

FINDING OF NO SIGNIFICANT IMPACT

For the reasons briefly presented below and based on an evaluation of the information contained in the supporting references enumerated below, I have determined that the development of the Jerome Access Relocation under the proposed alternative is not a major Federal action which would significantly affect the quality of the human environment within the meaning of Section 102(2)(c) of the National Environmental Policy Act of 1969. An Environmental Impact Statement will, accordingly, not be prepared.

The project purpose is to relocate the Jerome Access from its current location to provide the public with reliable and safe recreational boating access to the Missouri River throughout the year. MDC proposes to abandon the existing located on the left descending bank of the Gasconade River at River Mile (RM) 151.2 in western Phelps County, Missouri (Chapter 1, Page 1 of EA Figure 1-1).

Reasons:

1. The proposed project site is located on Missouri State Route D on an MDC-owned inholding within the Houston-Rolla Unit of the Mark Twain National Forest in western Phelps County, Missouri. It lies just west of the unincorporated community of Arlington and south of the unincorporated community of Jerome, and it is an approximately 1.2-mile distance from Interstate 44 (I-44) exit 172 (Figure 1-1). The property is located on the right descending bank of the Gasconade River at approximately RM 150, which is at the confluence with Little Piney Creek (Chapter 1, Page 7 of EA).
2. Explosives would likely be used to remove the existing rock bluff remnant; however, alternative methods, such as cutting and/or chipping, may be used. All blasting operations shall be conducted under the direct supervision of a licensed blaster as required by the Missouri Blasting Safety Act. Blasting recording requirements and procedures stipulated in the Missouri Standard Specifications for Highway Construction, Sections 107 and 203 (MoDOT 2021) shall be followed. (Chapter 3, Page 28 of EA).
3. Minor, long-term impacts from visible alterations associated with the

conversion of forested riverbank habitat to a public access, including demolition of previously disturbed rock bluff remnant. However, views would not detract from overall landscape due to location adjacent to existing highway, distance, intervening vegetation, and topography (Chapter 3, Page 67 of EA).

4. Approximately 14,000 cubic yards of cut and approximately 3,160 cubic yards of fill is expected to be required for construction of the project. No impact to wetlands. Permitted impact of 0.09 acres of fill into Gasconade River would be mitigated by effective use of BMPs and adherence to applicable permitting requirements. (Chapter 3, Page 85 of EA) No compensatory mitigation was required. On February 25, 2022, USACE approved the Section 404 permit for the proposed Project (Appendix E, Page 343 of EA).
5. Minor, long-term impacts to approximately 1.2 acres of previously disturbed early successional forest, scrub-shrub, and herbaceous vegetation. Other herbaceous and forested areas within the footprint may be disturbed during construction activities but would be stabilized or reseeded following construction. Impacts would be minimized in accordance with USACE requirements (Chapter 3, Page 91 of EA).
6. Minor, long-term impacts due to motorboat noise and potential vehicle collisions with wildlife, and permanent displacement of small amount of previously disturbed forest (0.83 acres) that would result in fragmentation and loss of forage and cover for wildlife associated with forested habitat. Minor, localized displacement of wildlife occurring within footprint and adjacent areas during the construction period and operations and maintenance activities (Chapter 3, Page 95 of EA).
7. Disturbance associated with construction activities may increase the establishment of invasive species in the Project footprint and surrounding areas. In addition, use of watercraft can spread aquatic invasive species in the Gasconade River and Little Piney Creek. However, these impacts would be minor considering the limited areas of construction disturbance, already heavily utilized and invaded landscape and river, integrated invasive species management programs, and proposed restoration of disturbed areas with non-invasive vegetation (Chapter 3, Page 103 of EA).
8. In compliance with Section 7(c) of the ESA, as amended, a listing of federally threatened or endangered species currently classified or proposed for classification that may occur within the proposed project was obtained from the USFWS IPaC on July 13, 2021 (USFWS 2021a). The project may affect, but is not likely to adversely affect, the Indiana bat, northern long-eared bat, gray bat, eastern hellbender, pink mucket, scaleshell mussel, and the spectaclecase. There would be no effect to any other protected or sensitive species. Consultation with the USFWS in compliance with Section 7 of the ESA is ongoing and will be

conducted in association with the proposed project grant proposal. (Chapter 3, Page 106 of EA).

9. Minor, long-term impacts from visible alterations associated with the conversion of forested riverbank habitat to a public access, including demolition of previously disturbed rock bluff remnant. However, views would not detract from overall landscape due to location adjacent to existing highway, distance, intervening vegetation, and topography. (Chapter 3, Page 114 of EA).
10. Adverse impacts to the health and safety of job site workers during construction and operation would be minor, minimized through the implementation of safety practices, training, and control measures. Moderate, beneficial long-term impacts from the increased reliability and safety, and improved road conditions, parking, and traffic flow associated with a relocated access (Chapter 3, Page 121 of EA).
11. Four comments were received during the commenting period that occurred April 7, 2022 to May 5, 2022. All comments supported the project or did not have concern with the project (Appendix B5 of EA).

Supporting References:

1. Environmental Assessment "Missouri Department of Conservation Jerome Access Relocation Project"
2. MDC Jerome Access Relocation Project Final draft EAS
3. Briefing paper MDC Jerome Access Relocation Project Draft EA

Regional Director, FWS, Region 3

Date:

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