

RECORD OF DECISION
East Locust Creek Watershed Revised Plan
Sullivan County, Missouri

1. Purpose

As State Conservationist for the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS), formerly the Soil Conservation Service (SCS), I am the Responsible Federal Official (RFO) for all NRCS projects in Missouri.

The recommended plan (a revised plan) for the East Locust Creek Watershed involves works of improvement to be installed under authorities administered by the Natural Resources Conservation Service. This project includes the installation of one multiple-purpose reservoir for agricultural water management (rural water supply); a water intake structure; a raw water line; 22 small floodwater retarding structures; seven modified existing small floodwater retarding structures; five small sediment/debris basins; and recreational facilities.

The East Locust Creek Watershed Revised Plan and Environmental Impact Statement was prepared under the authority of the Watershed Protection and Flood Prevention Act (Public Law 566, 83rd Congress, 68 Stat. 666, as amended) by the Locust Creek Watershed District, the North Central Missouri Regional Water Commission, the Sullivan County Soil and Water Conservation District, the Putnam County Soil and Water Conservation District, the Sullivan County Commission, the Putnam County Commission, and the U.S. Department of Agriculture Natural Resources Conservation Service. A scoping meeting held on November 4, 2003, established the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS), U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA), as lead agency, with the Forest Service, USDA, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, and U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service as cooperating agencies.

2. Measures Taken to Comply with National Environmental Policies

The East Locust Creek Watershed project has been planned in accordance with existing federal legislation concerned with the preservation of environmental values. The following actions were taken to ensure that the East Locust Creek Watershed Revised Plan-EIS is consistent with national goals and policies.

Preliminary environmental evaluations were completed by an interdisciplinary team under the direction of NRCS. It concluded that significant impacts on the human environment may occur because of the complexity and public interest of the proposed action. As RFO, I directed that a draft environmental impact statement (EIS) be prepared.

The interdisciplinary environmental evaluation of the East Locust Creek Watershed project was conducted by the sponsoring local organizations, cooperating agencies, and the Natural Resources Conservation Service. Information was obtained from many groups and agencies. Inventories and evaluations of archaeological and historic resources were produced by private consultants. Reviews were held with the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Missouri Department of Natural Resources, Missouri State Historic Preservation Officer, Missouri Department of Conservation, and many others. Inputs from these reviews are included in the EIS.

Public meetings were held in the watershed on November 4, 2003; June 14, 2004; January 19, 2005; and March 27, 2006, to solicit public participation in the environmental evaluation, to assure that all interested parties had sufficient information to understand how their concerns are affected by water resource problems, to afford local interests the opportunity to express their views regarding the plans that can best solve these problems, and to provide all interests an opportunity to participate in the plan selection. Meeting announcements were published in the local newspapers.

Testimony and planning concerns were received relative to the following subjects:

- a. An inadequate rural water supply system for the residents of Sullivan and Putnam Counties, as well as other areas of north central Missouri;
- b. Lack of public, water-based recreational opportunities;
- c. Damages from flooding along East Locust Creek and its tributaries;
- d. Erosion and sedimentation;
- e. Impacts of project implementation on the stream system, wetlands, and fish and wildlife habitats.

A draft environmental impact statement was prepared in February 2006, and made available for public review. Recommendations and comments obtained from public meetings held during project planning and assessment were considered in the preparation of the statement. Projects of other agencies were included only when they related to the Public Law 83-566 project, and they were not evaluated with regard to their individual merit.

Approximately 80 copies of the draft environmental impact statement were distributed to agencies, conservation groups, organizations, and individuals for comment. The draft environmental impact statement was filed with the Environmental Protection Agency in March 2006.

Existing data and information pertaining to the project's probable environmental consequences were obtained with assistance from other scientists and engineers. Documentary information, as well as the views of interested federal, state, and local agencies and concerned individuals and organizations having special knowledge of, competence over, or interest in the project's environmental impact were sought. This process continued until it was felt that all the information necessary for a comprehensive, reliable assessment had been gathered.

A complete picture of the project's current and probable future environmental setting was assembled to determine the proposed project's impact and to identify unavoidable adverse environmental impacts that might be produced.

The consequences of a full range of reasonable and viable alternatives to specific project features were considered, studied, and analyzed. In reviewing these alternatives, all courses of action that could reasonably accomplish the project purposes were considered. Attempts were made to identify the economic, social, and environmental values affected by each alternative. In accordance with existing policy and procedures, the possibilities for both structural and nonstructural alternatives for the project were considered.

Several structure sizes and locations to accomplish the project's objectives were evaluated. A full range of physical and economic effects was determined for each structure size. The National Economic Development (NED) plan consisting of one multiple-purpose reservoir for agricultural water management (rural water supply); a water intake structure; a raw water line; 22 small floodwater retarding structures; seven modified existing small floodwater retarding structures; five small sediment/debris basins; and recreational facilities was selected by the project Sponsors as the recommended plan.

3. Conclusions


The following conclusions were reached after carefully reviewing the proposed East Locust Creek Watershed project, in light of all national goals and policies, particularly those expressed in the National Environmental Policy Act, and after evaluating the overall merit of possible alternatives to the project:

- a. The East Locust Creek Watershed project will employ reasonable and practical means that are consistent with the National Environmental Policy Act while permitting the application of other national policies and interests. These means include, but are not limited to, a project planned and designed to minimize adverse effects on the natural environment while accomplishing authorized project purposes. Project features designed to preserve existing environmental values for future generations include: (1) Provisions to recover significant archaeological and historic resources discovered during project construction; (2) Establishing vegetation on construction areas with plant species beneficial to wildlife; (3) Mitigation of 626 lost habitat units on a 1,605-acre mitigation area adjacent to the multiple-purpose reservoir. Mitigation areas will be fenced, where necessary, to exclude livestock; (4) No net loss of wetlands with creation of 241.5 acres of wetlands in the reservoir permanent and temporary pools; (5) Streamflow augmentation below the multiple-purpose reservoir by installation of a low flow ports to replicate, to the extent practical, natural baseflow conditions; (6) Recreation increased by 72,000 annual user-days; and (7) Reduction in total watershed erosion and the amount of sediment delivered to downstream areas.
- b. The East Locust Creek Watershed project was planned using a systematic interdisciplinary approach involving integrated uses of the natural and social sciences and environmental design arts. All conclusions concerning the environmental impact of the project and overall merit of existing plans were based on a review of data and information that would be reasonably expected to reveal significant environmental consequences of the proposed project. These data included studies prepared specifically for the project and comments and views of all interested federal, state, and local agencies and individuals. The results of this review constitute the basis for the conclusions and recommendations. The project will not affect any cultural resources eligible for inclusion in the National Register of Historic Places. Nor will the project affect any species of fish, wildlife, or plant or their habitats that have been designated as endangered or threatened.
- c. In studying and evaluating the environmental impact of the East Locust Creek Watershed project, every effort was made to express all significant environmental values quantitatively and to identify and give appropriate weight and consideration of nonquantifiable environmental values.
- d. Every possible effort has been made to identify those adverse environmental effects that cannot be avoided if the project is constructed.

- e. The long and short-term resource uses, long-term productivity, and the irreversible and irretrievable commitment of resources are described in the final environmental impact statement.
- f. All reasonable and viable alternatives to project features and to the project itself were studied and analyzed with reference to national policies and goals, especially those expressed in the National Environmental Policy Act and the federal water resource development legislation under which the project was planned. Each possible course of action was evaluated as to its possible economic, technical, social, and overall environmental consequences to determine the tradeoffs necessary to accommodate all national policies and interests. No alternative or combination of alternatives will afford greater protection of the environmental values while accomplishing the other project goals and objectives.
- g. I conclude, therefore, that the proposed project will be the most effective means of meeting national goals, and is consistent in serving the public interest by including provisions to protect and enhance the environment. I also conclude that the recommended plan is the environmentally preferable plan.

4. Recommendations

Having concluded that the proposed East Locust Creek Watershed project uses all practical means, consistent with other essential considerations of the national policy, to meet the goals established in the National Environmental Policy Act, that the project will thus serve the overall public interest, that the final environmental impact statement has been prepared, reviewed, and accepted in accordance with the provisions of the National Environmental Policy Act as implemented by Departmental regulations for the preparation of environmental impact statements, and that the project meets the needs of the project Sponsors; I propose to implement the East Locust Creek Watershed project.

By: 
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Date: 9/14/06