

ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT

for

Construction and Operation of a Child Development Center (CDC) Facility at Fort Drum, New York

DECEMBER 2024

Prepared by:
U.S Army Garrison Fort Drum
Environmental Division Natural Resources Branch
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ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

AR	Army Regulation
BA	Biological Assessment
BO	Biological Opinion
CAA	Clean Air Act
CDC	Child Development Center
CEQ	Council on Environmental Quality
CFR	Code of Federal Regulations
CWA	Clean Water Act
DoD	Department of Defense
DOH	Department of Health
DPW	Directorate of Public Works
EA	Environmental Assessment
EIS	Environmental Impact Statement
ESA	Endangered Species Act
FONSI	Finding of No Significant Impact
NEPA	National Environmental Policy Act
NY	New York
NYS	New York State
NYSDEC	New York State Department of Environmental Conservation
RONA	Record of Non Applicability
SHPO	State Historic Preservation Office
SWPPP	Stormwater Pollution Prevention Plan
US	United States
USAG	United States Army Garrison
USFWS	United States Fish and Wildlife Service

ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT

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ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT

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1.0 PURPOSE AND NEED FOR THE PROPOSED ACTION

1.1 Background

Installations are required by the Department of Defense (DoD) to provide child care services (MCCA, 1989). Fort Drum currently operates three nationally accredited full-day Child Development Centers (CDC), on Post, able to provide for 595 children. Fort Drum is required to provide child care services for 1,014 children, leaving a care deficit of 419 children.

Fort Drum has four CDC; two of the four facilities are challenged with continuous infrastructure failures. The oldest CDC constructed in 1988 is currently closed and requires replacement of Heating Ventilation and Air Conditioning (HVAC) systems to reopen. Replacement is proposed for fiscal year 25 and is pending funding. Closure of this facility has exacerbated the stress on the care capacity of each facility. Capacity is now maximized. This prohibits any increase in additional care spaces and prevents flexibility in changing room layouts to accommodate the care requirements for different age groups. In order to provide ongoing quality dependable services for military families a Large CDC facility that will be conducive to that need. (Keegan, 2024).

Fort Drum proposes to construct a standard design large CDC facility (accommodates 338 children, 6 weeks to 6 years) with outdoor play areas, safety surfacing, fencing, security/safety/information systems; and site improvements such as walkways, roadways, parking lots, landscaping, etc., situated on eight to ten acres of suitable land that is unencumbered and located in close proximity to an access control point ¹ for ease of drop-off/pick-up, in close proximity to existing CDC to allow timely and safe relocation of children in event of an emergency, be located near the housing communities and living areas, preferably in or near South Post housing which has only one CDC while North Post housing has four, be located close to utilities for tie-in.

1.2 Purpose and Need

This environmental assessment (EA) is required to evaluate the potential environmental effects that would occur as a result of the proposed construction and operation of a standard design large Child Development Center (CDC).

This NEPA document identifies the potential environmental effects that may result from the proposed action. It is an assessment of the proposed construction and operation of

¹ An Access Control Point (ACP) at an Army installation is an access point that all vehicles and pedestrians must pass through to enter or exit the installation. ACPs are the first physical security barrier for the installation and are guarded by ACPs who control the barriers to allow or deny entry.

a standard design large CDC. The estimated project site for this facility will require an eight to ten acre site to build a 37,300 square foot facility with outdoor play areas, fencing, security/safety/information systems; walkways, roadways, parking lots, landscaping, etc.

1.3 Scope of the Analysis

This EA has been developed in accordance with National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA), as implemented by the regulations issued by the Council on Environmental Quality (CEQ), 40 CFR Parts 1505-1508 and the Army's implementing procedures as outlined in 32 CFR Part 651 *Environmental Analysis of Army Actions; Final Rule* (formerly Army Regulation 200-2).

This EA analyzes the potential effects of the proposed action and alternatives. It incorporates past environmental analysis, where applicable, to assessing potential impacts of implementing the proposed action. It identifies the potential direct, indirect and cumulative effects on the human environment that may result from the proposed action and alternatives, including the No Action Alternative, and will determine whether or not any such effects are significant. If the EA discloses any significant impacts, the Army will publish a Notice of Intent to prepare an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS). Otherwise, the Army will sign a Finding of No Significant Impact (FONSI).

2.0 DESCRIPTION OF THE PROPOSED ACTION AND ALTERNATIVES

The proposed action is to construct and operate a Child Development Center (CDC) to ease the current child care deficit. The facility will be a standard design large CDC facility that includes a reception/entrance area, an administrative area; staff lounge/work room, storage, kitchen, janitor closet, laundry room, and supporting facilities that include communications, utilities; electric service: fire protection, sprinkler and alarm systems, paved walks, curbs, gutters; storm drainage, outdoor play areas with age appropriate child development equipment to include safety surfacing and fencing; information systems; and site improvements. Facility will be handicapped accessible.

The Preferred Alternative is to construct in the property located north of the existing Po Valley Rd standard design medium CDC facility. There are approximately 20.75 acres of suitable land that is mostly forest. The facility would be constructed on the north side of the existing CDC and have access roads from Mount Belvedere Blvd.

The No Action Alternative is to continue to use only the facilities that are presently located on Fort Drum. These facilities are currently operating at their maximum capacity of 595 children, while failing to meet the mission requirement of 1,014 children.

The Other Sites Alternative. Other sites looked at for construction appeared suitable until a number of difficulties were identified. These locations, shown in Figure 2.1

Each alternative was considered for meeting the purpose and need to support construction of the CDC Facility and essential site improvements. This EA identifies the

potential direct, indirect and cumulative effects on the human environment that may result from the proposed action and will determine whether or not the effects are significant. If the EA discloses significant impacts, the Army will publish a Notice of Intent to prepare an EIS. Otherwise, the Army will sign a Finding of No Significant Impact (FONSI).

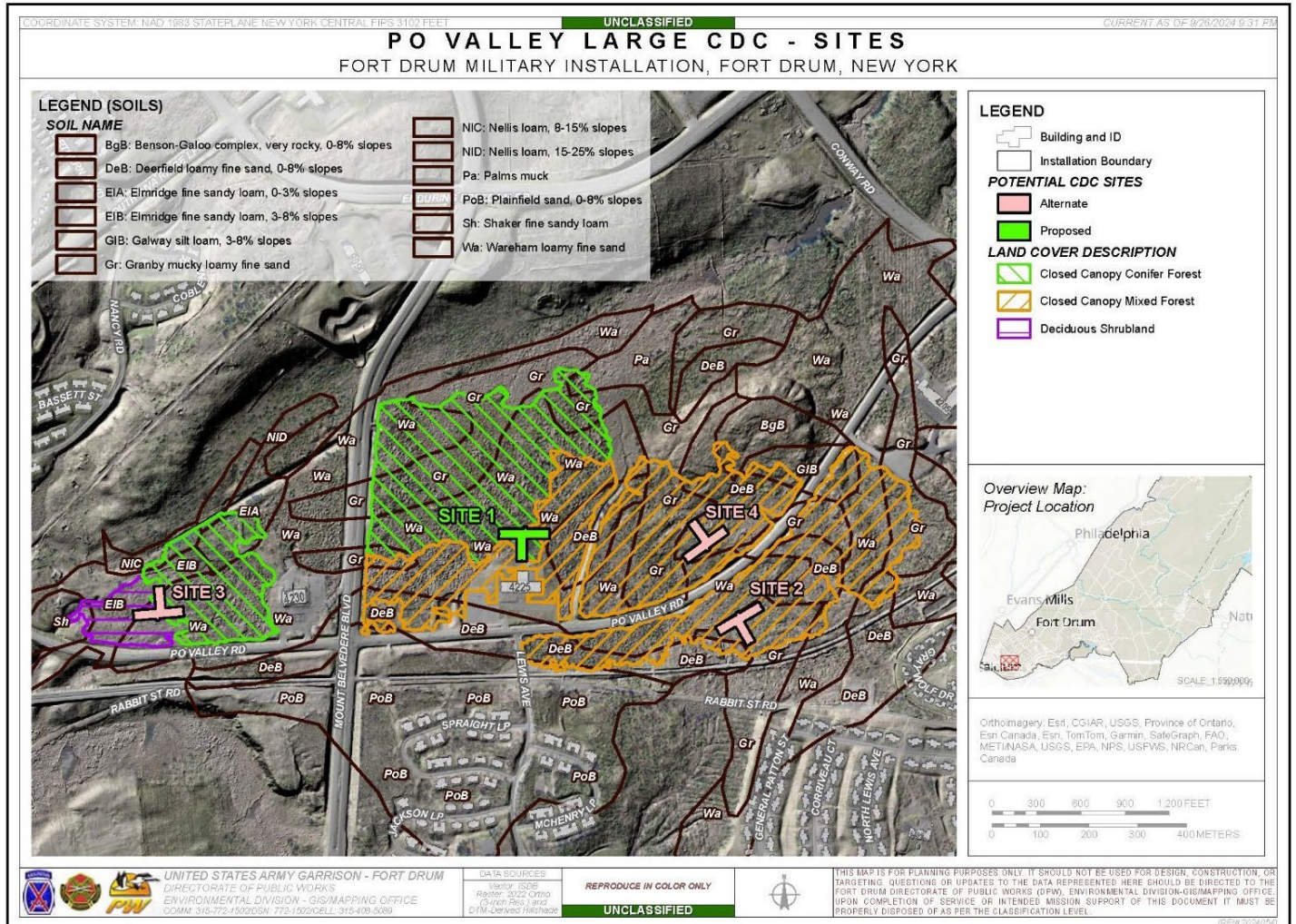


Figure 2.1 Preferred and Alternate CDC Locations ²

2.1 Alternative 1 – The Preferred Alternative

Fort Drum proposes to construct a standard design large CDC facility (accommodates 338 children, 6 weeks to 6 years) with outdoor play areas, safety surfacing, fencing, security/safety/information systems; and site improvements such as walkways, roadways, parking lots, landscaping, etc., situated on eight to ten acres of suitable land that is unencumbered and located near the housing communities and living areas, located close to utilities for tie-in, and have no restrictions to construction. By providing

² Figure 2.1 is of the considered site locations showing the soil types and the vegetation types over a shaded relief of the terrain. Low areas are darker and high areas are light. The elevations range from 560 to 590 feet above sea level. See Glossary for descriptions of Land Cover and Soil Type descriptions.

care services to children 6 weeks to 5 years of age and housing kindergarten children (5-6 years) in the same facility Fort Drum will meet the Installation mission and reduce any future waiting list. A large CDC will provide Fort Drum with stability and flexibility required to meet mission requirements and support soldier readiness.

The preferred site is located north of the existing standard design medium CDC facility on Po Valley Rd. There are approximately 20 acres of suitable land that is mostly forest, nearly level, *add*. The facility would be constructed on the north side of the existing CDC and have access roads from Mount Belvedere Blvd. (Figure 2.1).

2.2 Alternative 2 – Sites Considered

Several sites were considered but did not meet the siting requirements and are not as suitable as the preferred site. These sites are illustrated in Figure 2.1

Site 2 - The area south of Po Valley Road to the east looks to be approximately 16 acres of land south of the railroad tracks. The drainage in this area flows north leaving the project site fairly wet.

Site 3 - The area located 645 to 1225 meters west of the existing CDC was inconsideration until noted that there is not enough contiguous unencumbered land to construct the facility and needed site developments, i.e., playgrounds, parking, stormwater features, etc.

Site 4 - The area north of Po Valley Road, directly east of the existing CDC looks to be approximately 15 acres of land. This area is very wet.

2.3 Alternative 3 – The No Action Alternative

The No Action Alternative is to continue to use the facilities that are presently open on Fort Drum. These facilities are currently operating at their maximum capacity of 595 children, while failing to meet the mission requirement of 1,014 children. A majority of the current facilities were constructed before a standard design was established for CDC facilities, and while these facilities will continue to be utilized, they do not allow flexibility in modifying room layouts to accommodate different age group sizes as the need arises. Fort Drum's inability to accommodate children on an on-going waiting list results in failure to meet the primary mission to provide quality child care services to support Fort Drum Soldiers. The failure to provide adequate child care services will negatively impact mission readiness.

2.4 Screening Criteria

Constructing the CDC will ease the current child care deficit and improve access for Soldiers and their families to high quality developmental child care. As a result of initial scoping for this assessment, it has been determined that the action will have no effect on certain resource areas that frequently receive attention in NEPA analyses. Resource areas that were considered but excluded from further detailed analysis in this EA include: airspace, climate, geology (except soils), hazardous materials / hazardous

wastes, infrastructure (potable water supply, electricity, wastewater treatment, HVAC (heating, ventilation, and air conditioning), noise, telecommunications, traffic and transportation, solid waste (disposal, roadways), socioeconomic conditions, environmental justice (effects on low-income and minority populations), protection of children from environmental health and safety risks, and water resources. The proposed action will have no measurable changes in local or regional employment or other economic indicators.

This EA addresses potential impacts to resources, such as air quality, biological resources (vegetation, wildlife, threatened and endangered species), cultural resources, land use, soils, and wetlands. The EA was prepared utilizing a systematic, interdisciplinary approach integrating the natural and social sciences with planning and decision-making.

Table 1: Summary of Potential Impacts Resulting from Implementation of the Proposed Action and the Alternatives

Resource Area:	Alternative 1: One Facility	Alternative 2: Many Facilities	Alternative 3: No Action	Analyzed or Dismissed from further analysis
Air Quality	L	L	N	Analyzed
Airspace	N	N	N	Dismissed
Biological Resources	L	L	N	Analyzed
Climate	N	N	N	Dismissed
Cultural Resources	L	L	N	Analyzed
Facilities / Utilities	B	B	L	Dismissed
Geology	N	N	N	Dismissed
Hazardous Materials / Hazardous Wastes	N	N	N	Dismissed
Infrastructure	L	L	N	Dismissed
Land Use	L	L	N	Analyzed
Noise	L	L	N	Dismissed
Socioeconomics	B	B	N	Analyzed
- Environmental Justice	N	N	N	Analyzed
- Protection of Children	N	N	N	Analyzed
Soils	L	L	N	Analyzed
Traffic and Transportation	L	L	N	Dismissed
Water Resources	L	L	N	Dismissed
Wetlands	L	L	N	Analyzed

Key: NA = Not Applicable; B = beneficial; N = no impact; L = low/ minor; M = moderate/less than significant; SM = significant but mitigable; S = significant

3.0 AFFECTED ENVIRONMENT AND ENVIRONMENTAL CONSEQUENCES

Fort Drum is a 108,733-acre Army installation in northern New York State that lies within Jefferson and Lewis Counties and is adjacent to St. Lawrence County, New York. The northeastern portion of the installation includes the western portion of the Adirondack Mountains of New York State (U.S. Army, 2022). The Cantonment³ Area is approximately six miles east of Interstate Highway 81 and 10 miles northeast of the City of Watertown. Fort Drum is served by several state roads and has an extensive local road network. Most of the installation extends northeastward from the Cantonment Area, averaging 10 miles wide and 20 miles long. Lake Ontario is approximately 20 miles west of the installation, and the St. Lawrence River is about 20 miles to the north. Fort Drum is the largest military installation in the northeast United States.

3.1 Air Quality

The affected environment includes air quality. Air emissions associated with this project at Fort Drum are expected from land clearing, construction, and operations activities. These emissions will be temporary and short term. Fort Drum is currently in attainment for all criteria pollutants (Whitman, 2024 and EPA, 2024).

Actual emissions from stationary sources at Fort Drum fall below the thresholds for major source determination. Potential emissions from stationary sources at Fort Drum exceed the Major Facility threshold for CO, NO_x, SO₂, and VOCs. Because permitting requirements are determined based on a facility's "potential to emit," Fort Drum is considered a major facility and operates in accordance with an approved Title V permit. Since Fort Drum is a major source, the General Conformity Rule of the Clean Air Act applies. The general conformity rule requires analysis of total direct and indirect emissions of criteria pollutants, including precursors, when determining conformity of the proposed action. The rule does not apply to actions where the total direct and indirect emissions of criteria pollutants are at or below established *de minimis* levels. A Record of Non-Applicability (RONA) is required to document the calculations and determination that the projected/potential emissions of criteria pollutants do not exceed the *de minimis* thresholds. The project may need modifications or mitigation strategies to bring it into compliance.

The proposed action is to build a 83,000 square foot facility with parking areas, supporting utilities, site improvements (walkways, landscaping, etc.), access roadways, signage and environmental protections (stormwater retention, oil/water separators, etc.) on an eight to ten acre parcel of forest land. This action has the potential to increase VOC and NO_x emissions due to ground clearing, the potential operation of new stationary equipment (e.g. boiler, furnace, generator) and an expected increase in vehicular commuting associated with the facility. VOC and NO_x emissions resulting from each proposed action must be estimated and compared to general conformity *de minimis* thresholds for Jefferson County, NY. Actions with actual emissions that are below thresholds have no further regulatory obligations under the general conformity

³ Cantonment Area is the portion of an Army Installation that is comprised of permanent facilities for housing, recreation, and dining, exchanges (stores, restaurants, fuel stations), barracks, offices, headquarters facilities, equipment staging and maintenance areas, indoor ranges, training classrooms, and airfields, etc.

rule. However, emission calculations and the resulting comparison to applicable thresholds are required by Army policy to be documented in a written RONA and retained in administrative records to demonstrate that general conformity applicability was considered.

3.1.1 Environmental Consequences: Air Quality

Recent construction of projects similar in size and scope as the CDC at the installation have had temporary short-term impacts to air from the land clearing, construction, and operations. The same is expected for construction of the CDC with the impacts being low and short-term and predominantly from earth moving equipment and ground disturbance.

Neither the proposed action nor the alternatives would have potential for long-term adverse effects to air quality. In accordance with the General Conformity Rule a Record of Non Applicability (RONA) for the projected use of vehicles, equipment, and generators will be prepared and approved before the start of ground disturbance and hours of use recorded daily throughout construction for tracking.

3.2 Biological Resources:

Biological resources consist of the plants and animals in an area. The variable assemblage of interacting plant and animal populations that share a common environment make up an ecological community. At Fort Drum, there are various ecological communities which include both native and introduced plants and animals. Detailed information regarding types of vegetation communities, wildlife, fish species and management plans can be found in the Fort Drum Integrated Natural Resources Management Plan (INRMP) (USAG Fort Drum, 2024a).

3.2.1 Vegetation (Flora)

Although no federally listed endangered plants have been documented on Fort Drum, there at least 15 state-listed plants and nine are aquatic species. The best available status information is from the New York Flora Atlas web site at <http://newyork.plantatlas.usf.edu/default.aspx>. These species include *Cynoglossum virginianum* var. *boreale* (Northern Wild Comfrey), *Diphasiastrum complanatum* (Northern Running-pine), *Boechera stricta* (Canada/Drummond's Rock-cress), *Carex houghtoniana* (Houghton's Sedge), *Solidago rigida* var. *rigida* (Stiff-leaf Goldenrod), and *Ulmus thomasii* (Rock Elm). (USAG Fort Drum, 2024a).

Invasive Noxious and Invasive Plant Management Plan describes the distribution of invasive species on Fort Drum, management options, and treatment locations

3.2.2 Wildlife (Fauna)

A multitude of diverse and relatively undeveloped habitat types provide habitat for a variety of wildlife animals within this region of New York. Various surveys have confirmed the occurrence of 49 mammals, 252 birds, 42 fish, 15 reptiles, and 22

amphibian species on the installation. Invertebrates have not been adequately surveyed on Fort Drum to determine the number of species, although formal surveys for Odonates [dragonflies and damselflies], sand wasps and moths, and informal and opportunistic inventories for other insects have documented more than 1000 species. (USAG Fort Drum, 2024a).

The proposed construction sites are located within the Cantonment Area of the installation. The road networks and surrounding areas are developed and intensely used areas of the Installation. Common fauna species that can be found in Cantonment Area forests internal to developed areas include white-tailed deer, bats, squirrel, woodchuck, racoon, striped skunk, porcupine, red/grey fox, domestic/feral dogs and possibly coyote, domestic/feral cat, birds, reptiles and amphibians. The Installation manages time of year restrictions for disturbing/cutting trees and vegetation to avoid impacts to wildlife.

3.2.3 Threatened and Endangered Species

The federal and state endangered Indiana bat (*Myotis sodalis*) and northern long-eared bat (*Myotis septentrionalis*) and the tricolored bat (*Perimyotis subflavus* - proposed endangered) and their habitat are present on Fort Drum. All land management, construction, and training actions are reviewed for threatened and endangered species conservation and protection. There is no Critical Habitat designated on Fort Drum or anywhere else in New York State for the Indiana bat, however a Indiana bat summer maternity colony is known to exist in the Cantonment Area. (Dobony, 2024). Conservation efforts for bat species has been happening since 2009

In 2011 an approximate 2,200 acre Bat Conservation Area (BCA) was established to protect known bat roosting and foraging areas from permanent development within the Cantonment Area and parts of two training areas east of Route 26. The BCA encompasses a large area of habitat, where management can maintain minimal land clearing controls inside the BCA.

As part of Endangered Species Act Section 7 consultation with the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service (USFWS), Fort Drum completed a three-year installation-wide Biological Assessment (BA) to consider all activities that may impact the known bat habitats, including construction. There are approximately 125 new projects anticipated for construction on up to 400 acres in the Cantonment from January 2024 to December 2026. All appropriate conservation measures will be followed to minimize potential impacts. These projects are described in the current BA. Between 2009 and 2023, Fort Drum anticipated constructing on approximately 4390 acres of land in and around the Cantonment Area and the Wheeler Sack Army Airfield. During these 14 years, approximately only 738 acres were actually cleared for construction, as of July 2023. This included the loss of approximately 456 acres of natural vegetation. The remaining approximately 281 acres were on already disturbed and/or developed land. (USAG Fort Drum, 2023).

This project is accepted by the terms of the USFWS Letter of Concurrence received for actions proposed to occur from 2024-2026. The approximate eight to ten acre site

identified for the CDC facility represents a small percentage of the expected development at the installation. There are numerous conservation measures, limitations and conditions, and reasonable and prudent measures in place and outlined in the BA to ensure the bat population and habitat on Fort Drum is not jeopardized.

3.2.4 Environmental Consequences: Biological Resources

The preferred CDC project site could impact eight to ten acres of forested area within the Cantonment Area of Fort Drum. Clearing the vegetation from this site would cause mammals and birds that frequent this area to relocate to the surrounding forest. The project site is located outside of the BCA in an area where land clearing for construction is permitted within certain restrictions, such as felling trees for land clearing being permitted from 15 October to 15 April to avoid taking a roosting bat or a nesting bird (an Installation best management practice). This site is a forested area that is approximately 217.6 meters (714 feet) from the BCA and could be used as bat habitat. The Installation has management practices in place to avoid impacts to animals and birds.

Alternate sites 2, 3, and 4 initially appeared suitable for construction until identification of unavoidable impacts and siting difficulties were identified. This included potential unavoidable impacts to the BCA, cultural resources, and wetlands that cannot be mitigated without significant increase to project resource needs, costs, and duration to complete the project.

3.3 Cultural Resources

Fort Drum Cultural Resources reviews and surveys prior to all proposed ground disturbing actions on the installation. All excavations within the Cantonment Area require an excavation permit that must be reviewed and initialed by several Installation offices including the Cultural Resources Management. If no deposits are identified during the evaluation but there remains a high probability that such deposits may exist, the Cultural Resources staff reserves the right to monitor any excavation. All contracts at Fort Drum include 'stop work, avoid, and report' stipulations to follow in event of an accidental discovery during the course of a contract activity and that the Cultural Resources Program Manager will be notified immediately. Because of the potential of any archeological deposit to contain Native American human remains or cultural materials, failure to report discovery of archeological deposits may result in violation of the Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act of 1990 (NAGPRA), the Archeological Resources Protection Act of 1979 (ARPA), and other related federal and state laws resulting in fines and penalties against the Garrison Commander of Fort Drum, New York. (USAG Fort Drum, 2020).

3.3.1 Environmental Consequences: Cultural Resources

Preliminary analysis performed by Fort Drum Cultural Resources has determined that a portion of the Site 1 project area will have impacts to cultural resources and that they can be mitigated. Development of a proposal for mitigation measures is underway for

Installation approval to proceed with coordination and formal consultation with Tribal Nation Partners and the State Historic Preservation Office.

Preliminary analysis performed by Fort Drum Cultural Resources Section (CRS) has determined that all potential locations for the CDC placement have been surveyed for cultural resources and cultural resources are present.

A portion of the Site 1 project area will have unavoidable impacts to cultural resources. CRS is working with Fort Drum Engineering Plans & Services Division Engineers to ensure project is designed to protect the resources. CRS will coordinate directly with Indian Nation Partners and the NYS State Historic Preservation Office for meaningful participation and input on the minimization of potential impacts and document the consultations.

Alternate sites 2, 3, and 4 initially appeared suitable for construction until identification of unavoidable impacts and siting difficulties were identified. This includes potential unavoidable impacts to the BCA, cultural resources, and wetlands that cannot be mitigated without significant increase to project resource needs, costs, and duration to complete the project.

3.4 Land Use

Construction of the CDC would occur on an existing active Army training installation. At this time, there are no plans to change the current use of the property contained within Fort Drum. The parcel preferred for the proposed action, Site 1, is classified as a closed canopy deciduous forest. This is a forest where the dominant species of trees and other woody vegetation that make up the forest are species that shed their leaves during the cold months of the year and re-grows new leaves the next spring in time for the growing season.

Construction of the CDC could clear eight to ten acres of the approximately 997 to 1000 acres of this forest type from the Cantonment Area (Ganter, 2024). Clearing vegetation will occur within the timeframe established for felling trees (an installation best management practice) ensuring the clearing is carried out when there is a low risk of active roosting and nesting occurring in the area.

3.4.1 Environmental Consequences: Land Use

Neither the proposed action nor the alternatives is anticipated to have any significant adverse effects to land use on Fort Drum or the surrounding area of the Installation.

3.5 Soils

Soils of Fort Drum are generally developed from deltaic/lacustrine or glacial deposits. These soil types vary from sandy gravels to loams to clays to mucks. Soils in the region are generally shallow and poorly drained; soil permeability is slow to moderate.

Of the 193 different soil types mapped on Fort Drum the largest soil series by acreage across the installation is Plainfield Sand, 0-8% slopes. The soil series with the largest

number of isolated occurrences is Deerfield Loamy Fine Sand, 0-8% slopes. There are 12 soil types in and around the land considered for this assessment (Figure 2.1 and Appendix C).

The soils at Site 1 include Deerfield loamy fine sand (DeB), 0 to 8 percent slopes; Granby mucky loamy fine sand (Gr), 0 to 3 percent slopes; and Wareham loamy fine sand (Wa), 0 to less than 3 percent slopes. Soils at this location are predominantly undisturbed.

The soils at the alternate locations Site 2 and Site 4 are the same as Site 1, though the terrain has a greater number of drainages that go through the land.

The soils at Site 3 include Wareham loamy fine sand (Wa), 0 to less than 3 percent slopes; Elmridge fine sandy loam (EiB), 3 to 8 percent slopes; Nellis loam (NiC), 8 to 15 percent slopes; Nellis loam (NiD), 15 to 25 percent slopes; and Shaker fine sandy loam (Sh), 0 to 3 percent slopes.

See Appendix C for detailed soils descriptions.

3.5.1 Environmental Consequences: Soils

While there is expected minor short-term impacts to soils during subsurface site investigations neither the preferred action nor its alternatives would have potential for long-term adverse effects to soils.

Stormwater controls will be integral to project design and construction. A Stormwater Pollution Prevention Plan (SWPPP) is required to start construction. SWPPP are reviewed and approved by the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation (NYSDEC), and activities are monitored during and after construction to ensure the requirements of the SWPPP and best management practices for erosion and soil controls are followed.

3.6 Socioeconomics, Environmental Justice, Protection Of Children

Socioeconomics concerns the population and economic activity within the three counties in and around Fort Drum: Jefferson, Lewis, and St. Lawrence. This section addresses the potential impacts a proposed project would have on the social and economic conditions of the three county area, positively or negatively. Environmental Justice requires identification of the potential for disproportionate impacts on minority and low-income populations, and Protection of Children requires identification of environmental health risks and safety risks that may disproportionately affect children.

3.6.1 Environmental Consequences: Socioeconomics, Environmental Justice, and Protection of Children

It is expected there will be beneficial impacts from construction, operation, and maintenance of facilities. These activities increase jobs, both short-term from construction, and long-term for operations and maintenance, and can have positive

impacts to area populations and suppliers of goods and services. Neither the preferred action or the alternatives are likely to have significant adverse effects on Fort Drum or the surrounding area of the Installation

The sites addressed are within the installation boundary for the purpose to provide child developmental care services to children 6 weeks to 6 years, it is not expected these actions would have significant adverse effects or disproportionate impacts on minority and low-income populations or have environmental health risks and safety risks that disproportionately affect children.

3.7 Wetlands

Fort Drum is in the St. Lawrence River watershed, within the Indian Creek watershed. Surface water from Fort Drum primarily discharges into the Indian River, which in turn eventually flows into the Oswegatchie River and then on to the St. Lawrence River. A small portion of land at the southern end of Fort Drum drains into the Black River basin. Waters in the Black River flow westward towards Lake Ontario. (USARMY, 2022).

A considerable portion of Fort Drum is relatively flat and poorly drained resulting in approximately 20 percent or 20,000+ acres of the installation characterized as “wet” with wetlands, streams, and other waterbodies. Many of these areas are regulated “Waters of the United States” as defined in the Clean Water Act (CWA) and subject to federal, state, or local wetland regulations. CWA regulations are complicated and the process involves working with the US Army Corps of Engineers (USACE) New York District and the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation (NYSDEC). Avoidance of wetlands is usually the preferred course of action, but processes are in place if any of these areas are altered or filled. Although few “wet” areas are technically “off limits,” they provide logistical and functional challenges for training, construction, and almost any other action on Fort Drum. Natural features such as sinkholes, landslide-prone areas, and quicksand do not occur on Fort Drum. (USAG Fort Drum, 2024a).

3.7.1 Environmental Consequences: Wetlands

There are wetlands, located in all areas proposed for the CDC. Site 1 has regulated wetlands that can likely be avoided and or mitigated without significant increase to project resource needs, costs, and duration to complete construction. Alternative sites 2, 3, and 4 initially appeared suitable for construction until identification of unavoidable impacts and siting difficulties were identified. This included potential unavoidable impacts to the BCA, cultural resources, and wetlands that cannot be mitigated without significant increase to project resource needs, costs, and duration to complete the project.

Fort Drum Wetlands Managers are involved in planning level surveys and project design review, and through close coordination with Fort Drum Engineering Plans & Services Division Engineers will ensure project is smart designed to avoid impacts to water resources whenever possible then avoided, minimized or mitigated through the design process. They work with U.S. Army Corps of Engineers and NYSDEC for required permits and site monitoring. CWA permits will likely be required to address and

manage potential movement of water from the site projected to occur from construction of the CDC, parking lot, and roadways.

Stormwater controls will be integral to project design and construction. A Stormwater Pollution Prevention Plan (SWPPP) is required to start construction. SWPPP are reviewed and approved by the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation (NYSDEC), and activities are monitored during and after construction to ensure the requirements of the SWPPP and best management practices for erosion and soil controls are followed.

4.0 CUMULATIVE IMPACT

A cumulative effect is defined as an effect on the environment that results from the incremental effect of the action when added to other past, present and reasonably foreseeable future actions regardless of what agency or person undertakes these actions. Cumulative effects can result from individually minor but collectively significant actions taking place locally or regionally over a period of time.

Construction of the CDC is proposed to occur on an existing active Army installation. At this time, there are no plans to change the current use of the property contained within Fort Drum. The construction and operation of a CDC would not cause an appreciable increase or decrease in the number of troops using the installation. The Preferred Alternative is not anticipated to have significant immediate or long-term effects on Fort Drum or the surrounding area of Installation.

Cumulatively this action could remove up to ten acres of forest from the Cantonment Area. Clearing and Grubbing of the land will occur at a time when there is a low chance of active nesting occurring in the area.

5.0 FINDINGS AND CONCLUSIONS.

Construction and operation of a standard design large CDC at Fort Drum is not expected to result in significant environmental or socioeconomic impacts. Army, Federal and State laws and regulations, management plans, environmental requirements, and best management practices implemented by Fort Drum, and consultation with Federal and State agencies, and Indian Nation Partners, will ensure placement, design, construction, and operations activities follow all applicable federal and state laws, regulations, policies, Army guidelines, and Agreements.

All activities that occur on Fort Drum are reviewed by the Installation's Environmental Division including Natural Resources Management, Compliance Management and the Cultural Resources Management programs, for guidance and when necessary, to provide recommendations to ensure activities avoid, minimize, and/or mitigate impacts.

As a result of the analyses performed by this EA, it is determined that the known and potential impacts of the Preferred Action and Alternatives, on the physical and

socioeconomic environment, would not be significant. All projects are subject to funding, mission priorities, and other factors, and although 250 projects are proposed for the next three years, it is not known how many will actually be constructed.

The Preferred Alternative has the least number of challenges. Based on the analysis and findings in this EA it is recommended that the Preferred Alternative be advanced to approval and a Finding of No significant Impact (FONSI) be prepared to document the decision.

6.0 List of Preparers.

Cait Schadock, NEPA Program Manager, Fort Drum, Environmental Division; BA, 1983, Anthropology/Biology, State University of New York, Potsdam, New York; Years of Experience: 35

Jason Wagner, Chief Natural Resources Branch , Fort Drum, Environmental Division;

7.0 Agencies and Persons Consulted.

Erin Keegan	Fort Drum Directorate of Public Works (DPW) Engineering Plans & Services Division (EP&S), General Engineer
Tom Ross	Fort Drum DPW EP&S Division, General Engineer
Jason Wagner	Fort Drum, DPW Environmental Division, Natural Resources Branch Chief
Travis Ganter	Fort Drum DPW Environmental Division, Natural Resources Branch, Installation Forester
Chris Dobony	Fort Drum DPW Environmental Division, Natural Resources Branch, Wildlife Biologist (ESA)
Jason Murray	Fort Drum DPW Environmental Division, Natural Resources Branch, Wetlands Program Biologist
Christopher Whitman	Fort Drum DPW Environmental Division, Compliance Branch, Air Quality Program
Jaime Marhevsky	Fort Drum DPW Environmental Division, Geospatial Data Manager/Analyst
Laurie W. Rush, PhD	Fort Drum DPW Environmental Division, Cultural Resources Manager

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APPENDIX A

CORRESPONDENCE

BA, Letter to U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service

Concurrence Letter from U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service on the Fort Drum Biological Assessment.

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REPLY TO
ATTENTION OF

DEPARTMENT OF THE ARMY
US ARMY INSTALLATION MANAGEMENT COMMAND
HEADQUARTERS, UNITED STATES ARMY GARRISON, FORT DRUM
10000 10TH MOUNTAIN DIVISION DRIVE
FORT DRUM, NEW YORK 13602-5000

September 12, 2023

Environmental Division
Public Works

Mr. Ian Drew
United States Fish & Wildlife Service
New York State Field Office
3817 Luker Rd
Cortland, New York 13045

Dear Mr. Drew:

Enclosed is Fort Drum's 2024-2026 Biological Assessment on the proposed activities on Fort Drum Military Installation for the Indiana bat, northern long-eared bat, and tricolored bat.

After reviewing all of the proposed activities, Fort Drum has determined that by following the project descriptions and the conservation measures proposed, there should be no activities within the next three years that are likely to adversely affect Indiana or northern long-eared bats on Fort Drum. Fort Drum has also determined that only in-season clearing for small scale range construction projects and the use of smoke/obscurants is likely to adversely affect tricolored bats on Fort Drum. All other proposed activities on Fort Drum will not affect, or may affect, but should not adversely affect tricolored bats.

Please note that some supporting documentation for this Biological Assessment (e.g., Appendices) can be found at the provided websites or has been previously provided to your office. Some of the Appendices are preliminary reports and should only be used for internal US Fish and Wildlife Service use, unless specifically discussed with Fort Drum.

If you have questions, please contact Chris Dobony, Fort Drum Fish & Wildlife Biologist, at 315-778-6348 or Christopher.A.Dobony.civ@army.mil.

Sincerely,

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Date: 2023.09.11
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James M. Miller
Chief, Environmental Division
Public Works

Enclosures

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United States Department of the Interior

FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE
3817 Luker Road
Cortland, New York 13045



January 30, 2024

James Miller
Chief, Environmental Division, Public Works
Department of the Army
U.S. Army Installation Management Command
Headquarters, United States Army Garrison, Fort Drum
10000 10th Mountain Division Dr.,
Fort Drum, NY 13602-5000
james.m.miller352.civ@army.mil

Dear James Miller:

This letter is in response to your September 12, 2023, letter and January 3, 2024, electronic mail, regarding proposed activities on the Fort Drum Military Installation (Fort Drum), Jefferson County, New York, over the next three years. The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (Service) received your Biological Assessment (BA) on September 12, 2023. We understand that the U.S. Army (Army) is the lead federal agency for all activities on Fort Drum, and that the Army will coordinate with all other agencies and project sponsors to ensure all conservation measures are followed. The BA evaluated the following categories of activities that are anticipated to occur within the action area between 2024-2026: construction, military training, forest management, mechanical vegetation management, land conversion, use of pesticides, wildlife management/vertebrate pest control, outdoor recreation, and conservation activities that include activities within the Bat Conservation Area, monitoring and research, outreach efforts, and the Army Compatible Use Buffer program.

Pursuant to Section 7(a)(2) of the Endangered Species Act (ESA) (87 Stat. 884, as amended; 16 U.S.C. 1531 *et seq.*), the Army determined that all proposed activities addressed in the BA "may affect, but are not likely to adversely affect," the federally listed Indiana bat (*Myotis sodalis*; Endangered; IBAT) and the northern long-eared bat (*Myotis septentrionalis*; Endangered; NLEB). Given the project description, the extensive monitoring information for bats present at Fort Drum, our joint experience with similar work conducted over the past 15 years, and the Army's implementation of conservation measures listed in the BA (Appendices X and Y, pp. 71–85), the Service concurs with this determination for the IBAT and NLEB.

Fort Drum also requested to conference with the Service on the tricolored bat (*Perimyotis subflavus*; Proposed Endangered; TCB). While there is no requirement to consult with the

Service regarding species proposed for listing, Fort Drum proactively assessed the potential impacts of all their activities on TCBs and proposes to include the conservation measures outlined in the BA for the IBAT and NLEB, to also protect TCBs. Fort Drum determined that all proposed activities included in the BA “may affect, but are not likely to adversely affect” the TCB, with the exception of small-scale construction projects and the use of smoke and obscurants. Fort Drum made a “may affect, likely to adversely affect” determination for these two activities given the uncertainties of potential adverse impacts to the TCB that may occupy suitable habitat where these activities may occur. However, over a video conference on January 3, 2024, Fort Drum and the Service further discussed potential adverse impacts and because only one TCB has been documented in a nearby hibernaculum, summer acoustic surveys on Fort Drum have documented very low numbers of TCBs, and the implementation of conservation measures, no adverse impacts are anticipated. Fort Drum subsequently made a “may affect, not likely to adversely affect” determination for the two activities in an electronic mail dated January 3, 2024. The Service concurs with this determination for the TCB. If the TCB is federally listed, then Fort Drum will need to confirm the Service’s concurrence to receive future ESA Section 7(a)(2) concurrence when the final listing rule becomes effective. The Service will provide technical assistance if and when confirmation on this concurrence is needed.

We understand that the Army will continue to submit an annual monitoring report summarizing activities conducted on Fort Drum and the implementation of all conservation measures for the IBAT, NLEB, and TCB. No further coordination or consultation under the ESA is required at this time. Should the Army (or any other federal agency or project sponsor on Fort Drum) propose any projects not addressed in the BA, or any new information on listed or proposed species on Fort Drum become available, further consultation between the Army and the Service may be required.

Thank you for your continued efforts to conserve not only the federally listed and proposed bat species, but all bat species that may be using various habitats on Fort Drum. Should you have any questions, please contact Steve Kendrot by email at stephen_kendrot@fws.gov or at 607-753-9334. Future correspondence with us on this project should reference project file 2024-0030032.

Sincerely,

IAN DREW

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Ian Drew

Field Supervisor

*Additional information referred to above may be found on our website at:

<https://www.fws.gov/office/new-york-ecological-services-field/new-york-project-reviews>

cc: NYSDEC, Watertown, NY (andrew.macduff@dec.ny.gov)
NYSDEC, Albany, NY (angelena.ross@dec.ny.gov; ashley.meyer@dec.ny.gov)
Army, Fort Drum (jason.e.wagner.civ@army.mil; christopher.a.dobony.civ@army.mil)
USACE, Watervliet, NY (amy.l.gitchell@usace.army.mil)

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APPENDIX B

DRAFT FINDING OF NO SIGNIFICANT IMPACT

FINDING OF NO SIGNIFICANT IMPACT

Construction and Operation of a Child Development Center (CDC) Facility at Fort Drum, New York

The Environmental Assessment (EA) documents the results of a study of the potential impacts to the natural and human environment from the construction and operation of a Child Development Center (CDC) Facility at Fort Drum, New York.

This study was conducted pursuant to the requirements of the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) of 1969 [42 United States Code, 4321 et seq.], the Council on Environmental Quality (CEQ) Regulations [40 Code of Federal Regulations (CFR) 1500-1508], and 32 CFR Part 651 (a.k.a. Army Regulation (AR) 200-2), Environmental Analysis of Army Actions, Final Rule, 29 March 2002. The purpose of this study was to determine the extent of potential environmental impacts from the proposed action and to decide whether or not those impacts are significant, thereby warranting a more detailed study of possible impacts, mitigation, and alternative courses of action.

The analysis process involved the review of installation natural resources-related data collected by Fort Drum, by other governmental agencies, and private organizations. The process involved interviews with Fort Drum personnel involved with natural resources management, facilities master planning, cultural resource management, and operations & maintenance.

The analysis of impacts (or consequences) of the proposed action was based on information about the affected environment on and around the Fort Drum Army Installation as well as on the multiple years of experience of the people involved in the preparation and review of this EA. Following this assessment effort, it is concluded that implementation of the proposed action would not have a significant adverse impact on the natural or human environment; as long as Fort Drum and New York State best management practices are implemented properly.

Fort Drum proposes to construct and operate a standard design large CDC facility with outdoor play areas, safety surfacing, fencing, security/safety/information systems; and site improvements such as walkways, roadways, parking lots, landscaping, etc., situated on eight to ten acres of suitable land that is unencumbered and located in close proximity to an access control point for ease of drop-off/pick-up, in close proximity to existing CDC to allow timely and safe relocation of children in event of an emergency, be located near the housing communities and living areas, preferably in or near South Post housing.

This EA considered three alternatives for this study. Alternative 1 - The Preferred Action is to construct and operate the CDC behind the existing Po Valley Rd CDC. Alternative 2 - Sites Considered Action groups a number of sites that were considered but did not meet the full siting requirements. Alternative 3 - The No Action Alternative is to continue to use the facilities that are presently open on the installation, operating at their maximum capacity of 595 children, while failing to meet the mission requirement to support 1,014 children. Each alternative was considered for meeting the purpose and need, cost and impact to the human and natural environment. No other alternatives were analyzed for this EA.

Constructing the CDC will ease the current child care deficit and improve access for Soldiers and their families to high quality developmental child care. As a result of initial scoping for this assessment, it has been determined that the action will have no effect on certain resource areas that frequently receive attention in NEPA analyses. Resource areas that were considered but excluded from further detailed analysis in this EA include: airspace, climate, geology (except soils), hazardous materials / hazardous wastes, infrastructure (potable water supply, electricity, wastewater treatment, HVAC (heating, ventilation, and air conditioning), noise, telecommunications, traffic and transportation, solid waste (disposal, roadways), socioeconomic conditions, environmental justice (effects on low-income and minority populations), protection of children from environmental health and safety risks, and water resources. The proposed action will have no measurable changes in local or regional employment or other economic indicators.

This EA addresses potential impacts to resources, such as air quality, biological resources (vegetation, wildlife, threatened and endangered species), cultural resources, land use, soils, and wetlands. The EA was prepared utilizing a systematic, interdisciplinary approach integrating the natural and social sciences with planning and decision-making.

After careful review of the potential impacts of the alternatives, it is concluded that Alternative 1 would not have a significant adverse impact on the quality of the human or natural environment as long as measures summarized in the EA are implemented properly. The proposed action has minimal potential for irreversible or irretrievable commitment of natural resources by either actions and or cumulative effects. Because there would be no significant environmental impacts resulting from implementation of the proposed action, an Environmental Impact Statement is not required and will not be prepared. This analysis fulfills the requirements of the NEPA and associated Council On Environmental Quality regulations, as well as requirements of 32 CFR Part 651 (AR 200-2), Environmental Analysis of Army Actions.

A public notice was published in the December 18, 28, 2024 and January 8, 2025 editions of the Watertown Daily Times newspaper to announce the availability of this EA for a 30-day public comment period. Copies of the EA and the Draft Finding of No Significant Impact were made available for review online at <https://home.army.mil/drum/about/fort-drum-environmental-assessments>. Comments were received through January 17, 2025.

Matthew R. Myer
Colonel, IN
Garrison Commander

Date

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APPENDIX C

GLOSSARY

GLOSSARY:

Land Cover Descriptions:

Closed Canopy Forest - is a dense forest where tree canopies cover almost the entire land surface.

Conifers are known for having needle-like leaves or scales and bearing cones. Often referred to as evergreens, most (though not all) conifers keep their foliage year-round.

Deciduous plants include shrubs, trees, and herbaceous perennials that lose all of their leaves for a period of time, usually during the winter in temperate and polar climates. Deciduous trees are often flowering plants, also known as broadleaved trees.

Closed Canopy Conifer Forest - is a multi-story forest with a dense understory and tree crowns that spread over at least 20% of the ground, often touching one another, and shading out light on the forest floor.

Closed Canopy Mixed Forest - A closed canopy mixed forest is a forest with a dense canopy of trees that cover almost the entire land surface, where both deciduous and coniferous trees are present in varying amounts.

Deciduous shrublands - are areas where shrubs that shed their leaves seasonally are the dominant vegetation.

Soil Type Descriptions:

BgB: Benson-Galoo complex, very rocky, 0 to 8 percent slopes. This map unit consists of nearly level to gently sloping, shallow and very shallow, somewhat excessively drained and excessively drained soils. The soils are mainly in broad, undulating areas interspersed with rock outcrops on ridges. Rock outcrops make up as much as 10 percent of the areas. Areas of these soils range from 10 to 80 acres or more. Slope is 0 to 8 percent, but is dominantly less than 5 percent.

DeB: Deerfield loamy fine sand, 0 to 8 percent slopes. This is a nearly level to gently sloping, very deep, moderately well drained soil mainly in undulating areas on terraces and lowland plains. Areas range from 10 to 35 acres.

EIA: Elmridge fine sandy loam, 0 to 3 percent slopes. This is a nearly level, very deep, moderately well drained soil mainly in smooth, oval or round areas on lowland plains or terraces. Areas range from 15 to 45 acres.

EIB: Elmridge fine sandy loam, 3 to 8 percent slopes. This is a gently sloping, very deep, moderately well drained soil mainly in smooth, irregular areas and on concave slopes on plains or terraces. Areas range from 10 to 50 acres.

GIB: Galway silt loam, 3 to 8 percent slopes. This is a gently sloping, moderately deep, well drained and moderately well drained soil mainly in convex, sloping areas on uplands. Bedrock is at a depth of 20 to 40 inches. Areas range from 10 to 80 acres.

Gr: Granby mucky loamy fine sand. This is a nearly level, very deep, poorly drained and very poorly drained soil mainly in smooth, nearly level to depressional areas on plains, and near drainageways. Areas range from 15 to more than 40 acres. Slope ranges from 0 to 3 percent, but is dominantly less than 2 percent.

NIC: Nellis loam, 8 to 15 percent slopes. This is a sloping, very deep, well-drained soil mainly in long, narrow, convex areas on flanks of hilltops and ridges on uplands. Areas range from 8 to 45 acres.

NID: Nellis loam, 15 to 25 percent slopes. This is a moderately steep, very deep, well-drained soil mainly in long, narrow areas on the sides of ridges and hills on uplands. Areas range from 8 to 30 acres.

Pa: Palms muck. This is a nearly level, very deep, very poorly drained soil mainly in smooth, rounded, or linear depressions and bogs. Areas range from 20 to 100 acres. Slope ranges from 0 to 3 percent, but is dominantly less than 2 percent.

PoB: RPlainfield sand, 0 to 8 percent slopes. This is a nearly level to gently sloping, very deep, excessively drained soil mainly in broad, undulating areas on plains and terraces. Areas range from 40 to 100 acres.

Sh: Shaker fine sandy loam. This is a nearly level, very deep, poorly drained and somewhat poorly drained soil mainly in smooth, gently undulating areas on lowland plains. Areas range from 5 to 60 acres in size. Slope ranges from 0 to 3 percent.

Wa: Wareham loamy fine sand. This is a nearly level, very deep, somewhat poorly drained and poorly drained soil mainly in low-lying areas on sandy plains. Areas range from 15 to 100 acres. Slope is less than 3 percent.

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