FINDING OF NO SIGNIFICANT IMPACT

1.0 INTRODUCTION

The United States Army has prepared an Environmental Assessment (EA) to identify and evaluate potential environmental effects from construction and operation of additional recreational facilities at Uchee Creek Campground, Fort Benning, Russell County, Alabama. In May 1995, the Army completed an EA and Finding of No Significant Impact (FNSI) for the Expansion and Upgrade of the Uchee Creek Campground and Marina at Fort Benning, Russell County, Alabama (USACE 1995). In it, the 1995 EA proposed construction of additional cabins, primitive camping and picnic areas, an equine facility and trail system, a covered picnic pavilion, covered boat slips at the marina, a riverboat dock, an interpretive archaeological display, and a sand beach along the creek proper. Since the 1995 EA was completed 11 years ago, and the population and mission of this dynamic Post has changed significantly, Fort Benning is preparing another EA to address expanded needs at the existing campground. This EA was prepared in accordance with the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA), the Council on Environmental Quality Regulations at 40 Code of Federal Regulations (CFR) Parts 1500-1508 and the Army NEPA Regulation at 32 CFR Part 651 (*Environmental Analysis of Army Actions*).

2.0 DESCRIPTION OF THE PROPOSED ACTION

Currently, there is a high demand for overnight accommodations at Fort Benning, including camping sites and associated facilities. This demand arises from the growing needs of the Installation, retired and visiting military and their families. The main focus of the Uchee Creek Campground project is to develop more recreational vehicle (RV) sites to accommodate the larger, ever more popular RVs, and chalets to help satisfy this demand. The proposed action would provide the facilities and campground areas to support recreational needs of Soldiers, civilians, and their families at Fort Benning and complement existing overnight options at Fort Benning. To ease the pressure for recreational facilities, the proposed action would construct 10 new chalets, 29 pull-through RV sites, a new playground, and renovate existing playgrounds, as funding allows.

3.0 DESCRIPTION OF THE ALTERNATIVES

Fort Benning developed two alternatives for the proposed action as part of the planning process:

Alternative A (Preferred Alternative): Under Alternative A, Fort Benning would:

- Construct ten chalets, two of which would be completed with additional luxury amenities and are referred to as "honeymoon" chalets;
- Construct 29 RV pull-through sites, completed in two phases;
- Construct one new playground and refurbish others; and

- Operate and maintain RV sites and chalets in a manner consistent with current operating and maintenance procedures at existing campground.

Alternative B

Under this alternative, the Uchee Creek Campground expansion would be identical to Alternative A with the exception of an added amenity: a catfish pond would be created from the conversion of an existing 1-acre pond that was used for dredge spoils disposal from Uchee Creek, when funding becomes available.

Alternative C (No Action)

In accordance with NEPA, the no-action alternative was also considered. For the no-action alternative, no additional recreational facilities would be constructed at Uchee Creek Recreational Area and no renovations would occur. The existing, insufficient recreational facilities at Uchee Creek would continue to fail to meet the needs of Army personnel, particularly at Fort Benning. This alternative has no potential impacts.

4.0 ANTICIPATED ENVIRONMENTAL EFFECTS

The analysis contained in this EA indicates that Alternative A would have temporary minor adverse effects on soils, water quality, and biological resources at Fort Benning because of construction. The EA demonstrated that with adherence management plans, applicable Federal and state laws and regulation, no significant adverse environmental impacts would result from the proposed action as implemented by either Alternative A or B. This determination is based on the following findings:

- Erosion control best management practices (e.g., silt fencing and soil covering) would minimize the potential adverse effects to soils and water quality that may result from ground disturbance. However, under Alternative B, soil samples from the pond would be required to be disposed of at an approved disposal site (depending on soil sample makeup) prior to any construction.
- No impaired streams are found at or near the proposed site, soil erosion would be kept to a minimum, and potential contamination during construction would be minimized by following existing Fort Benning plans, Federal and State permitting regulations, and existing management procedures. Nearby impaired Chattahoochee River would not be impacted due to distance, soil erosion control measures, and Uchee Creek (nearest outlet to the river) is impounded.
- The proposed action would not affect any Federally- or state-listed threatened or endangered species potentially occurring in the project area. One inactive Red-cockaded woodpecker cluster would be effected; however, this would not be adverse or significant since it is inactive.

- The proposed action under either of the alternatives would not adversely affect wetlands, vegetation, cultural resources, or air quality.
- No cumulative impacts would result from implementing the proposed action through Alternatives A or B.

In accordance with Army NEPA Regulations , the Army must indicate if any mitigation measures would be needed to implement the proposed action or any alternative selected as the preferred alternative under this environmental assessment. For purposes of this EA, it was determined that no mitigation measures, except for wetlands fencing and avoidance, would be needed to arrive at a finding of no significant impact for the preferred alternative. If Alternative B were chosen, appropriate soil sampling would be required to determine the proper means of disposal.

5.0 CONCLUSION

Based on review of the information contained in this EA, it has been determined that implementation of Alternative A is the best course of action. While Alternative B provides additional recreational facilities and amenities, this alternative would require extensive funding for the required soil sampling and construction, which is not available at this time. I have determined that the construction of chalets and RV sites at Uchee Creek Campground at Fort Benning is not a major Federal action within the meaning of Section 102(2)(c) of NEPA and the proposed expansion would not result in significant potential environmental impacts. Accordingly, the preparation of an Environmental Impact Statement is not required.

6.0 PUBLIC AVAILABILITY

a. The EA and draft Finding of No Significant Impact (FNSI) for the proposed action were available for a public review period of 30 days starting from the first day of publication in *The Columbus Ledger-Enquirer* (February 12 to March 14, 2007), in accordance with 40 CFR Part 1501.4 (e)(1) and Army Regulation 200-2 (as promulgated in 32 CFR 651.36). These documents are available at the W.C. Bradley Memorial Library, South Lumpkin Library, Fort Benning Main Post Library, and at the Installation website: http://www.benning.army.mil/EMd/_program_mgt/legal/index.htm. A notice of availability (NOA) of the EA and Draft FNSI was mailed to all agencies/individuals/ organizations on the distribution (mailing) list for the proposed action. The NOA will also be posted at the Uchee Creek Recreation Area.

b. Summary of Public Comments: No comments were received from the public or agencies regarding this proposed action and alternatives.

7.0 REQUESTS

Requests for additional information may be made by contacting Mr. John E. Brown, NEPA Program Manager, Fort Benning Directorate of Public Works, Environmental Management Division, Attention: IMSE-BEN-PWE-P, Meloy Hall, Building #6, Fort Benning, Georgia 31905-5122.

FINDING OF NO SIGNIFICANT IMPACT
REVIEWED AND APPROVED BY:

10 Apr. 07
Date

KEITH R. LOVEJOY
Colonel, IN
Garrison Commander