



# Disposition of Bureau of Mines Property, Twin Cities Research Center Main Campus Hennepin County, Minnesota

July 2006





# DRAFT ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT STATEMENT

## Disposition of Bureau of Mines Property Twin Cities Research Center Main Campus Hennepin County, Minnesota

Prepared For:  
National Park Service  
U.S. Department of the Interior  
In cooperation with U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service



Prepared By:  
engineering-environmental Management, Inc.



# Mississippi National River and Recreation Area

## Minnesota



**National Park Service  
U.S. Department of the Interior  
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Twin Cities Research Center Main Campus  
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**Mississippi National River and Recreation Area**

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**SUMMARY**

The Mississippi National River and Recreation Area (MNRRA) has been designated by Congress to lead the public planning process pursuant to the National Environmental Policy Act of 1969 (NEPA) to address the disposition of the federal property known as the Bureau of Mines, Twin Cities Research Center Main Campus (Center). Congress closed the Center in 1995. The Center is located on a bluff overlooking the Mississippi River and is within the boundaries of the MNRRA, a unit of the national park system. The proposed action is to dispose of the Center.

This draft environmental impact statement (EIS) will consider and identify alternatives and the impacts of such alternatives regarding the disposition of the Center. The analysis process will consider the guidelines of the MNRRA's Comprehensive Management Plan and the laws and rules that are applied to the geographic area of the Mississippi River Corridor Critical Area.

Maintenance, upkeep, and the day-to-day management of the Center is the responsibility of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. The Center consists of approximately 27 acres of land near the intersection of State Highways (SH) 62 and 55 in Hennepin County, Minnesota. The original intent of the U.S. Bureau of Mines (USBM) was to erect a new storage facility for cores drilled by private companies in their assessments of mineral deposits, primarily in the north-central part of the country. The storage facility was erected in 1949, and by 1959, construction efforts at the Center were complete. The Center eventually employed up to 200 people and included 11 buildings. The buildings, some of which are of a historic character, are in various stages of disrepair and are mostly vacant.

There are three historic districts and a national historic landmark that overlap in the area of the Center. These include the Fort Snelling National Historic District (designated in October 1966 and expanded in 1970) and Fort Snelling National Historic Landmark (designated in December 1960 and updated in 1978), Old Fort Snelling State Historic District (designated in 1971), and the U.S. Bureau of Mines Twin Cities Research Center Historic District (determined eligible for listing on the National Register of Historic Places by consensus determination with the Minnesota state historic preservation office in 1996). As part of the EIS planning process, the National Park Service is leading the consultation process under section

106 of the National Historic Preservation Act to determine what effects, if any, disposition of the Center may have on historic and cultural resources.

Notable site features at the Center include the historic Camp Coldwater Spring and the associated springhouse and reservoir located near the heart of the site. Camp Coldwater was the location of the historic camp of Lieutenant Colonel Henry Leavenworth and a contingent of 200 soldiers who settled in the area to survey and begin construction of historic Fort Snelling in 1820. The clear-running spring became a source for clean drinking water and was the reason for choosing that site. Today, the spring is held to be culturally important to some American Indians, spiritual, environmental, and other interested groups and individuals who regularly visit the site. Continued access to and preservation of the Camp Coldwater Spring area, and the spring itself, is one of the public issues associated with the Center property and its potential disposition.

### **Purpose and Need**

The proposed action is to dispose of the Center in accordance with authority provided by Congress in legislation addressing the closure of the Center. This authority is contained, in part, in the Department of the Interior and Related Agencies Appropriations Act of 1996, Public Law (Pub. L.) No. 104-134 (1996), which provides the Secretary of the Interior with authority to convey the Center directly to a university or government entity as the Secretary deems appropriate. The Secretary's overall authority for disposition of the Center under this draft EIS, however, should not be construed as being limited to Pub. L. No. 104-134, Department of the Interior and Related Agencies Appropriations Act of 1996.

The proposed action is needed because the Center permanently closed after Congress abolished the USBM by enacting the Balanced Budget Downpayment Act I, dated January 26, 1996 (Pub. L. No. 104-99, 110 Stat. 26) (Thomas 2005). This authority terminated funding for the USBM.

### **Public Review and Comment**

The National Park Service published a notice of intent to prepare an EIS in the *Federal Register* on January 28, 2005 (70 Fed. Reg. 4148). The notice of intent included a request that all interested persons, organizations, and agencies submit comments and suggestions on issues, concerns, and future uses of the Center that should be addressed in the draft EIS. The notice of intent also requested suggestions on alternatives for the draft EIS, and announced the project Web site at: <http://www.nps.gov/miss/bom>.

The National Park Service distributed news releases on January 31, 2005, and March 28, 2005, and a scoping newsletter was distributed on March 11, 2005. The outreach provided background on the planning process; the dates, locations, and times of the public scoping meetings; and included an opportunity to provide comment to the planning process. Legal notices announcing the start of the public scoping meetings were printed in the *St. Paul Pioneer Press* and the *Minneapolis Star Tribune* on March 21, 2005.

The National Park Service held four public scoping meetings on March 30 and 31, 2005, which were held in an open house format. Comments received during the initial public scoping

period were taken into consideration in development of alternatives, issues, and concerns to be addressed in the EIS. A complete public scoping report is included as appendix D of this draft EIS.

The National Park Service invites public comments and written proposals from university and government entities on this draft EIS. Comments will be accepted via U.S. Mail, fax, e-mail, or at the upcoming public meetings. Comments can be mailed to:

National Park Service  
Mississippi National River and Recreation Area  
111 Kellogg Blvd East, Suite 105  
St. Paul, Minnesota 55101

telephone: 651.290.4160  
fax: 651.290.3214  
or send via e-mail to: miss\_bomcomments@nps.gov

Additional information on the EIS planning process for disposition of the Center, including information about commenting and upcoming public meetings, can be found on the Internet at: <http://www.nps.gov/miss/bom>.

## **Alternatives**

The National Park Service developed alternatives for disposition of the Center by considering comments received during the public scoping period and meetings, the purpose and need for the proposed action, and considering the requirements of NEPA.

The no-action alternative, which means disposition of the Center to a university or nonfederal government entity would not occur, and the Center would continue in caretaker status under control of the federal government, is analyzed in the draft EIS as required by the Council on Environmental Quality (CEQ) NEPA regulations. The no-action alternative serves as a baseline against which the impacts of the other action alternatives are assessed. Additionally, the CEQ NEPA regulations state that agencies shall “identify the agency’s preferred alternative or alternatives, if one or more exists, in the draft statement and identify such alternative in the final statement unless another law prohibits the expression of such a preference” (40 C.F.R. § 1502.14[e]). The National Park Service has not chosen a preferred alternative in this draft EIS. Although the National Park Service was designated by Congress to lead the planning process for the disposition of the Center, the National Park Service has not developed a preference on which alternative should be selected, or whether the Center property should leave the federal government. The National Park Service intends to review the information developed and comments and proposals submitted in response to the draft EIS in identifying a preferred alternative for the final EIS (NPS 2005).

In addition to the no-action alternative, this draft EIS analyzes environmental impacts from three action alternatives. These include: (1) transfer of the Center to a university or nonfederal government entity without conditions, (2) transfer of the Center to a university or nonfederal government entity with conditions, and (3) modification of the Center property prior to transfer or retention (either with or without conditions on the transfer).

The three action alternatives are analyzed in this draft EIS by applying three land-use scenarios to each. The land-use scenarios demonstrate a range of potential land uses that could be implemented by a recipient. The three land-use scenarios that apply to each of the three action alternatives are: (1) open space / park, (2) interpretive / nature / history center, and (3) training center / office park. The three land-use scenarios were developed by considering comments received during the public scoping meetings and during the public scoping period. They reflect reasonable probable future uses by a recipient of the Center based on input received from scoping and public input.

The environmental impacts of the alternatives depend on how a future owner would use the Center, and on the activities associated with that use. However, neither the future owner nor the future use of the Center could be identified precisely until after the EIS process was completed. The environmental consequences section of this draft EIS (chapter 4) summarizes the potential environmental impacts from disposition of the Center under the four alternatives. Impacts under each alternative were assessed by applying the three land-use scenarios to each of the three action alternatives and analyzing the impacts on the environment. Potential impacts of the various alternatives range from major beneficial impacts to major negative impacts on various resource categories, or “impact topics.” A table summarizing the impacts analysis is located at the end of chapter 4 of the draft EIS.

In addition, a cumulative impact analysis was conducted, as required by CEQ NEPA regulations. Cumulative impacts were assessed by identifying past, present, or reasonably foreseeable projects in the area of the Center that, when combined with the potential impacts from disposition of the Center, could have a cumulative effect on the environment. The cumulative impact analysis is presented in chapter 4 of the draft EIS. A summary of potential cumulative impacts is presented in table form at the end of chapter 4 of the draft EIS.

# CONTENTS

Summary i  
Acronyms and Abbreviations xv

## CHAPTER 1: PURPOSE AND NEED 1

Introduction 3  
Background on the Center 4  
Authority for Disposition of the Center 8  
    Center Conveyance 8  
    Planning Process 9  
    Cooperating Agencies 9  
    Decision-Making Process 10  
Purpose and Need 11  
Previous Planning Efforts 12  
Relationship with Other Laws, Regulations, and Planning Documents 13  
    Mississippi River Corridor Critical Area (Critical Areas Act of 1973, Executive Order 79-19, Interim Development Regulations) 13  
    MNRRA Enabling Legislation and the MNRRA Comprehensive Management Plan 14  
    Minneapolis-St. Paul International Airport (Wold-Chamberlain Field) Zoning Ordinance (Airport Zoning Ordinance) 16  
        Airspace Obstruction Zone 17  
        Land-use Safety Zoning 17  
        Permitting Requirements 20  
        Airport Zoning and the Center 20  
    Camp Coldwater Spring Protection Legislation – Minnesota Senate File 2049 and Minnesota Historic Sites Act 22  
    National Historic Preservation Act 23  
        Section 106 (16 U.S.C. 470f) 23  
        Section 110 (16 U.S.C. 470h) 26  
    American Indian Religious Freedom Act of 1978 and Executive Order 13007 (Indian Sacred Sites) 27  
Public Involvement 30  
Issues and Impact Topics 32  
    Impact Topics Included in this Document 32  
    Impact Topics Dismissed from Further Analysis 32  
        Museum Collections 32  
        Air Quality 33  
        Geology 33  
        Threatened and Endangered Species, Species of Concern, Designated Critical Habitat 33

CONTENTS

Wild and Scenic Rivers 34  
Executive Order 11988 (Floodplain Management) 34  
Prime and Unique Farmlands 34  
Ecologically Critical Areas 35  
Wilderness Areas 35  
Environmental Justice 35  
Noise 36  
Lightscapes 37  
Indian Trust Resources 37  
Hazardous Materials and Waste Management 38

**CHAPTER 2: DESCRIPTION OF ALTERNATIVES 39**

Introduction 41  
Conceptual Land-use Scenarios 42  
    Open Space / Park 42  
    Interpretive / Nature / History Center 42  
    Training Center / Office Park 42  
Laws, Regulations, and Planning Documents Governing Use 44  
Alternatives 45  
Alternative A: No Action—Retention of the Center by the Federal Government 46  
Alternative B: Convey the Center Without Conditions to a University or Nonfederal Government Entity 47  
    Laws, Regulations, and Planning Documents Governing Use Under Alternative B 47  
        MNRRA Enabling Legislation and the MNRRA Comprehensive Management Plan 47  
        Mississippi River Corridor Critical Area 47  
        Minneapolis-St. Paul International Airport Zoning Ordinance 47  
        Camp Coldwater Spring Protection Legislation – Minnesota Senate File 2049 and  
        Minnesota Historic Sites Act 48  
        National Historic Preservation Act 49  
Alternative C: Convey the Center with Condition(s) to a University or Nonfederal Government Entity 50  
    Conditions 50  
        Conservation Easements 51  
        Covenants and Easements 51  
    Laws, Regulations, and Planning Documents Governing Use Under Alternative C 53  
        MNRRA Enabling Legislation and the MNRRA Comprehensive Management Plan 53  
        Mississippi River Corridor Critical Area Legislation 53  
        Minneapolis-St. Paul International Airport Zoning Ordinance 53  
        Camp Coldwater Spring Protection Legislation – Minnesota Senate File 2049 53  
        National Historic Preservation Act 54  
Alternative D: Modification of Land, Structures, or Other Improvements by the Federal Government Prior to  
Conveyance or Retention of the Center 55  
    Laws, Regulations, Planning Documents Governing Modification and Use Under Alternative D 55

**CHAPTER 3: AFFECTED ENVIRONMENT 57**

Center Facilities and Operations 59

- Location, Setting, and Operations 59
- Buildings and Other Structures 60
- Other Infrastructure 70
- Historic Overview 71
  - Prehistoric 71
  - Historic Contact 73
  - Historic 74
- Archeological Resources 80
- Historic Structures and Districts 80
- Ethnography 81
- Natural Resources 82
  - Soils 82
  - Vegetation 85
  - Rare Plant Species 93
  - Wildlife 93
  - Hydrology 94
  - Water Quality 97
  - Wetlands 99
- Socioeconomics 105
  - Area Demographics 105
- Health and Safety 107
  - Asbestos 108
  - Mold 108
  - Radon 109
  - Polychlorinated Biphenyls 109
  - Lead-based Paint 110
  - Other Hazards 110
- Land Use 111
  - Existing Easements, Licenses, Rights-of Way, and Leases 111
- Public Use and Experience 113
  - Public Use and Access 113
  - Public Experience and Values 114
  - Parks, Open Space, and Trails 115
- Transportation 117
- Visual Resources 118

**CHAPTER 4: ENVIRONMENTAL CONSEQUENCES 119**

Introduction 121

- Definitions 121

## CONTENTS

Direct and Indirect Effects	121
Context	121
Duration	121
Intensity	122
Type of Impact	122
Impacts to Cultural Resources and Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act	122
Chapter Format	123
Impact Intensity Thresholds	123
Archeological Resources	123
Historic Structures and Districts	124
Ethnographic Resources	125
Soils	126
Vegetation	127
Wildlife	128
Hydrology	128
Water Quality	129
Wetlands	130
Socioeconomics	131
Health and Safety	132
Land Use	132
Visual Resources	133
Public Use and Experience	134
Impact Analysis of Alternatives	135
Alternative A	135
Laws, Regulations, and Planning Documents Applicable Under this Alternative	135
Archeological Resources	135
Historic Structures and Districts	136
Ethnographic Resources	137
Soils	137
Vegetation	138
Wildlife	138
Hydrology	139
Water Quality	139
Wetlands	139
Socioeconomics	140
Health and Safety	140
Land Use	140
Public Use and Experience	141
Visual Resources	142
Alternative B	142
Laws, Regulations, and Planning Documents Governing Use Under Alternative B	142
Archeological Resources	144
Historic Structures and Districts	146

Ethnographic Resources	148
Soils	151
Vegetation	153
Wildlife	155
Hydrology	158
Water Quality	160
Wetlands	162
Socioeconomics	164
Health and Safety	166
Land Use	168
Public Use and Experience	169
Visual Resources	172
Alternative C	174
Laws, Regulations, and Planning Documents Governing Use Under Alternative C	174
Archeological Resources	176
Historic Structures and Districts	178
Ethnographic Resources	180
Soils	182
Vegetation	184
Wildlife	185
Hydrology	187
Water Quality	189
Wetlands	191
Socioeconomics	193
Health and Safety	194
Land Use	196
Public Use and Experience	196
Visual Resources	199
Alternative D	201
Laws, Regulations, and Planning Documents Governing Modification and Use Under Alternative D	201
Archeological Resources	201
Historic Structures and Districts	204
Ethnographic Resources	206
Soils	209
Vegetation	211
Wildlife	212
Hydrology	214
Water Quality	217
Wetlands	219
Socioeconomics	221
Health and Safety	222
Land Use	224
Public Use and Experience	224

CONTENTS

- Visual Resources 227
- Cumulative Impacts 230
  - Projects that Make Up the Cumulative Impact Scenario 230
    - Fort Snelling State Park, Removal of Medical Waste Dump, Establishment of Wetlands 230
    - Minnesota Valley National Wildlife Refuge, Installation of Water-Control Structure 231
    - Fort Snelling Upper Bluff Property and Historic Structures 231
    - Fort Snelling State Park, Trail Construction 232
    - Minneapolis Parks and Recreation Board, Rehabilitation within the Waban Portion of Minnehaha Park 233
  - Alternative A 233
    - Archeological Resources 233
    - Ethnographic Resources 234
    - Soils 235
    - Vegetation 235
    - Wildlife 236
    - Hydrology 236
    - Water Quality 237
    - Wetlands 237
    - Health and Safety 238
    - Public Use and Experience 238
    - Visual Resources 239
  - Alternative B 240
    - Archeological Resources 240
    - Historic Structures and Districts 241
    - Ethnographic Resources 242
    - Soils 243
    - Vegetation 244
    - Wildlife 246
    - Hydrology 247
    - Water Quality 248
    - Wetlands 249
    - Health and Safety 251
    - Public Use and Experience 252
    - Visual Resources 253
  - Alternative C 255
    - Archeological Resources 255
    - Historic Structures and Districts 256
    - Ethnographic Resources 257
    - Soils 258
    - Vegetation 259
    - Wildlife 260
    - Hydrology 262
    - Water Quality 263
    - Wetlands 264

Health and Safety	266
Public Use and Experience	266
Visual Resources	268
Alternative D	269
Archeological Resources	269
Historic Structures and Districts	271
Ethnographic Resources	272
Soils	273
Vegetation	274
Wildlife	275
Hydrology	276
Water Quality	278
Wetlands	278
Health and Safety	280
Public Use and Experience	280
Visual Resources	282
Sustainability and Long-Term Management	283
Alternative A	283
Alternative B	284
Alternative C	285
Alternative D	285
Irreversible or Irretrievable Commitments of Resources that Would Be Involved if the Alternative Were Implemented	286
Alternative A	286
Alternative B	287
Alternative C	287
Alternative D	287
Summary of Environmental Impacts By Alternative	289

## **CHAPTER 5: CONSULTATION AND COORDINATION 295**

Scoping Process and Public Involvement	297
Public Meetings	297
Additional Contacts	298
Federal Elected Officials	298
State and Local Agencies / Governments (including elected officials)	298
Other Organizations	299
University and College Organizations	299
Neighborhood Associations	299
Media Contacts and Publications	299
Endangered or Threatened Species Consultation	300
Cultural Resources Consultation	300
Ethnography	300

## CONTENTS

National Park Service Contacts with Federally Recognized Indian Tribes	301
Wetlands and Floodplains Consultation	302
List of Preparers and Contributors	302
List of Recipients	303

## REFERENCES 307

## FIGURES

Figure 1: General Location Map	5
Figure 2: Historic Photo of First Building Constructed at the Center	6
Figure 3: General Site Map of the Center (with building locations)	7
Figure 4: Maximum Building Elevations	18
Figure 5: Airport Safety Zones	19
Figure 6: Maximum Construction Height Without Permit Under Airport Zoning Ordinance	21
Figure 7: Fort Snelling National Historic District and National Historic Landmark Boundary, Old Fort Snelling State Historic District Boundary, and U.S. Bureau of Mines Twin Cities Research Center Historic District	25
Figure 8. Building 1	62
Figure 9. Close-up of Building 1 with Visible Blue Brick	62
Figure 10. Building 2	63
Figure 11. Building 3	64
Figure 12. Building 4	64
Figure 13. Building 5	66
Figure 14. Building 5 with Adjacent Fuel Tanks	66
Figure 15. Building 6	67
Figure 16. Building 7	67
Figure 17. Building 8	68
Figure 18. Building 9	68
Figure 19. Building 10	69
Figure 20. Building 11	69
Figure 21. Ore Bins	70
Figure 22. Soils of the Center Site and Vicinity	83
Figure 23. Representative Wetlands on the Center Site	88
Figure 24. Representative Aquatic Wetlands at the Center	90
Figure 25. Representative Emergent Wetlands at the Center	91
Figure 26. Representative Forested Wetlands at the Center	91
Figure 27. Elm Tree Stumps Adjacent to Coldwater Reservoir	93
Figure 28. Wetlands Delineation Map	103

**TABLES**

Table 1. Buildings of the Center Site 60  
 Table 2. Soils Limitations for Building Site Development—Soils Found on the Center Site<sup>1</sup> 84  
 Table 3. Generalized Geologic Section of the Minneapolis –St. Paul Area 96  
 Table 4. Wetlands of the Center Site 101  
 Table 5. Neighborhood Characteristics 1990–2000 105  
 Table 6. Median Household Income 1999 106  
 Table 7. Metropolitan Growth and Projections 1990–2020 106  
 Table 8. Top Activities in the Regional Park System, 2004 116  
 Table 9. Summary of Environmental Impacts 289

**APPENDIXES**

APPENDIX A: AUTHORITIES FOR TRANSFERRING THE CENTER 317  
 APPENDIX B: NATIONAL PARK SERVICE AND U.S. FISH AND WILDLIFE MEMORANDUM OF AGREEMENT (2004) 329  
 APPENDIX C: MNRRA ENABLING LEGISLATION 335  
 APPENDIX D: PUBLIC SCOPING REPORT 351  
 APPENDIX E: CONSULTATION AND COORDINATION LETTERS 367  
 APPENDIX F: U.S. FISH AND WILDLIFE ENDANGERED SPECIES CONSULTATION LETTER 421  
 APPENDIX G: DEMOLITION COSTS FOR THE CENTER, FINAL REPORT 425



## ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

ACHP	Advisory Council on Historic Preservation
BP	Before Present
Center	U.S. Bureau of Mines, Twin Cities Research Center, Main Campus
CEQ	Council on Environmental Quality
CERCLA	Comprehensive Environmental Response, Compensation, and Liability Act of 1980
C.F.R.	Code of Federal Regulations
CMP	Comprehensive Management Plan
Critical Area	Mississippi River Corridor Critical Area
EIS	Environmental Impact Statement
EPA	U.S. Environmental Protection Agency
FAA	Federal Aviation Administration
GIS	Geographic Information System
HABS	Historic American Buildings Survey
HAER	Historic Architecture Engineering Record
MAC	Metropolitan Airports Commission
MDH	Minnesota Department of Health
MIAC	Minnesota Indian Affairs Council
MnDOT	Minnesota Department of Transportation
MNRRRA	Mississippi National River and Recreation Area
MOA	Memorandum of Agreement
MPCA	Minnesota Pollution Control Agency
MSL	Mean Sea Level
NEPA	National Environmental Policy Act of 1969
NHPA	National Historic Preservation Act of 1966
NPS	National Park Service
NRHP	National Register of Historic Places
PCB	Polychlorinated Biphenyls
PPE	Personal Protective Equipment
PUBF	Palustrine Unconsolidated Bottom Semi-Permanently Flooded
Pub.L.	Public Law
S.F.	Senate File
SH	State Highway
SHPO	State Historic Preservation Office
TCP	Traditional Cultural Property
USACE	U.S. Army Corps of Engineers
USBM	U.S. Bureau of Mines
U.S.C.	United States Code
USDI	U.S. Department of the Interior
USFWS	U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service

