

DRAFT
FINDING OF NO SIGNIFICANT IMPACT
and
FINDING OF NO PRACTICABLE ALTERNATIVE

Installation Development Environmental Assessment
Joint Base Charleston, South Carolina

Federal actions that potentially involve significant impacts on the environment must be reviewed in accordance with the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) and all other applicable laws. The Department of the Air Force (DAF) and supported component missions have completed an Environmental Assessment (EA) to address the potential environmental consequences associated with implementing selected installation development projects on approximately 60 acres of installation property. This EA is incorporated by reference into this Finding of No Significant Impact (FONSI) / Finding of No Practicable Alternative (FONPA).

The Proposed Action would involve facilities and infrastructure construction, demolition, and additions/remodeling across the Joint Base Charleston (JBC) Air Base (JBC-AB), Weapons Station (JBC-WS), and the North Auxiliary Airfield (NAAF) installation properties. These projects include construction, renovation, demolition, and removal and replacement activities. Proposed Action elements include the following:

- Removal and replacement of civil engineering shops, sewer lift stations, water distribution system, civil engineering entomology facility, ambulatory care center facilities, and munitions facilities;
- Construction of the new Nuclear Power Training Unit (NPTU) Training Facility, NPTU substation, laser test ranges, goose creek floating dock, natural resources facilities, aircraft hydrant pits, cargo laydown area, and NAAF fire station;
- Renovation of the Old Tom Road causeway, sewer lift stations, and hazmat load and unload facility, and;
- Demolition of the Pier Bravo, water tower #2, and a dormitory.

The Proposed Action would meet ongoing mission requirements associated with improving the efficiency and effectiveness of forces by enhancing their ability to expand; replacing older, substandard facilities with new buildings; and providing reliable utilities to support JBC. Wetlands and floodplains are located within the disturbance areas for several proposed projects.

Each Proposed Action considers individualized alternatives specific to the details of the proposed projects. Multiple location and design alternatives are considered for the New NPTU Training Facility (Alternatives 1, 2, 3, 4, and No-Action), NPTU Substation (Alternatives 1, 2, and No-Action) and Old Tom Road causeway (Alternatives 1, 2, 3, and No-Action). All other Proposed Actions are evaluated on the basis of the Action Alternative (Alternative 1) and the No-Action Alternative.

These alternatives have been reviewed pursuant to provisions of the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA), Title 42 United States Code (USC) Sections 4321 to 4347, implemented by Council on Environmental Quality (CEQ) Regulations, Title 40, Code of Federal Regulations (CFR) § 1500-1508 (The 14 September 2020 version of CEQ NEPA rules is being used, 87 FR 23453-23470, as modified by the CEQ NEPA Implementing Regulations Revisions Final Rule that became effective 20 May 2022).

Public and Tribal Review and Comment

The NEPA process is designed to involve the public in the federal decision-making process. Formal notification and opportunities for public participation were provided during the preparation of this EA. Formal and informal coordination and consultation with government agencies and planners was also conducted.

The Draft EA and the Draft FONSI/FONPA were provided to federal, state, and local officials as well as federally-recognized American Indian Tribes as identified in Appendix A of the EA. The Draft EA and the Draft FONSI/FONPA were made available for public review during 30-day comment periods at the Dorchester Road Regional Library in North Charleston, South Carolina, the JBC-WS Branch Library in Goose Creek, South Carolina, and on the Joint Base Charleston public website. All substantial and relevant comments from the public and other government agencies will be addressed in the Final EA and the Final FONSI/FONPA.

Finding of No Practicable Alternative

Executive Order (EO) 11990, *Protection of Wetlands*, (24 May 1977) directs agencies to avoid to the extent possible the long- and short-term adverse impacts associated with the destruction or modification of wetlands and to avoid direct or indirect support of new construction in wetlands wherever there is a practicable alternative. Federal agencies are to avoid new construction in wetlands, unless the agency finds there is no practicable alternative to construction in the wetland and the proposed construction incorporates all possible measures to limit harm associated with development in the wetland. Agencies should use economic and environmental data, agency mission statements, and any other pertinent information when deciding whether or not to build in wetlands. EO 11990 directs each agency to provide for early public review of plans for construction in wetlands. In accordance with EO 11990 and 32 CFR Part 989, a Finding of No Practicable Alternative (FONPA) must accompany the Finding of No Significant Impact (FONSI) stating why there are no practicable alternatives to development within or affecting wetland areas.

Similarly, EO 11988, *Floodplain Management* (May 24, 1977), requires Federal agencies to avoid to the extent possible the long and short-term adverse impacts associated with the occupancy and modification of floodplains and to avoid direct and indirect support of floodplain development wherever there is a practicable alternative. If it is found that there is no practicable alternative, the agency must minimize potential harm to the floodplain and circulate a notice explaining why the action is to be located in the floodplain prior to taking action. Finally, new construction in a floodplain must apply accepted flood proofing and flood protection to include elevating structures above the base flood level rather than filling in land. In accordance with EO 11988, a FONPA must accompany the FONSI stating why there are no practicable alternatives to development within or affecting floodplains.

The Proposed Actions would result in impacts to both wetlands and floodplains. The following FONPA is therefore presented with the FONSI, pursuant to EO 11990 and EO 11988.

Notice of Wetland Involvement

As guided by EO 11990, the DAF hereby provides notice of the potential for wetland impacts. The DAF has a no net loss policy on wetlands and acknowledges 1.7, 0.25, 8.0, and 16 acres of wetland area in New NPTU Training Facility alternatives 1, 2, 3, and 4, respectively, 0.46, 0.3 and 0.25 acre of wetland area for the Old Tom Road Causeway alternatives 1, 2, and 3, respectively, 0.14 acre of wetland area in the 1.25 km Goose Creek Laser Test Range (LTR), and 0.82 acre of wetland area in the 2.05 km LTR, while it is noted that the Goose Creek floating dock and Pier Bravo include areas of open water. Because the design will minimize impacts to wetlands and any mitigation required by the permit would be

implemented, any effects to wetlands would be minor. The maximum anticipated wetland area to be impacted by any of the Proposed Action components is 0.5 acres. Other alternatives were reviewed during the EA development process, but they were eliminated from further detailed analysis in the EA because they did not meet the stated purpose and need for the Proposed Action, were not practicable, or would have led to greater overall environmental impact. The only practicable alternatives are described in the “Description of the Proposed Action and Alternatives” section of this EA. For the reasons stated in the EA, the dismissed alternatives are not practicable alternatives for avoiding the potential wetland impacts from the New NPTU Training Facility and Old Tom Road Causeway Improvement actions.

Notice of Floodplain Involvement

As guided by EO 11988, the DAF hereby provides notice of work within floodplains. Proposed Action components that include work within floodplains include both LTRs, the New NPTU Training Facility, NPTU multi-use pathway, Old Tom Road Causeway, sewer lift station replacements, water distribution system repairs, Goose Creek floating dock, and Pier Bravo. There is no practicable alternative to implementing the Preferred Alternative without working within floodplains. Sea level rise and flood events will have an increasing impact on the installation in coming years. Implementation of the Proposed Actions would not increase the frequency, duration, depth, or velocity of flood flows. As with all environmental restorations, projects and tasks must be completed within those ecosystems if an effective restoration is to occur. Short-term negative impacts will quickly be overcome by long-term gains of this action. As stated in the attached EA, practicable alternatives that would avoid work in the floodplain are not available for the proposed actions. There would be no additional encroachment into the floodplain beyond what is necessary to provide adequate erosion protection impacts from development under the Proposed Action.

Pursuant to EO 11988, Floodplain Management, and the authority delegated by the Secretary of the Air Force Order 791.1, *Environment*, and taking the previous information in account, I find that there is no practicable alternative for the Proposed Action.

Finding of No Significant Impact

Based on the information and analysis presented in the EA conducted in accordance with the requirements of the NEPA, the CEQ regulations, and the DAF regulations as set forth in 32 CFR 989, (EIAP), as amended, and after a review of the agency comments submitted during the 30-day public comment period, I conclude that implementation of the Proposed Action, under any of the considered alternatives, will not have a significant impact on the quality of the human and natural environment and, therefore, an Environmental Impact Statement is not warranted. This decision has been made after taking into account all the submitted information, and after considering a full range of practicable alternatives that will meet project requirements and are within the legal authority of the DAF.

RAYMOND DECK
Deputy Base Civil Engineer
628th Civil Engineer Squadron
Joint Base Charleston

DATE

Attachment:

1. Installation Development Environmental Assessment at Joint Base Charleston, South Carolina