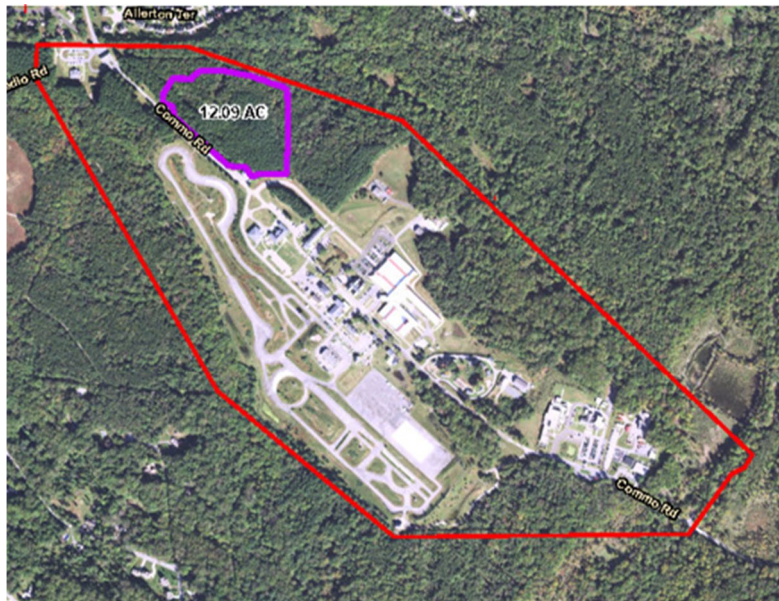


FINAL
Finding of No Significant Impact
Environmental Assessment
Proposed Construction, Operation and Maintenance of a
1.875-Megawatt Ground Mounted Solar
Photovoltaic Array
Cheltenham, Maryland



September 2020

FINDING OF NO SIGNIFICANT IMPACT

Proposed Construction, Operation and Maintenance of a 1.875-Megawatt Ground Mounted Solar Photovoltaic Array

Federal Law Enforcement Training Centers (FLETC)

Cheltenham, Maryland

NAME OF ACTION

The proposed new 1.875-Megawatt (MW) alternating current photovoltaic (PV) system on approximately 12.09 acres of land located in the northwestern corner of the FLETC in Cheltenham, Maryland to meet federal government renewable energy directives and the Department of Homeland Security (DHS)'s overall sustainability goals while maintaining FLETC's mission of national security.

DESCRIPTION OF PROPOSED ACTION

FLETC proposes to construct and operate a 1.875-MW PV system on approximately 12.09 acres of land located in the northwestern corner of FLETC Cheltenham. Approximately 6,162 modules would be used to obtain a total power output of 1.875 MW of alternating current. The modules are considered to have an estimated operational lifetime of upwards of 30 years. The PV system would consist of 24 vertical rows spaced 15.8 feet apart; the number of modules per row varies. The only permanent impervious surface areas associated with the Proposed Action would be the two concrete pads, the gravel access path, and the steel posts totaling 1,604 square feet of new impervious surface. Site preparation activities prior to the installation of the proposed PV system would involve vegetation removal totaling 12.02 acres followed by fine grading of 10.21 acres within the 12.09-acre Proposed Action Area. Additional details and figures depicting the PV system are detailed in the attached Environmental Assessment (EA).

Installation of the PV system and associated infrastructure would involve a variety of powered equipment such as a crane, bulldozers, feller bunchers, graders, scrapers, post pounders, forklifts, and trenchers. However, most of the work would involve manual labor using hand tools. Installation of the solar array would occur over a 9- to 10-month period (depending on weather conditions).

ALTERNATIVES

Alternatives to the Proposed Action for the PV system were analyzed, and reasonable alternatives were carried forward for further evaluation in the alternatives analysis within the EA. In the evaluation and siting of the solar PV array, different on-site locations and alternatives were considered. Alternatives 1 through 4 addressed individual on-site location types and structures, while Alternatives 5 through 8 represented combinations/hybrids of Alternatives 1 through 4. The solar array alternatives considered included:

Alternative 1. Ground-Mounted Array in the Proposed Action Area

Alternative 2. Rooftop Solar Arrays

Alternative 3. Parking Lot Arrays

Alternative 4. Ground-Mounted Array in Existing Open Area

Alternative 5. Hybrid of Alternatives 1 (Ground-Mounted Array in the Proposed Action

Area) and 2 (Rooftop Solar Arrays)

Alternative 6. Hybrid of Alternatives 1 (Ground-Mounted Array in the Proposed Action Area) and 4 (Ground-Mounted Array in Existing Open Area)

Alternative 7. Hybrid of Alternatives 2 (Rooftop Solar Arrays) and 4 (Ground-Mounted Array in Existing Open Area)

Alternative 8. Hybrid of Alternatives 1 (Ground-Mounted Array in the Proposed Action Area), 2 (Rooftop Solar Arrays), and 4 (Ground-Mounted Array in Existing Open Area)

Screening criteria were used to evaluate the potential solar PV array alternatives. In comparing their differences, the following criteria were used:

1. No impacts to mission-critical activities
2. Meets energy production for purpose and need (at least 60 percent of FLETC's consumable energy)
3. Financial feasibility (i.e., construction cost would not exceed the overall Utility Energy Services Contract [UESC] energy savings in under 25 years)
4. Environmental impact (acreage of forest resources lost)

Screening criteria 1, 2, and 3 above are associated with federal mandates. As such, these screening criteria must be met in order to implement the proposed action; if these criteria are not met, the alternative would be considered unfeasible. Alternatives 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, and 8 were rejected due to not meeting one or more screening criteria and were eliminated from additional analysis. As a result, the alternatives considered in this EA include:

1. The "No-Action" Alternative or the "Status Quo"; and
2. The Proposed Action.

ANTICIPATED ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACTS

According to the analysis in this EA, implementation of the Proposed Action would result in no significant environmental impacts in any resource category; especially, threatened and endangered species, jurisdictional wetlands, or cultural resources. Other than having a moderate beneficial impact on sustainability and resilience, implementation of the Proposed Action would not significantly affect existing conditions at Cheltenham.

MITIGATION

The attached National Environmental Policy Act of 1969 (NEPA) evaluation did not identify any significant adverse impacts from implementation of the Proposed Action. However, the State of Maryland necessitates mitigation to satisfy requirements for the Forest Conservation Act, Code of Maryland Regulation (COMAR) 08.19.04.11, and Tier II waters, COMAR 26.08.02.04-1, for the loss of 12.02 acres of forest. FLETC's mitigation includes the on-site planting of 7.24 acres of trees that will be protected in accordance with a long-term protection agreement.

FINDING OF NO SIGNIFICANT IMPACT

The EA for this project is prepared in accordance with the NEPA (42 United States Code [U.S.C.] 4321 *et seq.*); the Council on Environmental Quality (CEQ), *Regulations Implementing the Procedural Provisions of NEPA* (40 Code of Federal Regulations [CFR] §§1500-1508); DHS Directive 023-01 Revision 01, *Implementation of the National Environmental Policy Act* (October 31, 2014); DHS Instruction Manual 023-01-01 Revision 01 (November 6, 2014); and other pertinent environmental statutes, regulations, and compliance requirements. In accordance with Section 307 of the Federal Coastal Zone Management Act of 1972, as amended (CZMA), the Proposed Action is in compliance with all State of Maryland enforceable policies. The analyses described in the EA demonstrate that the Proposed Action would not result in a significant adverse effect on the environment. As a result, no additional analysis or documentation (i.e., Environmental Impact Statement) is required under NEPA (42 U.S.C. 4321 *et seq.*) or CEQ’s *Regulations Implementing the Procedural Provisions of NEPA* (40 CFR §§1500-1508). FLETC would utilize all practical means to minimize or avoid the potential for adverse impacts to the human and natural environment.

PUBLIC/AGENCY COMMENT

The EA and Finding of No Significant Impact (FONSI) have been coordinated with appropriate parties having an interest in the project. In addition, a Public Notice of Availability (NOA) was published in the *Prince George’s Sentinel* announcing the availability of the Draft EA. To date, there have not been any comments received that were averse to the Proposed Action. Coordination with all appropriate parties is detailed in Sections 1.5 and 5.0 and Appendix B of the EA.

POINT OF CONTACT

Comments and inquiries for further information about this EA and FONSI should be directed to Mr. Timothy D. Harper, Engineer-Environmental and Safety Division, Federal Law Enforcement Training Centers, 1131 Chapel Crossing Road, Brunswick, Georgia 31524; telephone number (912) 261-4025.

Reviewed and Approved by:

Charles L. Daenzer
Deputy Assistant Director
Mission and Readiness Support Directorate
Federal Law Enforcement Training Centers

Date