmental impact statement is not required.

### **Decision**

The Service has decided to federally fund the construction of a maintenance building at the Ceylon Wildlife Management Area, Camden County, Georgia. The action is consistent with applicable laws and policies.

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