

Finding of No Significant Impact (FONSI)

Master Plan

Charles River Natural Valley Storage Area

Massachusetts

Pursuant to the Council on Environmental Quality (CEQ) regulations (40 *Code of Federal Regulations* [CFR] 1500-1508) for implementing the procedural provisions of the *National Environmental Policy Act* (NEPA) (42 U.S.C. 4321 et. seq.) and the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE) Regulation 33 CFR 230 (*Procedures for Implementing NEPA*), the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers conducted an environmental assessment (EA) of potential environmental effects associated with the adoption and implementation of the Master Plan for the Charles River Natural Valley Storage Area (CRNVSA).

The CRNVSA is a unit in the flood risk reduction plan for the Charles River Watershed which helps to protect communities along the lower Charles River in Massachusetts. Authorization of the project is contained in the Water Resources Development Act of 1974 (Public Law 93-251). CRNVSA was authorized as a multi-purpose project for flood control, recreation, and fish and wildlife management (FY1978 Annual Report of the Chief of Engineers on Civil Works Activities, Volume II, Section 45, Field Reports). Comprised of 17 separate areas of natural wetland in the middle and upper portions of the Charles River Watershed, the project includes land in 16 towns. Preservation of these key wetland areas in the upper and middle parts of the watershed allow for their continued ability to retain and slow flood waters and thus reduce the flood crests in the more developed areas of the lower watershed.

The Master Plan as described in EP 1130-2-550 (Jan 2013) is a strategic land use management document that steers the comprehensive management and development of all project recreational, natural and cultural resources throughout the life of the project. The primary goals of a Master Plan are to prescribe an overall land use management plan, resource objectives, and associated design and management concepts.

My determination of a Finding of No Significant Impact is based on the analysis in the EA and the following considerations:

Impacts on public health or safety: The adoption and implementation of the Master Plan will ensure continued guidance and continuity of purpose for the CRNVSA. This thoughtful approach will provide a net public benefit of continued ability for the CRNVSA to provide flood control benefits.

Unique characteristics: The CRNVSA contains multiple rare and endangered species and habitats. Acceptance and implementation of the Master Plan will ensure continued protection and thoughtful planning within the project.

Controversy: The Master Plan is not controversial.

Uncertain impacts: The impacts of the adoption and implementation of the Master Plan are not uncertain; they are readily understood based on past operation, maintenance and recreation support activities.

Precedent for future actions: The adoption and implementation of the Master Plan are required per USACE regulations. The Master Plan allows for the continued conversation with local municipalities and partners regarding its appropriate use. It does not specify major operational changes.

Cumulative significance: The adoption and implementation of the Mater Plan is non-significant when considered in the context of past, present and future impacts to the river ecosystem.

Historic resources: The adoption and implementation of the Master Plan will have no known adverse impacts on historic properties, nor will it result in adverse impacts on properties eligible for listing on the National Register of Historic Places.

Endangered species: There will be no negative, long-term environmental impact to endangered or threatened species in the CRNVSA due to implementation of the Master Plan. The Master Plan's objectives are to maintain the project in a natural state to further facilitate flood damage control, which will preserve habitat for all species.

Potential violation of state or federal law: The acceptance and implementation of the Master Plan will not violate Federal nor state laws.

Based on my review and evaluation of the environmental effects as presented in the EA, I have determined that the acceptance and implementation of the CRNVSA Master Plan is not a major Federal action significantly affecting the quality of the human environment. Therefore, acceptance and implementation of the CRNVSA Master Plan are exempt from the requirement to prepare an Environmental Impact Statement.

Date: _____

Christopher J. Barron

Colonel, Corps of Engineers