

# Environmental Assessment

Williamsburg School Park Conversion, Part of LWCF Project Grant No. 54-00247

January 12, 2016, revised 02/13/2018

Sponsor:

Greenbrier County Board of Education  
Mr. Jeff Bryant, Superintendent  
202 Chestnut Street  
Lewisburg, West Virginia 24901

Contact:

John McGarrity, Senior Planner  
West Virginia Development Office  
Charleston, West Virginia 25305  
(t) 304.558.2234  
(e) john.r.mcgarrity@wv.gov

For:

National Park Service  
Philadelphia Support Office  
Attention: Megan Lang  
U. S. Customs House  
200 Chestnut Street  
Philadelphia, Pennsylvania 19106-2878

# Table of Contents

---

Summary.....1

Introduction.....3

Purpose, Need and Background.....5

Description of Alternatives.....7

Affected Environment.....9

Environmental Impact.....11

Coordination and Consultation.....13

Appendix I – Census Data for Williamsburg and Greenbrier County.....14

Appendix II – Appraisal Abstract.....21

Appendix III – State Historic Preservation Office Review.....22

# Summary

---

The subject of this Section 6(f)(3) parkland conversion is one of two project sites developed with LWCF Project Grant No. 54-00247 in 1979, to construct 'sport and playfields, picnic areas, and support facilities' at the former Williamsburg Elementary School (WES) and present Greenbrier East High School (GEHS) in Greenbrier County, West Virginia. This conversion is the result of implementing a county school consolidation plan. The Greenbrier County Board of Education (the School Board) proposes to remove federal protection from all of the LWCF-assisted property at the WES site, leaving the GEHS site unaffected. The School Board proposes to mitigate this impact with the dedication of replacement playfields adjoining the newly opened Lewisburg Elementary-Middle School (LES) in Lewisburg, West Virginia.

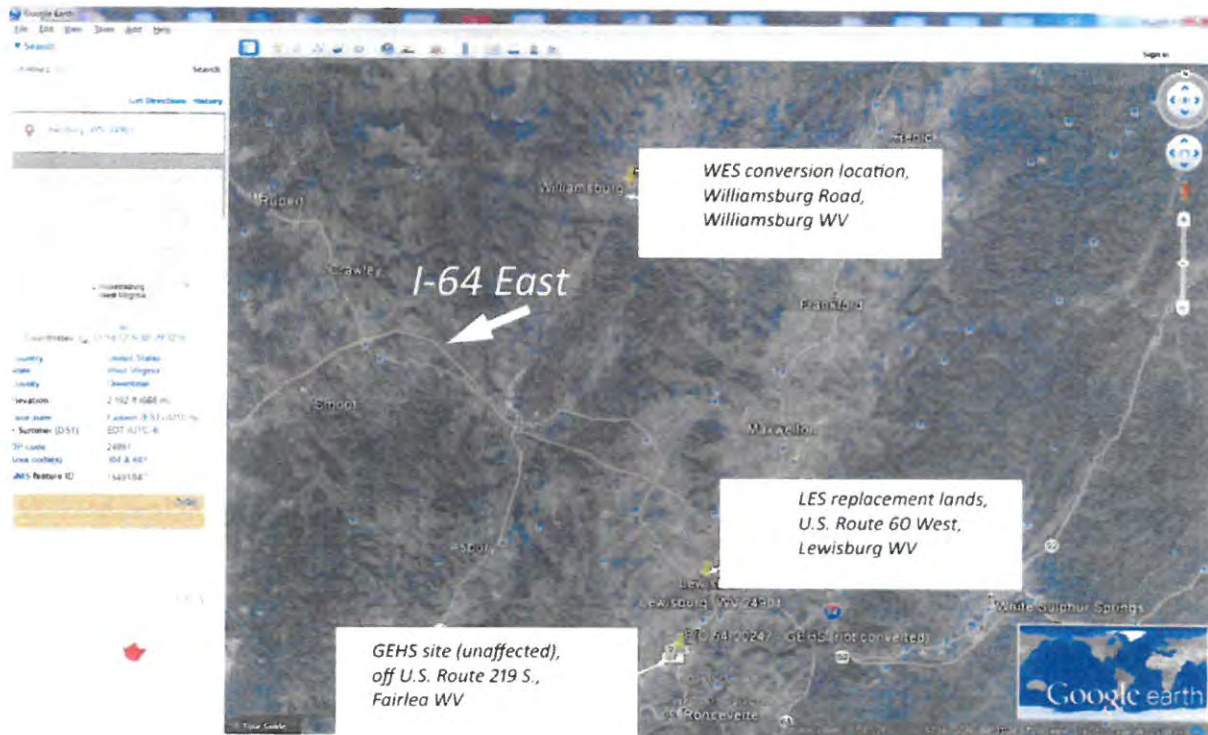


Figure 1. 54-00247 Vicinity Map: one project, two sites: Williamsburg Elementary School (WES) and Greenbrier East High School (GEHS). GEHS site not affected by Williamsburg conversion; Lewisburg Elementary-Middle School (LES) site of proposed replacement land.

No alternatives were considered for this school consolidation due to the declining ability of the Williamsburg area's population to sustain their elementary school, and the presence of a local, non-profit organization's willingness to continue operations the former school's park facilities for the benefit of this area's residents.

# Introduction

---

The Williamsburg Elementary School Park was developed with assistance from the federal Land and Water Conservation Fund (LWCF) State Assistance Program in 1979 for, "sport, playfields, picnic areas, and support facilities." By accepting the LWCF grant, the State and its sub-recipient, the Greenbrier County Board of Education, agreed to maintain the property in public outdoor recreation use unless otherwise approved by the Secretary of the Interior (delegated to the National Park Service) pursuant to the LWCF Act, Section 6(f)(3) and the LWCF conversion regulations at 36 CFR 59.

In 2014 the Williamsburg Elementary School and the related school park was closed as a result of a county school consolidation effort. The LWCF Section 6(f)(3) public outdoor recreation lands at the park consist of a playground, picnic area, playfields and off-street parking in addition to non-federally supported walking trail and school indoor gym facilities. With the closure, the School Board conveyed the property to the non-profit Williamsburg Community Action Group. This organization will maintain the property as a park, however, because it is no longer classified as a public park, a LWCF conversion has been triggered.

Section 6(f)(3) requires that protected parkland that is converted to a use other than outdoor recreation be replaced with property that is of least equal fair market value and equivalent recreational utility as the property that was converted. The replacement property must constitute a viable recreation unit. Development of the replacement property may be required to ensure that a level of recreation utility is achieved similar to what was lost at the converted site.

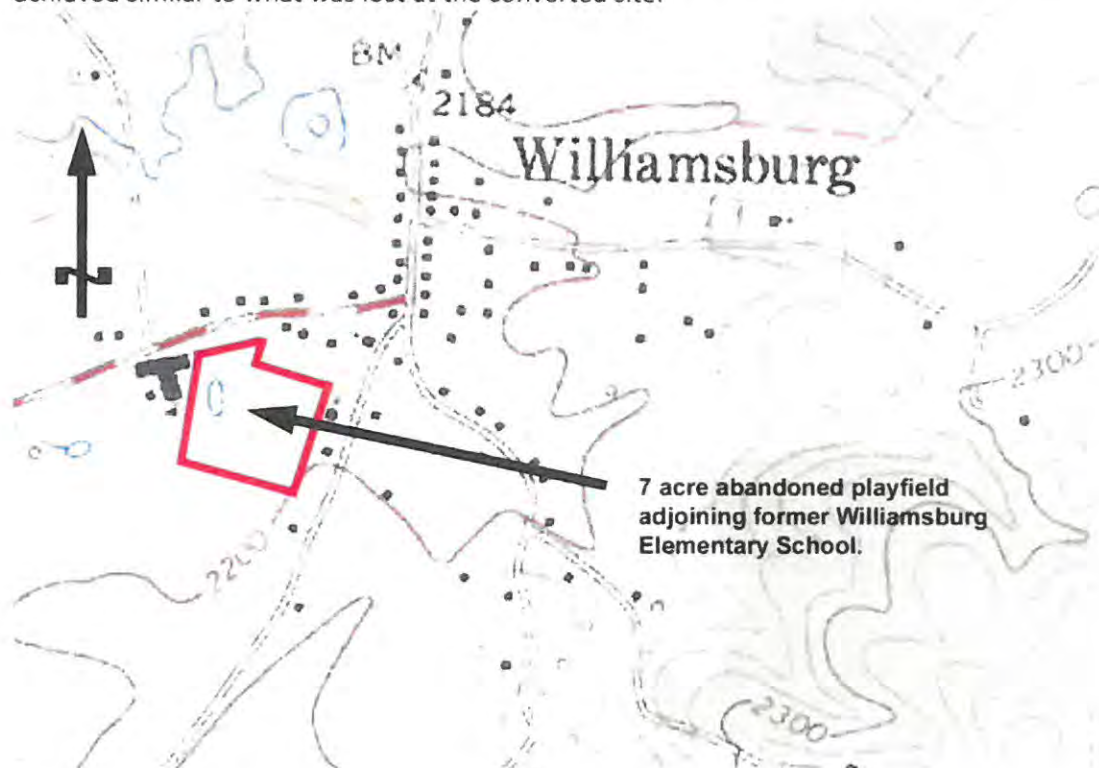


Figure 2. Vicinity map of Williamsburg, West Virginia, showing location of school property.

To meet the LWCF conversion requirements for replacement, School Board is proposing to develop a new public park as part of the new Lewisburg Elementary School complex. The new site is to include soccer and softball fields to replace the LWCF 6 (f)(3) protected public outdoor recreation property due to the closure of the Williamsburg Elementary School.

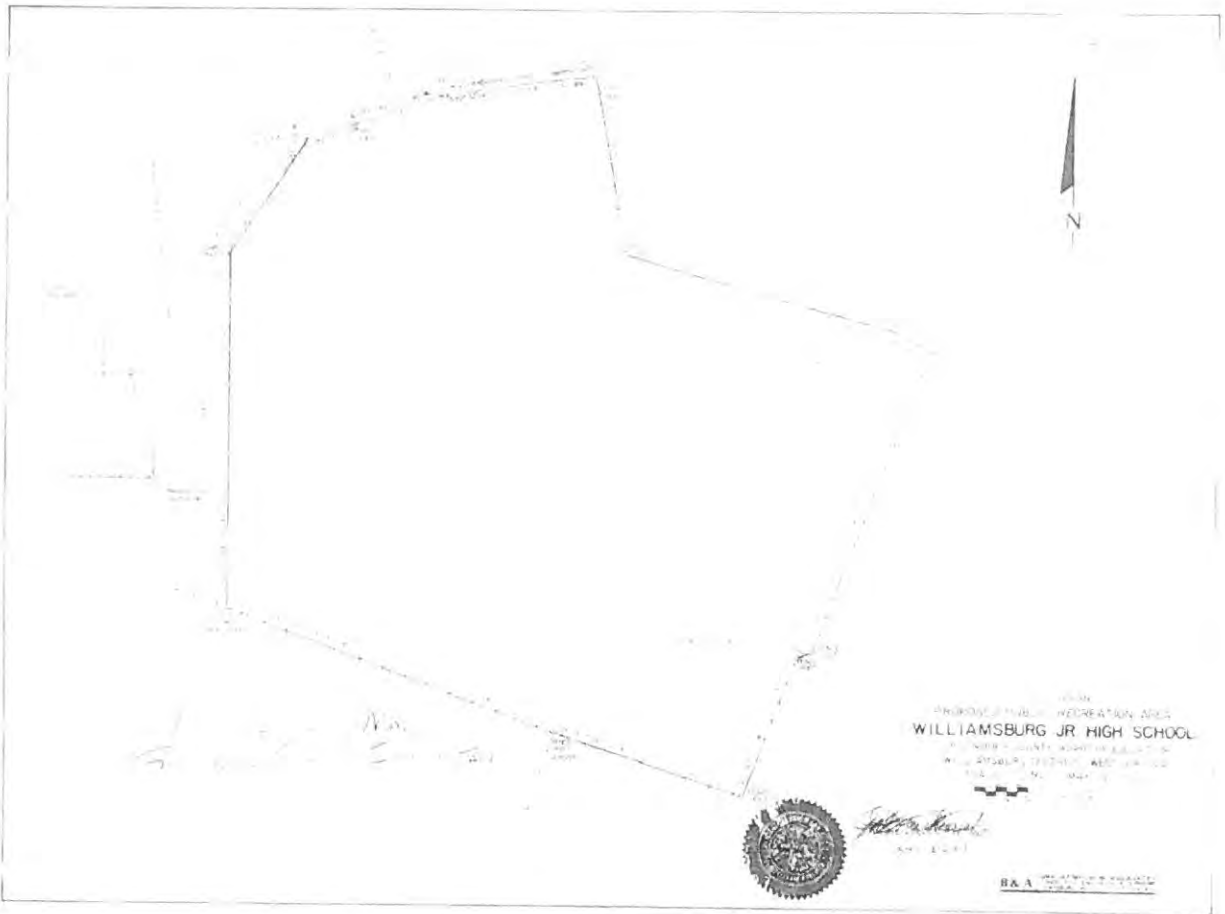


Figure 3. §6(f)(3) project area boundary map for Williamsburg School portion of LWCF Project Grant No. 54-00247.

# Purpose, Need and Background

---

The purpose of this conversion application is to remove Federal protection from seven acres of the former Williamsburg School, now transferred in ownership to the Williamsburg Community Action Group, a non-profit organization. This action is needed because of the closure of the former Williamsburg School property due to school consolidation and the Williamsburg Community Action Group's ineligibility as a candidate LWCF project sponsor.

The School Board proposes to convert the seven acre Williamsburg school park and replace it with a 5.98 acre school park adjoining the newly constructed Lewisburg Elementary-Middle School in Lewisburg, West Virginia (site on U.S. Route 60 West). This replacement property is currently reserved. A plat of the proposed replacement parkland is shown on the following page as Figure 4. Size, rectangular shape and grounds-to-building orientation were considered for future development purposes, to be comparable with the 'sport, playfields and support facilities' development of the area it replaces. State School Bonding Authority funding policies do not authorize school bonding for recreational facilities in support of secondary education, and as a consequence this proposed replacement school park is locally supported in its entirety and would be made available for public use at all times other than when school activities are ongoing.

This Environmental Assessment is required to help the National Park Service (NPS) evaluate the environmental consequences of the proposed action on the human environment and allow the affected public to understand the context for the proposed action.

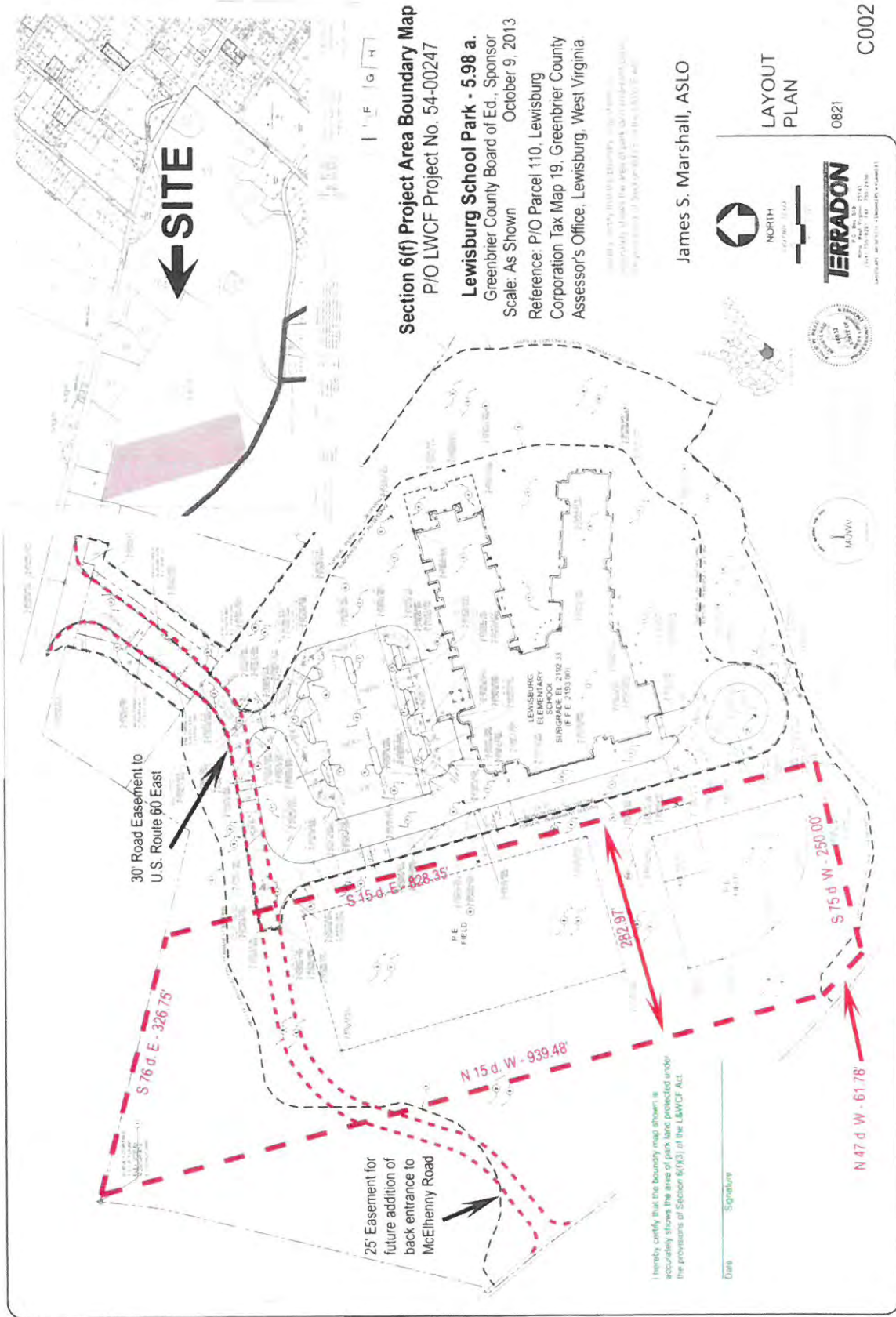


Figure 4. Proposed School Park Boundary Map (in red) for LES Replacement Land.



# Description of Alternatives

---

## No Action

Under the No Action alternative there would be no changes at the Williamsburg Elementary School Park and the NPS would not receive the conversion proposal.

## Proposed Alternative

The NPS approves the conversion of seven acres of public outdoor recreation property as part of the Williamsburg School Complex closure. The School park provided the following outdoor recreation facilities and opportunities: playfields, parking and a picnic area.

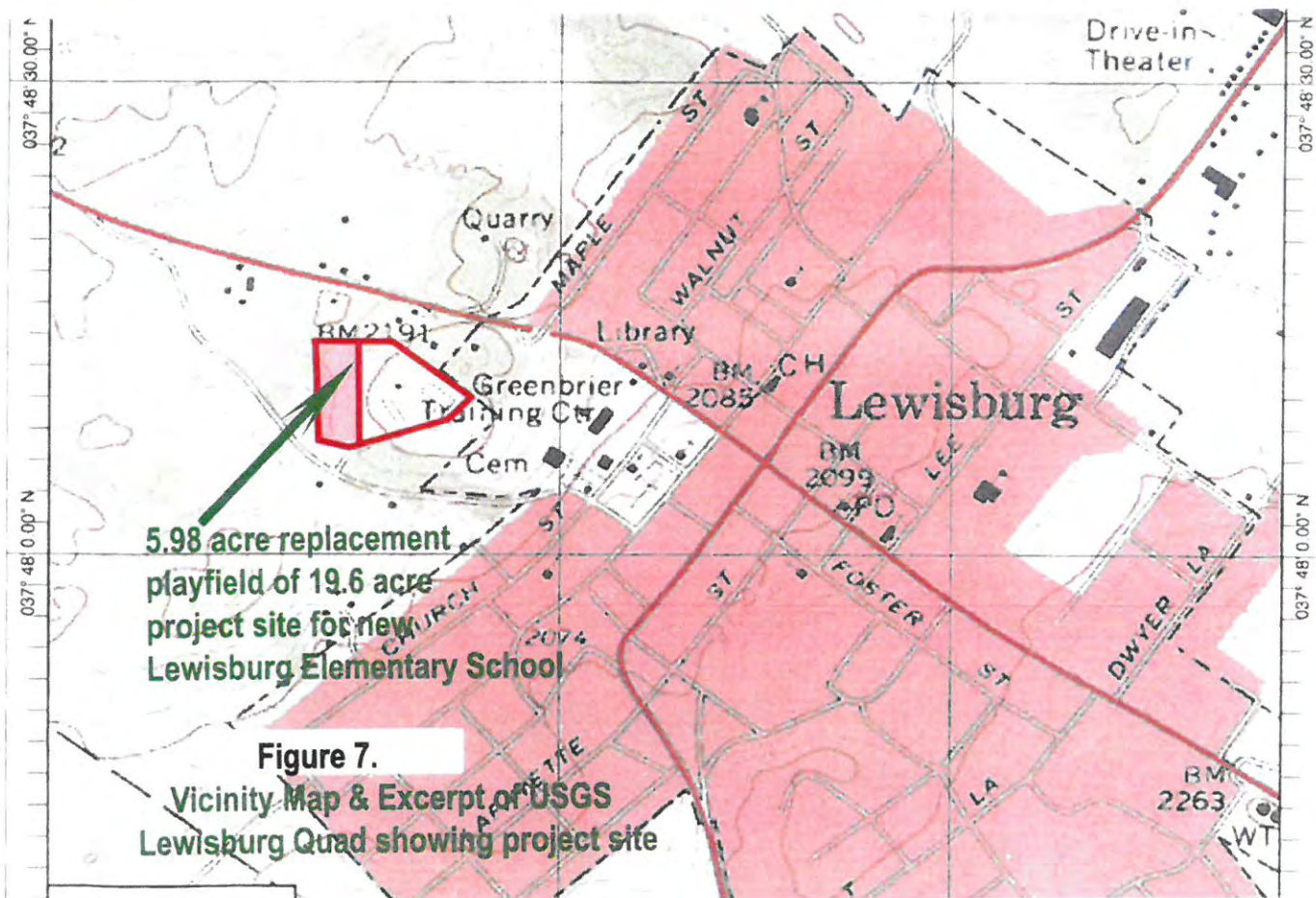
The Williamsburg School Park Section 6(f)(3) area will be replaced at the Lewisburg Elementary School complex, where approximately 5.98 acres will be dedicated to public outdoor recreation use. The 5.98 acre replacement parkland proposed by the Greenbrier County Board of Education is located on the grounds of the new 19.6 acre Lewisburg Elementary-Middle School located on U.S. Route 60 West in Lewisburg, West Virginia (vicinity map and aerial photo on next page, Figures 6 & 7). Federal UASFLA (Uniform Appraisal Standards for Federal Land Acquisitions) appraisals were completed for both tracts of land with the conclusion that the replacement property was of greater value than the converted property. In spite of the size difference between the seven acre converted property and the 5.98 acre replacement property, the proposed replacement property has equivalent recreational usefulness for its accommodation of identical field sports offered at the Williamsburg site. The differences in monetary value are attributable to the higher land values found in an urbanized area vs. a rural, unincorporated area. Historically, the proposed replacement parkland on the Lewisburg School site had been a horse farm (note riding rinks in 2013 aerial photo below, Figure 5).



Figure 5. Prior horse farm land use of proposed replacement parkland, Lewisburg WV (source: Bing.com)



Google earth



# Affected Environment

---

Affected environmental areas are both the former Williamsburg Elementary School park property and its replacement property at the new Lewisburg Elementary School.



Figure 8. WES exercise trail & parking.



Figure 9. WES existing playground.



Figure 10. New Lewisburg Elementary-Middle School.



Figure 11. 5.98 Acre Proposed Replacement Land.

The former, seven-acre Williamsburg school park is part of a twelve acre elementary school campus, now consolidated and replaced by a five-acre tract alongside the new Lewisburg Elementary School. Although differing in size, both tracts are comparable in land value, the differences due to higher land appraisals in the vicinity of Lewisburg, the county seat. The actual conversion is due to a change in park sponsorship, from the Greenbrier County Board of Education, a unit of local government, to the Williamsburg Community Action Group, a non-profit organization. Functionally, the Williamsburg park facilities will remain in place to be maintained by the Williamsburg Community Action Group (see existing park photos above).

The Williamsburg School was closed and consolidated due to basic demographics; built in 1947, this school helped address education needs for a post-WWII population boom in Greenbrier County. However beginning in the 1960's to the present the county's population, and particularly its K-12 cohort, has declined with some offsets due to an influx of retirees (note the median age increase in the table below). Today, unincorporated Williamsburg (ZIP: 24991) has a total population of 521 persons, with an under five population of 20 and a 5-14 population of 52.

At the Williamsburg Elementary School site is a mix of LWCF-assisted and non-LWCF assisted outdoor recreational facilities include the school's original playground, playfield, perimeter walking trail and a small picnic area. These facilities are now owned and maintained by the Williamsburg Community Action Group, a non-profit organization. They complement this organization's ownership and management of the site's former indoor gym and classroom building, now reserved for community gatherings.

At the Lewisburg Elementary School site's 19.6 acre campus, a 5.98 acre field has been reserved for replacement of the former Williamsburg School's LWCF-assisted sport and playfields. Abutting this replacement property are the Lewisburg School's existing classroom and gym buildings and outdoor playground in support of the elementary school. All of these facilities are owned and managed by the Greenbrier County Board of Education. Missing from the 5.98 acre field is over-seeding and signage to make this property serviceable for the public following National Park Service approval of its use as replacement land.

#### References:

- LES Layout Plans, Terradon Engineering, Nitro WV, November, 2009, as amended.
- Summary Real Estate Appraisal Reports, Sirna Appraisal Natural Resources, Bunker Hill WV, January, 2012.
- Technical Desk Review, Sirna Reports, by Boggs & Associates, Inc. Nitro WV, July, 2013.
- LWCF 54-00247 case files and field notes, West Virginia Development Office, Charleston, WV, 1979, et. seq.
- Revised Comprehensive Facilities Plan (CEFP), Planning Advocates, Inc., Delaware OH and ZMM, Inc. Architect-Engineers, Charleston WV, September 2006, Amended November 20, 2008.
- WV Division of Culture & History Letter, September 12, 2013, by Susan Pierce, DSHPO.
- U.S. Census, 1940, et. seq., Characteristics of the Population: Age by Sex for West Virginia County Subdivisions.
- Greenbrier County Commission General Warranty Deed to the Greenbrier County Board of Education, June 29, 2009; Greenbrier County Assessor's Office, DB 528, Page 714, Lewisburg WV.
- National Park Service LWCF State Assistance Program Manual: Chapter 8 'Post-Completion and Stewardship', October, 2008.

# Environmental Impact

---

This section summarizes the effects of 'no action' and 'action' alternatives to both the converted Williamsburg School Park and its replacement Lewisburg School Park as this development relates to impacts on any of four general areas of environmental concern. Any impacts on any of these areas deemed to be significant, controversial or adverse must be noted with mandatory comments.

## 'NO ACTION' ALTERNATIVE:

Under the 'no action' alternative, no changes occur to either the former Williamsburg School site, which remains closed as a public facility, or the public's use of the replacement field developed at the newly opened Lewisburg Elementary-Middle School property. Neither the converted park nor the replacement park retain eligibility for grant-in-aid assistance through the federal Land and Water Conservation Fund program, and the park conversion problem remains unresolved.

## 'ACTION' ALTERNATIVE:

Under the 'action' alternative, seven acres of playfields at the former Williamsburg School are replaced and designated as federal LWCF Section 6(f)(3)-protected property on a 5.98 acre tract adjoining the new Lewisburg Elementary-Middle School. New sport and playfield programs and uses can be developed and made available for public use by notice from the Greenbrier County Board of Education following NPS approval of the conversion proposal. The Greenbrier County Board of Education maintains their LWCF sponsor's eligibility for continued financial support from the federal Land and Water Conservation Fund, based upon NPS requirements and review of development proposals.

## NO ACTION ALTERNATIVE:

- *Public Outdoor Recreation Resources:* No impacts if the Section 6(f) area remains as it is currently.
- *Historic and Cultural Resources:* No impacts if the Section 6(f) area remains as it is currently.
- *Traffic and Circulation:* No impacts if the Section 6(f) area remains as it is currently.
- *Natural Resources (wetlands, floodplain, species/habitat):* No impacts if the Section 6(f) area remains as it is currently.

## 'ACTION' ALTERNATIVE:

- *Public Outdoor Recreation Resources:* Under the 'action' alternative, seven acres of playfields at the former Williamsburg School are removed from 6(f) protection and replaced on approximately six acres adjoining the new Lewisburg Elementary-Middle School. New sport and playfields and uses will be developed and made available for public use by the Greenbrier County Board of Education following NPS approval of the conversion proposal. The new development includes areas for softball and soccer and general playfield and picnic areas. The timetable for developing these new recreational opportunities is immediately upon NPS approval. The School Board will post the schedule and rules for public use of these school park facilities following NPS approval.

The new fields will be located in closer proximity of a larger population.

While the former Williamsburg School park will continue to offer recreational opportunities, the recreational facilities will serve a smaller, local population, and present fewer universally accessible opportunities.

'ACTION ALTERNATIVE' (Continued):

- *Historic and Cultural Resources:* The West Virginia State Historical Preservation Office (SHPO response, dated September 12, 2013, indicates that based on the project information submitted, "there are no archeological resources locations within the proposed abandonment or park development areas". As a result, the SHPO recommended that the proposed project will have no effect on archeological resources that are eligible for or listed in the National Register of Historic Places. However, if intact cultural properties are discovered while constructing the new park, the SHPO requested that all activity be ceased and their office contacted immediately. Further, it is their opinion that there are no properties which are eligible for or listed in the National Register of Historic Places that will be impacted by the proposed project.

Not noted or observed at either the Williamsburg or Lewisburg School sites were archeological, historic or cultural environmental resources, hazardous materials or tribal land uses.

- *Traffic and Circulation:* Minor and temporary impacts are anticipated from increased traffic from visitors attending any games or events at the new Lewisburg School, which, if warranted, may be mitigated by construction of a rear exit driveway onto McElhenny Road (see site plan, Figure 4, on page 6).
- *Natural Resources (wetlands, floodplain, species/habitat):* Negligible impacts upon the soils at the Lewisburg School site from regrading and leveling the former horse farm property. No wetland resources, 100 year floodplain or federally-listed species habitats identified in either the converted Williamsburg property or the replacement Lewisburg property. As such, no impacts would be expected to these resources as a result of this conversion. Natural environments not found at either site include streams, unique ecosystems or geothermal resources.

MANDATORY CRITERIA:

NO ACTION ALTERNATIVE: The Mandatory Criteria evaluation is not applicable to the 'No Action' alternative.

'ACTION' ALTERNATIVE: No significant, controversial or adverse environmental effects are anticipated at either the Williamsburg or Lewisburg School sites.

PUBLIC COMMENTS:

Any public comments on this report received during the 30-day review period need to be made in writing to:

John McGarrity, Senior Planner  
West Virginia Development Office  
Capitol Complex, Building 3— Suite 700  
Charleston, West Virginia 25305-0311

# Coordination and Consultation

---

The following persons and organizations were involved in the preparation of this assessment:

- David A. McClure, Treasurer, Greenbrier County Board of Education
- David A. Sirna, Sr. WV CGRA, Sirna Appraisal & Natural Resources, LLC
- Jennifer O. Aaron, WV CGRA, Sirna Appraisal & Natural Resources, LLC
- Mary Jo Thompson, SLO, West Virginia Development Office
- Kelly Workman, ASLO, West Virginia Development Office
- John McGarrity, AICP, West Virginia Development Office
- Charles Lawrence, Director, West Virginia Office of Real Estate Management
- H. Kim Painter, WV CGRA, Certified General Appraiser
- Susan M. Pierce, Deputy West Virginia State Historic Preservation Officer
- Terradon Landscape Architects – Engineers – Planners, Nitro WV

Report review and coordination under Intergovernmental Review of Federal Program Executive Order 12372 (A-95 Clearinghouse) is the responsibility of the West Virginia Development Office, which originated and coordinated this assessment. Public engagement during the course of preparing a county school consolidation plan, including the proposed relocation of the former Williamsburg School programs and functions to the new Lewisburg Elementary-Middle School, was accomplished by the Greenbrier County Board of Education during the 2000-2013 period through a series of public meetings held during this time. This proposed parkland conversion is not part of any other Federal action.