



Categorical Exclusion Form

Project: Proposed Approval of Planned Observatory Structure

PEPC Project Number: 74681

Description of Action (Project Description):

The National Park Service (NPS) proposes a determination of No Historic Properties Affected for and thus approval of a project planned, and to be funded by, the owner of a 91-acre farm in the Green Springs National Historic Landmark District, Louisa County, Virginia: a bolt-together, removable observatory structure, 10' in height and 10' in diameter, atop a concrete foundation-pad, to house a particular type of telescope. The structure would be colored tan to match the color of the house, which dates to 1996 and 2012. The NPS reviews the owner's plan (the review constituting the Federal undertaking) under the terms of a 1973, NPS-managed conservation easement for Sunny Banks (an older estate that once included the 91-acre farm). Stipulation 2 of the restrictions-section of the NPS-managed Sunny Banks easement states that structures may be erected "in a way that would, in the opinion of the Grantee [NPS] be in keeping with the historic character of the [c. 1885 Sunny Banks] manor house, its setting and the character of the Green Springs Historic District, and provided that the prior written approval of the Grantee to such action shall have been obtained." Stipulation 2 also states that the property owner may propose new structures "appropriately incidental to a single-family dwelling." Following the recommendations of the NPS subject-area experts, and with concurrence by the Virginia State Historic Preservation Officer, this review and consultation, are expedited per 36 CFR 800.3(g), to combine the steps of: Initiation of Consultation; Identification of Historic Properties; and Assessment of Adverse Effects.

For illustrations and supporting documentation, including delineation of the Area of Potential Effect, see "Illustrations and Site Plans" in the Internal Documents section of this webpage. For archeological aspects, see also "Section 106 Advisor's Archeological Assessment 2012" (prepared as part of a prior project-review at the same property in 2012), and "Proposed Conditions Regarding Unanticipated Discoveries," in the same section.

The project entails construction of a circular-plan, dome-topped, bolted-together fiberglass observatory measuring 10' in height and 10' in diameter, and resting on a concrete pad 12' square in area and 6" in thickness.

The structure would be colored tan to match the tan, earth-tone color of the house and garage.

The observatory would draw power from the house via two underground conduits laid together in a trench. The observatory structure would require excavation of: an area 13' square on the surface and 1' in depth under concrete-pad site, and with a deeper depth of 5', in an area 18" in diameter at the center of the pad (for the telescope's mount); and a trench, connecting the house to the observatory, 90' long, 1' deep, and 4" wide for the conduits leading from the house to the observatory, and skirting the parking area.

The structure-proposal is based on the dimensions of the telescope that it would house: a Celestron 14" Schmidt Cassegrain with a German equatorial-style mount, suitable for photography...to accommodate its dimensions, avoid a breakage-risk from moving, and to avoid the wind- and stray light intrusions that would be imposed by a fabric/portable shelter. The set-up for telescope of this type requires approximately one hour for proper polar- and star alignment, and involves moving several heavy and delicate components. Disassembly requires a half hour and involves risk of damaging heavy but delicate components. An observatory structure would allow the telescope to remain set-up and aligned yet protected from the

elements and risks associated with moving. Observing through it would become instantaneous when the opportunity arises. The telescope would remain aligned under the dome when not in use.

[Continue reading in "General Notes" section, below, for Identification of Historic Properties, and Assessment of Effects.]

Project Locations:

Location

County: Louisa

State: VA

Mitigation(s):

- No mitigations identified.

CE Citation: C.18 Construction of minor structures, including small improved parking lots, in previously disturbed or developed areas.

CE Justification:

Decision: I find that the action fits within the categorical exclusion above. Therefore, I am categorically excluding the described project from further NEPA analysis. No extraordinary circumstances apply.

Superintendent:



Date:

3 Oct 2017

Extraordinary Circumstances:

| If implemented, would the proposal... | Yes/No | Notes |
|---|--------|-------|
| A. Have significant impacts on public health or safety? | No | |
| B. Have significant impacts on such natural resources and unique geographic characteristics as historic or cultural resources; park, recreation, or refuge lands; wilderness areas; wild or scenic rivers; national natural landmarks; sole or principal drinking water aquifers; prime farmlands; wetlands (Executive Order 11990); floodplains (Executive Order 11988); national monuments; migratory birds; and other ecologically significant or critical areas? | No | |
| C. Have highly controversial environmental effects or involve unresolved conflicts concerning alternative uses of available resources (NEPA section 102(2)(E))? | No | |
| D. Have highly uncertain and potentially significant environmental effects or involve unique or unknown environmental risks? | No | |
| E. Establish a precedent for future action or represent a decision in principle about future actions with potentially significant environmental effects? | No | |
| F. Have a direct relationship to other actions with individually insignificant, but cumulatively significant, environmental effects? | No | |
| G. Have significant impacts on properties listed or eligible for listing on the National Register of Historic Places, as determined by either the bureau or office? | No | |
| H. Have significant impacts on species listed or proposed to be listed on the List of Endangered or Threatened Species, or have significant impacts on designated Critical Habitat for these species? | No | |
| I. Violate a federal, state, local or tribal law or requirement imposed for the protection of the environment? | No | |
| J. Have a disproportionately high and adverse effect on low income or minority populations (EO 12898)? | No | |
| K. Limit access to and ceremonial use of Indian sacred sites on federal lands by Indian religious practitioners or adversely affect the physical integrity of such sacred sites (EO 130007)? | No | |
| L. Contribute to the introduction, continued existence, or spread of noxious weeds or non-native invasive species known to occur in the area or actions that may promote the introduction, growth, or expansion of the range of such species (Federal Noxious Weed Control Act and Executive Order 13112)? | No | |