

**RECORD OF DECISION  
FOR THE F-35A OPERATIONAL BEDDOWN – PACIFIC  
AT EIELSON AIR FORCE BASE, ALASKA**

**Introduction**

The United States Air Force (Air Force) is issuing this Record of Decision for the Proposed Actions associated with the F-35A Operational Beddown – Pacific Final Supplemental Environmental Impact Statement (Federal Register Vol. 82, No. 193, Pg. 46808, October 6, 2017). In making this decision, the information, analysis, and public comments contained in the Final Supplemental Environmental Impact Statement, along with other relevant matters, were considered.

This Record of Decision is prepared in accordance with the Council on Environmental Quality regulations implementing the National Environmental Policy Act at Title 40 Code of the Federal Regulations § 1505.2, Record of Decision in Cases Requiring Environmental Impact Statements and the Air Force Environmental Impact Analysis Process at Title 32 Code of the Federal Regulations § 989.21, Record of Decision. The Air Force is the Lead Agency for the Supplemental Environmental Impact Statement and there are no cooperating agencies.

Specifically, this Record of Decision:

- States the Air Force decision (page 1 and 7);
- Identifies alternatives considered by the Air Force in reaching the decision and specifies the preferred alternatives and the environmentally preferred alternatives (pages 1-2);
- Identifies and discusses relevant factors that were considered in making the decision and states how those factors entered into its decision (page 3); and
- States whether all practicable means to avoid or minimize environmental harm from the alternative selected were adopted, and if not, why they were not adopted, and summarizes the applicable mitigations (pages 4-6).

**Decision**

The Air Force has decided to implement the three Proposed Action Alternatives (Preferred Alternatives): provide additional stormwater runoff control; develop equipment and material laydown areas; and provide additional heat, water, and power to the South Loop. The Air Force considered all relevant operational, environmental, economic, and technical factors discussed in the Final Supplemental Environmental Impact Statement in making this decision, as well as other relevant factors and supporting materials. Comments from the public, inputs from regulatory agencies, and others, were also considered.

**Background**

The Air Force prepared the Supplemental Environmental Impact Statement to address changes made since the February 2016 completion of the F-35A Operational Beddown – Pacific Environmental Impact Statement (referred herein as the original Environmental Impact Statement) and signing of the Record of Decision, announcing the Air Force decision to beddown two squadrons of F-35A aircraft at Eielson AFB. The original Environmental Impact Statement evaluated infrastructure construction, demolition, renovations, additional personnel, and increases in aircraft operations at the airfield and in the Joint Pacific Alaska Range Complex airspace. After the Record of Decision was signed in April 2016, several

new infrastructure projects were identified. These changes came about through the Air Force planning process used for all beddowns—the Site Action Task Force. This task force comprises a team of Air Force functional experts who, throughout the beddown process (which takes several years), work with base personnel to refine the projects necessary to ensure the beddown is successful.

### **Alternatives Considered**

The Air Force analyzed three proposed action alternatives at Eielson Air Force Base (AFB) for improving facility and infrastructure development in support of the F-35A beddown at Eielson AFB, as more fully described in the Final Supplemental Environmental Impact Statement. The three alternatives were:

- Provide Additional Stormwater Runoff Controls. To account for the addition of impervious surfaces introduced by F-35A construction, the Air Force must construct additional stormwater runoff areas. These additional runoff controls will provide stormwater conveyance and infiltration areas to minimize sedimentation in area surface water systems and reduce standing water. The area will consist of up to 20 acres adjacent to F-35A facility development in the South Loop and generally located within the area bounded by Cargain Road, Quarry Pit Road, Mullins Pit Road and Ammo Road. These stormwater control measures include, but are not limited to, sloping paved areas so that water flows to adjacent vegetated areas and using rocks to fill in low areas so that ponds would not be created. Wildlife in an active airfield poses a bird/wildlife aircraft strike hazard; therefore, the Air Force must minimize standing water when designing stormwater runoff control systems within airfields (Final Supplemental Environmental Impact Statement, Section 2.3).
- Develop Equipment and Material Laydown Areas. Additional equipment and material laydown areas will be established on base, eliminating the need for off-base storage. The laydown areas will consist of up to 60 acres located in the South Loop, generally between Central Avenue and Mullins Pit Road and proximate to F-35A facility development (Final Supplemental Environmental Impact Statement, Section 2.4). These laydown areas will accommodate the construction contractors' equipment, material stockpiles, and construction worker vehicles involved in development area. The laydown areas will include the construction of chain-link fence for security and a temporary 4-inch gravel and/or recycled asphalt pad to minimize mud and dust generation. Upon completion of construction, the laydown areas will be restored to their original state (Final Supplemental Environmental Impact Statement, Section 2.4).
- Provide Additional Heat, Water, and Power to the South Loop. Additional heat, water, and power will be provided to the South Loop through an underground utiliduct and overhead power line system. The new utiliduct and overhead power lines will service the South Loop by connecting to the existing Central Heat and Power Plant's utiliduct and power line system. The utiliduct and power line route will extend approximately 2 miles from the Central Heat and Power Plant, along Industrial Drive, cross over to Cargain Drive, and end at a manhole for the existing utiliduct system in the South Loop. The utiliduct will be buried and covered to maintain pre-construction topography, and the power line will travel along an aboveground pole system that is screwed into the ground (Final Supplemental Environmental Impact Statement, Section 2.5).

### ***No Action Alternatives and Environmentally Preferred Alternatives Determinations***

Pursuant to the National Environmental Policy Act, a No Action Alternative was also evaluated for each of the proposed action alternatives described above, and constitutes the baseline conditions on Eielson Air Force Base that would potentially be impacted by the F-35A Beddown. Under the No Action Alternatives:

- The additional stormwater runoff controls proposed action alternative would not be implemented. If this alternative were implemented, surface flow could increase soil erosion and sedimentation that could negatively affect nearby water quality. Additionally, runoff could create standing water that attracts birds and wildlife, which may increase bird/wildlife aircraft strike hazard risks (Final Supplemental Environmental Impact Statement, Section 2.3). This Proposed Action Alternative is environmentally preferred over the No Action Alternative as it would decrease soil erosion and sedimentation that could negatively affect nearby water quality.
- The additional equipment and material laydown areas proposed action alternative would not be established. The absence of additional on-base laydown areas may require off-base storage. This would increase travel time and fuel, and therefore cost, to and from the off-base laydown sites to the on-base construction sites (Final Supplemental Environmental Impact Statement, Section 2.4). This Proposed Action Alternative is environmentally preferred over the No Action Alternative as it would decrease the use of fossil fuel and decrease air emissions.
- The additional heat, water, and power through an underground utiliduct and overhead power system proposed action alternative would not be provided to the South Loop. The South Heat Plant would be constructed in the South Loop as evaluated in the original Environmental Impact Statement (Final Supplemental Environmental Impact Statement, Section 2.5). This Proposed Action Alternative is environmentally preferred over the No Action Alternative as it would not require construction of a new South Heat Plant and would reduce potential wetlands impacts and maintain a consistent topography with adjacent lands.

Overall, implementing the Proposed Action Alternatives would be environmentally preferred over the No Action Alternative for each of the Proposed Actions.

### **Basis of Decision**

To support F-35A facility development in the South Loop, the Air Force identified three preferred alternatives best suited to implement the proposed actions. The Air Force will construct new, additional stormwater runoff control measures to offset the additional impervious surfaces created by the F-35A beddown related construction. These measures are necessary to minimize sedimentation in area water systems and avoid standing water that attracts wildlife in areas adjacent to new F-35A buildings and pavements in the South Loop area. There were no other reasonable alternatives that would meet this requirement.

Due to Eielson AFB's remote location and lack of locally available building materials in the required quantities, the Air Force will establish and develop new, but temporary, equipment and material laydown areas in the South Loop. Without the availability of these new laydown areas, the entire beddown construction will require an increased time, fuel, and cost to store equipment and materials off base.

The Air Force will also construct a new utiliduct system and install new overhead power lines in order to provide reliable heating, adequate pressures for steam, condensate return, water for domestic use and fire

suppression, and power to the South Loop. This utiliduct and power system will provide these necessities by connecting to the installation's existing Central Heat and Power Plant. The new system will be more cost effective and environmentally preferable over the construction of a new South Heat Plant, as analyzed in the original Environmental Impact Statement.

### **Public Involvement**

Public and other agencies and entities were included and kept informed by the Air Force, as discussed in the Final Supplemental Environmental Impact Statement (Section 1.4) and as follows:

- Notice of Intent: Published in the Federal Register, March 29, 2017, Vol. 82, No. 59, pg.15517
- Scoping Period: Initiated March 29, 2017 and ended on May 25, 2017. According to 40 Code of Federal Regulations 1502.9, the agency shall prepare, circulate, and file a supplement to an Environmental Impact Statement in the same fashion (exclusive of scoping) as a draft and final Environmental Impact Statement. Due to the entirely on-base impacts of the proposed actions and Council on Environmental Quality recommendations, no formal scoping meetings were held. Instead, the Air Force invited comments through the Notice of Intent and in newspapers at the time of the Notice of Intent announcement.
- Draft Supplemental Environmental Impact Statement Notice of Availability: June 23, 2017, Federal Register, Vol. 82, No. 120, pg. 28656.
- Public Comment and Review Period: Initiated on June 24, 2015 and ended on August 8, 2017.
- Public Hearing: During the public comment period, one hearing was conducted in North Pole, Alaska on July 11, 2017.
- Final Supplemental Environmental Impact Statement Notice of Availability: Published in the Federal Register, October 6, 2017, Vol. 82, No. 193, pg. 46808. This initiated the mandatory 30-day waiting period prior to the signature of this Record of Decision.

### **Agency Coordination and Consultation**

The Air Force coordinated and consulted with federal and state agencies and Federally Recognized Tribes (Tribes) throughout the Environmental Impact Statement process. Federal and state agencies with jurisdiction over biological and cultural resources were contacted early in the Environmental Impact Analysis Process. The Air Force consulted on all of the alternatives presented in the draft Supplemental Environmental Impact Statement. Information developed during consultations informed the Air Force and the public regarding potential effects and in developing mitigations.

The Air Force consulted and coordinated with Indian Tribal Governments in accordance with the National Historic Preservation Act, its implementing regulations (36 Code of Federal Regulations Part 800); Executive Order 13175; Department of Defense Instruction 4710.02, Department of Defense Interactions with Federally-Recognized Tribes; and Air Force Instruction 90-2002. Federally Recognized Tribes and Alaska Native villages were invited to consult on a government-to-government basis and asked to provide information on any properties of religious and cultural significance that could be affected by the proposed action (Final Supplemental Environmental Impact Statement, Sec. 1.4.). In addition, information was shared with and consultation opportunities offered to Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act Corporations. No specific concerns were identified, and no project-specific meetings were requested.

Regulatory consultations included informal consultation with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service under Section 7 of the *Endangered Species Act*. As no listed threatened or endangered species or designated

critical habitat are present in the area of the Proposed Actions, the Air Force's finding for threatened or endangered species (or their associated preferred or critical habitat) was "no effect."

The United States Fish and Wildlife Service responded with recommendations that were considered in preparation of the Supplemental Environmental Impact Statement. There was no request for further consultation (Final Supplemental Environmental Impact Statement, Section 1.4.; Appendix B). The Air Force found that other species of special concern would not be adversely impacted, including species protected under the Bald and Golden Eagle Protection Act and the Migratory Bird Treaty Act.

The Air Force requested concurrence from the Alaska State Historic Preservation Officer for its finding that the proposed actions and alternatives will have no effects (directly or indirectly) to historic properties. The Alaska State Historic Preservation Officer concurred with the Air Force finding of no effects to historic properties (Final Supplemental Environmental Impact Statement, Section 1.4; Appendix B).

## **Mitigation**

### ***Wetlands***

Upon signature of this Record of Decision, Eielson AFB will complete the Clean Water Act, Section 404 Permit process with the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers Regulatory Branch to identify the *in-lieu fee* required to mitigate the loss of approximately 26 acres of wetlands and specify actions that the Air Force must comply with during and after construction in wetlands resulting from construction of the additional stormwater runoff controls and additional heat, water, and power provided through an underground utiliduct and overhead power system.

### ***Floodplains***

No mitigation measures are required, as no residential or occupied facilities will be constructed in the 100-year floodplain.

### ***Construction***

The Air Force will ensure that all plans, regulatory requirements, and permits are integrated to minimize environmental impacts and maintain mandatory compliance and comply with all new or revised regulations or permit requirements during the final design and construction of stormwater runoff controls, equipment and material laydown areas, and utiliduct and power systems.

Major protective permits, standards, and requirements include, but are not limited to, the following:

- Applicable Alaska Pollutant Discharge Elimination System requirements for control of discharges from large and small construction activities
- Engineering Technical Letter 08-06 (adopted from the Federal Aviation Administration Advisory Circular 150/5320-5D, Airport Drainage Design)
- U.S. Environmental Protection Agency's 841-B-09-01, Technical Guidance on Implementing the Stormwater Runoff Requirements for Federal Projects under Section 438 of the Energy Independence and Security Act. The Air Force sustainable design requirements assures compliance with any mitigation required to meet Section 438 of the Energy Independence and Security Act.
- Stormwater Best Management Practices and Standard Operating Procedures (currently detailed in the Eielson AFB Stormwater Pollution Prevention Plan)

- Clean Water Act Section 404 permit stipulations and requirements regarding wetlands impacts
- Toxic Substance Control Act, Occupational Safety and Health Administration regulations (addresses worker safety during renovation activities where toxic substances such as asbestos or lead-based paint may be encountered)
- Resource Conservation and Recovery Act and Eielson AFB Hazardous Waste Management Plan covering hazardous waste management and disposal requirements
- Eielson AFB Oil and Hazardous Substances Discharge Prevention and Contingency Plan (addresses spill prevention, contingency planning, and emergency response)
- Installation Restoration Program to facilitate cleanup of sites contaminated by past military activities regulated under Comprehensive Environmental Response, Compensation, and Liability Act identifies land use controls and disposal requirement for contamination encountered during construction
- Standard Operating Procedures and other measures for resource protection developed for and included in the base Integrated Natural Resources Management Plan and Integrated Cultural Resources Management Plan

### **Finding of No Practicable Alternative**

Wetlands areas are abundant on and around Eielson AFB, and account for approximately half of all acreage on base. The following summarizes wetland impacts for establishing stormwater runoff controls, developing new equipment and laydown areas, and constructing an underground utiliduct and aboveground power system:

- Approximately 15.3 acres of wetlands would be affected by providing additional stormwater runoff control (Final Supplemental Environmental Impact Statement, Section 4.4). There are no practicable alternatives to avoid impacts to wetlands, due to the nature of stormwater conveyance and infiltration. Prior to any ground disturbing activities, the Clean Water Act Section 404 permitting process will be completed with the United States Army Corps of Engineers.
- No wetlands would be impacted in developing equipment and material laydown areas (Final Supplemental Environmental Impact Statement, Section 4.4).
- Up to 10.3 acres of wetlands will be affected by providing additional heat, water, and power through an underground utiliduct and overhead power system to the South Loop (Final Supplemental Environmental Impact Statement, Section 4.4.). A survey conducted in 2016 identified a majority of the route as uplands, with the wetlands occurring in pockets of low terrain.


Practicable alternatives were evaluated and the routing for the alternative to provide additional stormwater runoff controls and the alternative to provide additional heat, water, and power through an underground utiliduct and overhead power system minimizes affects to wetlands. Prior to any ground disturbing activities, the Clean Water Act Section 404 permitting process will be completed with the United States Army Corps of Engineers.

There are no other practicable alternatives to building in the floodplain because the majority of the F-35A facilities being developed are in the South Loop of Eielson AFB are located within the 100-year floodplain. Implementing the stormwater runoff control project, however, will improve the sheet flow around and away from F-35A facilities. The equipment and material laydown areas will be used

temporarily and then returned to their original condition. The installed utiliduct will maintain a consistent topography with the adjacent lands. Therefore, implementation of the proposed actions or alternatives will not have significant adverse impacts to water resources.

**Decision**

The Air Force will, by this decision, undertake the Proposed Actions to provide additional stormwater runoff control; develop equipment and material laydown areas; and provide additional heat, water, and power through an underground utiliduct and an overhead power system to the South Loop. These actions include all practicable means to avoid, minimize, or mitigate environmental harm. After consideration of relevant operational, environmental, economic, and technical factors, the Air Force will implement the Proposed Actions and proceed with providing additional stormwater runoff control, developing equipment and material laydown areas, and constructing an underground utiliduct and an overhead power system to provide additional heat, water, and power to the South Loop at Eielson AFB, Alaska.

  
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JENNIFER L. MILLER  
Deputy Assistant Secretary of the Air Force  
(Installations)

19 Dec 2017  
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Date