

DRAFT FINDING OF NO SIGNIFICANT IMPACT

Continuing Authorities Program Town of Boone Ecosystem Restoration - Habitat Restoration Project Watauga County, North Carolina

The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, Huntington District (Corps) has conducted an environmental analysis in accordance with the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) of 1969, as amended. The Draft Detailed Project Report and Integrated Environmental Assessment (DPR/EA) dated February 2026, for the Continuing Authorities Program (CAP) Section 206, Town of Boone Ecosystem Restoration - Habitat Restoration Project, addresses daylighting a section of Boone Creek in the Town of Boone, Watauga County, North Carolina. The need for the project is to provide ecosystem restoration benefits along Boone Creek on the Appalachian State University (ASU) campus, while minimizing environmental, economic, and social impacts.

The Draft DPR/EA, incorporated herein by reference, evaluated various alternatives that would provide cost-effective means of providing ecosystem restoration benefits in the study area. The Recommended Plan is Alternative B and includes:

- This restoration alternative daylights Reaches 1 and 2 to create a naturalized stream channel. Reach 1 consists of a low-flow, ten-foot-wide bottom stream channel with 3H:1V embankment slopes, a 15-ft. wide benched floodplain area extending along the right descending side of the stream channel (River Street side), and a series of varying-sized depressed wetland areas extending along the left descending embankments of the stream channel (Peacock Hall side). Reach 2 continues the ten-foot-wide bottom stream channel but shifts to 2.5H:1V embankment slopes extending along the right descending embankment (River Street side), and a vertical slope, achieved by means of a ten- to twelve-foot-tall retaining wall, extending along the left descending side of the stream channel (Duncan Hall side). Constructed cross vanes and rock toe protection will be used to build, control grade, and stabilize the new channel. Native riparian vegetation will be planted within the riparian corridor to optimize ecological conditions.

In addition to a “no action” plan, four (4) alternatives were evaluated. These alternatives combined Reach 1 and Reach 2 and included the following measures: no depressed wetlands areas or floodplain terracing in Reach 1, construction of two (2) retaining walls in Reach 2, and a three-sided bottomless arch culvert in Reach 2. Section 3.0 of the Draft DPR/EA discusses the proposed action and alternatives.

SUMMARY OF POTENTIAL EFFECTS:

For all alternatives, the potential effects were evaluated, as appropriate. A summary assessment of the potential effects of the recommended plan are listed in Table 1:

Table 1: Summary of Potential Effects of the Recommended Plan

| Resource | Insignificant effects | Insignificant effects as a result of mitigation | Resource unaffected by action |
|----------------------------|-------------------------------------|---|-------------------------------|
| Aesthetics | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Air quality | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Aquatic resources/wetlands | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Invasive species | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Fish and wildlife habitat | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |

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|--|-------------------------------------|--------------------------|-------------------------------------|
| Threatened/Endangered species/critical habitat | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Historic properties | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Other cultural resources | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Floodplains | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Hazardous, toxic & radioactive waste | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Hydrology | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Land use | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Navigation | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> |
| Noise levels | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Public infrastructure | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Socioeconomics | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Soils | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Tribal trust resources | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> |
| Water quality | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Prime and Unique Farmland | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Wild and Scenic Rivers | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> |

All practical means to avoid or minimize adverse environmental effects were analyzed and incorporated into the recommended plan. Best management practices (BMPs), as detailed in the DPR/EA, will be implemented, if appropriate, to minimize impacts.

No compensatory mitigation is required as part of the recommended plan.

Public, state, and agency review of the Draft DPR/EA and FONSI will be completed on [DATE PENDING]. All comments submitted during the public review period will be responded to in the Final DPR/EA and FONSI.

Pursuant to Section 7 of the Endangered Species Act of 1973, as amended, the Corps determined that the recommended plan may affect, but is not likely to adversely affect, the following Federally listed species or their designated critical habitat: gray bat, Indiana bat, tricolored bat, and Virginia big-eared bat. The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) concurred with the determination on 3 June 2025.

Pursuant to Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966, as amended, the Corps determined that the recommended plan would have no adverse effect on historic properties. Coordination with the State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO) and Tribal nations is ongoing.

The recommended plan would fall under the Nationwide Permit (NWP) 27 for Aquatic Habitat Restoration, Enhancement, and Establishment Activities. In addition, a 401 Water Quality Certification (WQC) would be required. Proposed in-water work would meet all conditions of the NWP 27 and 401 WQC. All conditions of the NWP 27 and 401 WQC will be implemented to minimize adverse impact to water quality. Coordination with the North Carolina Department of Environmental Quality (NCDEQ) is ongoing.

All applicable environmental laws have been considered and coordination with appropriate agencies and officials will be completed.

Technical, environmental, economic, and cost effectiveness criteria used in the formulation of alternative plans were those specified in the Water Resources Council's 1983 Economic and Environmental Principles and Guidelines for Water and Related Land Resources Implementation Studies. All applicable laws, executive orders, regulations, and local government plans were considered in

evaluation of alternatives. Based on these reports, the reviews by other Federal, State and local agencies, Tribes, input of the public, and the review by my staff, it is my determination that the recommended plan would not significantly affect the human environment; therefore, preparation of an Environmental Impact Statement is not required.

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