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**Project Name:** Muscle Shoals Outdoor Education and Recreation Area Improvements  
**Project Number:** 2014-35

**FINDING OF NO SIGNIFICANT IMPACT**  
**TENNESSEE VALLEY AUTHORITY**  
**MUSCLE SHOALS OUTDOOR EDUCATION AND**  
**RECREATION AREA IMPROVEMENTS**  
**COLBERT COUNTY, ALABAMA**

The Tennessee Valley Authority (TVA) proposes to improve the trail/recreation system on the Muscle Shoals Reservation (MSR), north of Reservation Road. The improvements would include activities in three main trail heads: the Rockpile Recreation Area, Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC) Pavilion Area, and the Native Plant Garden Area. Proposed improvements are part of TVA's Environmental Education Program, designed to enhance awareness and appreciation of the natural resources within the Tennessee River Valley, and support implementation of the Public Engagement Programs of TVA's 2011 Natural Resource Plan.

The proposed action is the subject of an environmental assessment (EA) prepared by TVA. This EA is incorporated by reference. The EA evaluates two feasible alternatives: the No Action Alternative and the Proposed Action Alternative. Under the No Action Alternative, TVA would not proceed with the improvements to the CCC Pavilion area, construction of a pavilion at the Rockpile Recreation area, or improvements to the native plant garden. These areas would continue to be used by the public, but would not offer optimal recreational opportunities. Environmental conditions would remain the same within the project area.

Under the Proposed Action Alternative, TVA would complete improvements to the Muscle Shoals Outdoor Education and Recreation Area at three main trail heads. TVA would re-vegetate disturbed areas with native non-invasive species and implement best management practices (i.e., silt fences) during construction activities. All ground disturbance associated with the CCC Pavilion improvements would be confined to the plow zone. TVA proposes the following improvements for each main trail head area:

1) Native Plant Garden Area Improvements:

- Return some mown areas to native grass and wildflower meadows to increase native habitat and reduce stormwater runoff and maintenance.
- Circular landscaping of formal native plant garden to demonstrate possible landscaping opportunities with native vegetation.
- Remove large hackberry trees to improve planting success of the native species.
- Within the existing native plant garden, establish a Native American domesticates garden.
- Construction of a 30-foot by 30-foot pavilion adjacent to the native plant garden.

2) CCC Pavilion Area Improvements:

- Installation of a 6-inch reinforced grass paving surrounding the existing CCC Pavilion to allow for handicap access.
- Repair existing stone steps from trail to CCC Pavilion. Preferred repair methodology would be to locate the original steps and replace to the original location. If the original stones cannot be located, a sandstone step would be used in its place.

- Installation of native stone patio around the existing picnic area. The native stone would consist of sandstone and would complement the stone used for the CCC Pavilion.
- Construction of a 6-foot wide accessible crushed-brick walk from the parking lot to the CCC Pavilion that also connects to the picnic area.
- Construction of natural play area and sitting area with benches.
- Removal of existing chain link fence and replacement with black vinyl coated chain link fence or a wooden split-rail fence.
- Construction of a new bathroom facility next to the circular parking lot. The new structure would connect to existing water, sewer and electric lines.

3) Rockpile Recreation Area Improvements - Construction of a 30-foot by 30-foot pavilion adjacent to a new play area. The pavilion would have steel roofing, steel frame construction and would be open on all sides with a 28-inch natural stone base around each corner column.

There would be no impacts related to air quality, natural areas, prime farmland, water quality, aquatic life, aquatic threatened and endangered species, wetlands, socioeconomics and environmental justice, transportation, Nationwide Rivers Inventory streams, or Wild and Scenic Rivers. There would be minor, temporary effects to recreation during construction of the proposed improvements. No long-term impacts to local populations of wildlife or plants are expected to occur as a result of proposed actions.

No suitable winter or summer habitat for the Indiana, gray or northern long-eared bat occurs within the project area. Therefore, there would be no impacts to federally listed Indiana bat or gray bat and the proposed action would not jeopardize the continued existence of northern long-eared bat. Implementation of the Proposed Action Alternative would not affect federally listed plant species or designated critical habitat because neither occurs in the project area. However, the rare, state-listed Dutchman's breeches occurs on the periphery of areas that would be actively disturbed. To reduce potential impacts to the species, TVA biologists would clearly identify areas in the field where the species occurs and the project manager would notify work crews of the presence of the species on site. No grading or other soil disturbance would occur in areas containing Dutchman's breeches. Hand removal of woody species and other non-native plants would be performed next to the occurrence to enhance viewing of the Dutchman's breeches population and other wildflowers and to improve the overall aesthetics on the site.

Consistent with Executive Order 11988, the proposed improvements for the CCC Pavilion and the Native Plant Garden areas would be located outside the 100-year floodplain. The pavilion proposed at the Rockpile Recreation Area would be located within the 100-year floodplain of the Tennessee River. A pavilion is considered a recreational use of the floodplain that is approvable provided flooding impacts are minimized. To minimize adverse impacts on natural and beneficial floodplain values, provided the mitigation measures listed below are implemented for the Rockpile Recreation Area. Based upon implementation of these mitigation measures, the proposed improvements would have only a minor impact on floodplains.

The proposed improvements to the CCC Pavilion are located within the boundaries of an archaeological site and the CCC pavilion is eligible for the National Register of Historic Places. All ground disturbances would be confined to the plow zone and therefore would not affect archaeological deposits. The design of the CCC Pavilion area improvements would ensure that the visual setting and the CCC Pavilion would not be adversely affected. The Alabama Historical Commission concurred with TVA's findings that no historic properties would be adversely affected by the proposed action.

## Mitigation

The below mitigation measures were identified to minimize and reduce potentially adverse impacts from the implementation of the Proposed Action Alternative.

- To reduce potential impacts to the Dutchman's breeches, TVA biologists would clearly identify areas in the field where the species occurs and the project manager would notify work crews of the presence of the species on site. No grading or other soil disturbance would occur in areas containing Dutchman's breeches. Hand removal of woody species and other non-native plants would be performed next to the occurrence to enhance viewing of the Dutchman's breeches population and other wildflowers and to improve the overall aesthetics on the site.
- To minimize adverse impacts on natural and beneficial floodplain values, the following mitigation measures would be implemented during improvements to the Rockpile Recreation Area:
  1. The pavilion in the Rockpile area would remain open to the elements and never be enclosed in the future.
  2. Any flood-damageable equipment within the Rockpile pavilion would be elevated above or flood-proofed to the TVA Flood Risk Profile elevation 435.8 at this location.
  3. For any electrical services permitted, a disconnect would be located at or above the TVA Flood Risk Profile elevation 435.8.

## Conclusion and Findings

Based on the findings in the EA, TVA concludes that the proposed action of implementing the above-mentioned improvements to the Rockpile Recreation Area, CCC Pavilion Area, and the Native Plant Garden Area would not be a major federal action significantly affecting the environment. Accordingly, an environmental impact statement is not required.



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Date Signed