



Proposed Orange County Veterans Cemetery



Stephen Jorgensen
Assistant Deputy Secretary
Veterans Memorials and Cemeteries

- ▶ **US Army Veteran**
- ▶ **National Cemetery Administrator and Manager**
- ▶ **Managed the Northern California Veterans Cemetery since opening**
- ▶ **Worked on the operational model, design and implementation of the California Central Coast Veterans Cemetery**

Processes Overview

- ▶ **Determine Need**
 - ▶ **Encourage Support**
 - ▶ **Investigate Availability of Suitable Land**
 - ▶ **Assess Impacts**
 - ▶ **Develop an Operational Model**
 - ▶ **Begin the Application Process**
- 

Determine Need

- ▶ Analyze existing services provided by National Cemeteries.
Riverside National Cemetery is the only National Cemetery within a 75 mile radius of parts of Orange and LA Counties.
- ▶ Provide data on veteran population and veterans death projections.
Veteran population for Orange and LA Counties is estimated at, **428,000**
Veteran projected death rate for Orange and LA Counties estimated at, **14,200** (VA population data 2007)
- ▶ Consider burial projections.
 - ▶ USDVA average across the nation, 13.5% = **2,124** + dependents = **2,974**
 - ▶ CCCVC based projection, 25% = **3,933** + dependents = **5,506**

Riverside NC is 43 miles from Irvine, 65 miles from Los Angeles, 64 miles from San Clemente, 78 miles from Santa Monica, 57 miles from Seal Beach, as examples. Consider the congested roadways and time of travel.

Considering the short distances to Orange County from the population centers we need plan for a high burial rate.

Encourage Support

- ▶ Support of the cemetery clearly exists as is made clear by the actions of several Orange County cities in their resolutions and creation of this committee.
 - ▶ The outreach needs be extended throughout Orange and Los Angeles Counties. All local governments should be supportive.
 - ▶ Does the greater veteran community support a state veterans cemetery?
 - ▶ Ultimately, the state legislature must pass necessary legislation authorizing the state cemetery and appropriating funds for the establishment and operation.
 - ▶ Clearly AB 1453 is a big step in achieving the goal.
- 

Investigate Availability of Suitable Land

- ▶ Suitable land should be easily accessed by road, free of limitations such as rock, steep slopes and wetlands, uncompromised by incompatible land uses nearby, and appropriate for cemetery use.
- ▶ Considerations need to be given to items that will not be covered in the USDVA grant to establish the cemetery. These might include but are not limited to; all off site improvements, roadways, walks, traffic lights and utilities to the property. They will not cover demolition of existing infrastructure or buildings. They will also not cover the removal of ordnance or other contamination from the site. We have also seen that they will not cover environmental issues and will not pay for any work accomplished by state employees in the design or construction.
- ▶ How many acres are required for the cemetery to serve the veterans for 50 years? Given an estimated total gravesite demand of 200,000 burial sites, 30% casketed burials and 70% columbaria cremation burials we require a site of 80 useable acres. Increased burial options could take the acreage requirements to approximately 120 acres.

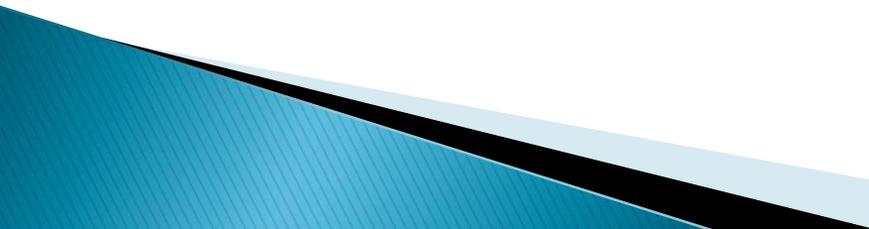
Assess Impacts and Community Concerns

- ▶ Analyze possible negative environmental and historic preservation impacts the cemetery location may have.
 - ▶ Are there any community objections to the proposed location?
 - ▶ Most important can any noted objections be overcome?
- 

Develop an Operational Model (1)

- ▶ This is a critical consideration as it will determine the acreage required to support the development of the cemetery. The USDVA will not consider a cemetery operation that will not serve the projected usage for a minimum of 20 years, but prefer it serve the area for 50 years. In the example I shared earlier we offer the most effective casketed and cremation burial options available in terms of land use to meet a 50 year demand. So if we are to serve the region for 50 years we require a minimum of 80 acres of useable land. Alternative burial options will result in additional acreage requirements.
- ▶ Any change in the types of burial options offered will affect the acreage requirements, the cost of development and operational costs.
- ▶ Cost of development is extremely important as the USDVA grant funding for the Veterans Cemetery Grant Program is roughly \$45 million for this coming year. While that would be considered sizeable to some, understand that is the entire program funding for a year for the United States.
- ▶ Our California Central Coast Veterans Cemetery is a cremation columbaria only operation. That facility with all the infrastructure, support facilities and 5,000 columbaria niches to meet the first ten years of demand requires a \$7.5 million grant. The 17-acre site has area to expand burial sites and options.

Develop an Operational Model (2)

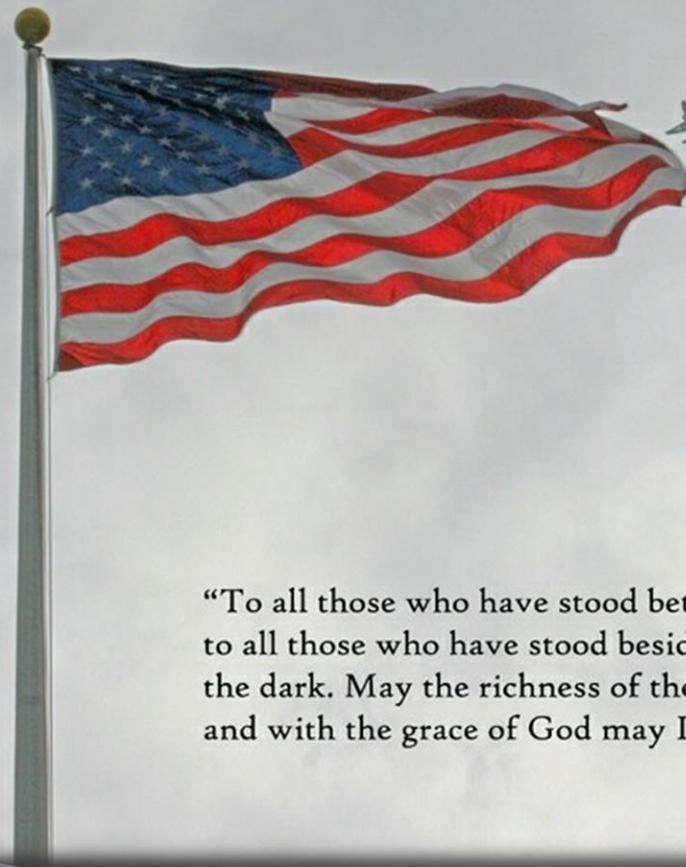
- ▶ The reasons CCCVC became a cremation columbarium only facility were: (1) our first estimate to construct a full option cemetery to meet a demand of less than 1,000 veterans a year was over \$20 million, (2) our operational costs were estimated at \$500,000 per year. In the columbarium only operation our revenues offset the cost of operation for the first ten years, requiring no general funds to support the operation.
 - ▶ The largest grant the USDVA has made to establish a new state veterans cemetery was roughly \$15 million.
 - ▶ The USDVA develops state veterans cemeteries to meet an estimated ten year need for each burial option offered. The initial development is the most costly as it includes the infrastructure and support facilities
 - ▶ Given the volume of veterans that are likely to utilize our veterans cemetery we have a challenge in how we approach developing an operational model that can be funded by the USDVA Veterans Cemetery Grant Program.
- 

Status of the California Central Coast Veterans Cemetery and Lessons Learned

- ▶ The CCCVC is currently out for bid for the construction of the facility, which is planned to open in March 2016. The only issue that could slow the opening are environmental concerns.
- ▶ CCCVC is initially being developed as a cremation columbarium only facility. It is being established in this manner to reduce the size of the federal grant to construct the facility and to eliminate the burden of an endowment fund as required by law to operate the facility for the first ten years of operation. An agreement was made that the state would make a pre-grant request to the USDVA to establish a casketed burial option when the endowment fund was adequate to fund that element of the operation for ten years as required by law.
- ▶ Our experience with the CCCVC has made us aware that the grant that is advertised as a 100% grant pays roughly 80% of the actual cost to construct the cemetery.
- ▶ The USDVA has stringent guidelines regarding to the size and amount of the support facilities it will fund. These guidelines are not published.

Grant Application Process

- ▶ The pre-application serves as a means by which VA can plan future budgets, screen out projects that are not viable, and open lines of communication between VA and the states.
- ▶ The Veterans Cemetery Grants Program evaluates pre-applications and advises the state whether the proposed project meets the requirements for funding.
- ▶ Each successful applicant receives a letter stating their project meets the requirements for participation in the program and an explanation that the project will be prioritized in the next fiscal year or a succeeding year, if funds are not available to fund all the projects that meet the requirements.
- ▶ Relying on this letter from VA these applicants begin the design phase of the project by using state funds to secure the services needed. VA requires a pre-design conference at the proposed site to orient all parties, especially the A&E team, to VA's design standards and plan review requirements.
- ▶ Applicants must comply with requirements of the National Environmental Policy Act and the National Historic Preservation Act before a grant may be made.
- ▶ Once VA-in writing has approved the plans and specifications for the project, applicants are authorized to advertise for construction bids. Applicants then submit applications for the award of the grant.



“To all those who have stood between me and the sword,
to all those who have stood beside me and guided me through
the dark. May the richness of the Nation I have inherited endure
and with the grace of God may I prove to be a worthy heir.”