



DEPARTMENT OF THE ARMY
HUNTINGTON DISTRICT, CORPS OF ENGINEERS
502 EIGHTH STREET
HUNTINGTON, WEST VIRGINIA 25701-2070

REPLY TO
ATTENTION OF

April 7, 1995

Planning Division
Resource Evaluation Branch

Input Request For: Dolly Sods Wilderness, Ordnance Removal Project

In cooperation with the U.S. Forest Service the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers proposes an ordnance and explosive waste (OEW) removal action at the Dolly Sods Wilderness to reduce the risk to the public and environment from unexploded ordnance.

BACKGROUND: The 10,215-acre Dolly Sods Wilderness, located within Grant, Tucker, and Randolph Counties, West Virginia and managed by the U.S. Forest Service, was a part of the 2,181,000 acre West Virginia Maneuver Area during World War II. Even though areas were searched and cleared by military explosive ordnance disposal (EOD) teams after the war, at least 20 pieces of ordnance have been found in recent years. Some of these were found in a 1991 feasibility study by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers. The Study included searching a sampling of areas considered to most likely have been used as targets or contain overshots or undershots. Approximately 281 acres of the 10,215 acres were searched with magnetometers and thirteen pieces of ordnance, ranging in size, were found from 6 to 24 inches beneath the surface. One piece was found within several feet of a site used as a campfire pit. If the fire had been located over the buried ordnance, there is the likelihood that the ordnance would have detonated, potentially harming several persons. There is also the potential for tent pegs to be driven into buried ordnance or for people to find and pick up pieces of ordnance, creating a hazardous situation. A high concentration of ordnance is thought to exist within the Red Creek Valley of the Wilderness, where campers are commonly found. An estimated 45,000 to 75,000 people come to the Dolly Sods Wilderness each year for hiking, camping, picnics, and hunting. The Forest Service maintains 20.8 miles of trails and has documented 101 commonly used camping areas in the Wilderness.

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PROPOSED ACTION: Trails will be searched their entire length and 20 feet to each side by unexploded ordnance (UXO) specialists using hand-held ordnance detection devices such as metal detectors. If metal is indicated the area will be excavated by hand to a depth of one foot. Cleared areas used for camping will also be searched and excavated by hand to a 4-foot depth where metal is indicated. Small undergrowth, grasses, and fallen trees will be cleared only if necessary to search an area and only if the area is accessible to hikers, campers, or hunters. Earth will be excavated only if metal objects are detected. Discovered UXO will not be moved for safety reasons but will be destroyed in place by detonation.

ALTERNATIVES: Alternatives to this proposed action that are currently being considered are: (1) No Action - not searching for ordnance and only disposing of those mortars and artillery shells that are found and reported by area users and (2) clearing hiking trails and an area 20 feet on each side to a depth of one foot, but not clearing campsites.

MINIMIZING ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACTS: Before any onsite work commences, trained personnel will work closely with the U.S. Forest Service and other agencies to define potential archaeologically significant areas, sensitive plants, and animal habitats that must be protected and to establish steps to avoid or minimize impacts. Procedures for avoiding and minimizing adverse impacts will be defined in an Environmental Assessment which is currently being prepared and in a workplan to be prepared by the UXO contractor. Current plans are:

- An archaeologist will conduct a records search and site survey to define potentially significant areas and establish an action plan for protection of heritage resources for the UXO team to follow.

- A biologist will determine the potential for threatened, endangered, or sensitive species to be impacted; of particular interest are the Cheat Mountain Salamander and, possibly, the Virginia Northern Flying Squirrel. Even though it is doubtful either will be impacted by work in trails and campsites, the UXO team will be taught how to recognize them and how to avoid adverse impacts. No threatened or endangered plant species are known to exist in the Wilderness. However because regrowth is extremely slow in this harsh environment the UXO team will also be taught how to minimize impacts to plant life.

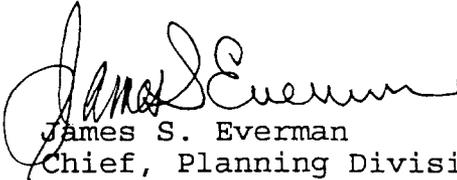
- No motorized vehicles will be used within the Wilderness.

- Disturbed areas will be covered with leaves and other materials found in the area to minimize exposure to the elements.

SOLICITATION OF INPUT: We value your opinion in this process. To assist us in our environmental evaluation, we are requesting your comments in regard to possible effects of this project no later than April 28, 1995. Your comments will be considered in planning and decisions on this proposed project. If you wish to make comments, receive further information on this project, or receive a copy of the Environmental Assessment, please reply to:

Commander
U.S. Army Corps of Engineers
ATTN: CEORH-PD-B (Mr. A. B. Borda, Jr.)
502 Eighth Street
Huntington, WV 25701-2070
Phone: 304/529-5712
Fax: 304/529-5591.

If we do not receive a reply from you we will not send further information.


James S. Everman
Chief, Planning Division

Enclosure

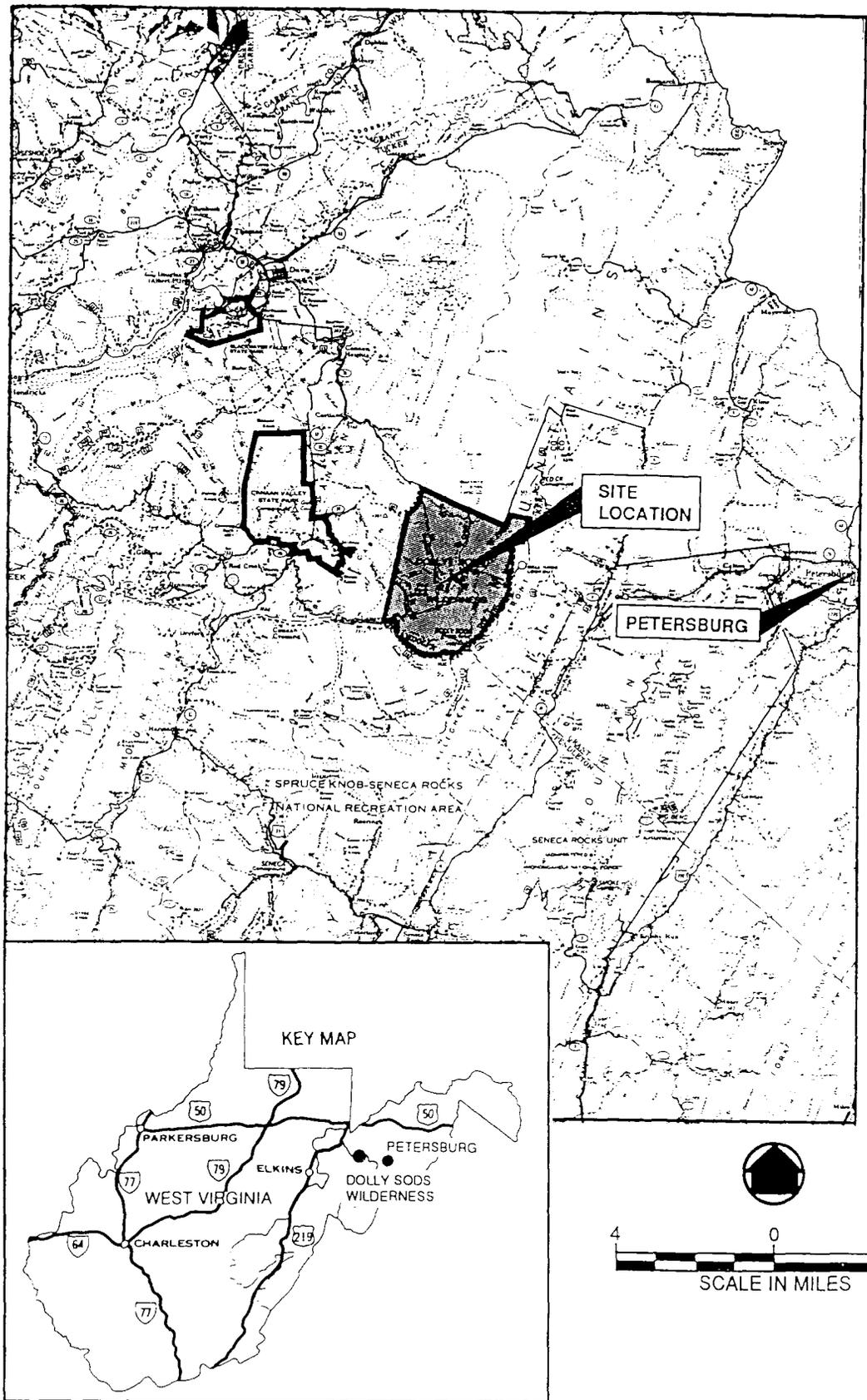


FIGURE 1-1. DOLLY SODS WILDERNESS
SITE LOCATION PLAN