

**NATIONAL AERONAUTICS AND SPACE ADMINISTRATION (NASA)**

**NOTICE: WFF-13-02**

**NATIONAL ENVIRONMENTAL POLICY ACT (NEPA): U.S. Navy E-2/C-2 Field Carrier Landing Practice (FCLP) Operations at the Wallops Flight Facility (WFF)**

**AGENCY: NASA Goddard Space Flight Center's (GSFC) WFF**

**ACTION: Finding of No Significant Impact (FONSI)**

**SUMMARY:** Pursuant to the NEPA of 1969, as amended (42 U.S.C. 4321 et seq.), the Council on Environmental Quality Regulations for Implementing NEPA (40 CFR Parts 1500-1508), and NASA policy and procedures (14 CFR Part 1216 Subpart 1216.3), NASA has made a Finding of No Significant Impact with respect to the proposed U.S. Navy E-2/C-2 FCLP at WFF. NASA's proposed action would be the authorization of regularly scheduled U.S. Navy E-2C Hawkeye, E-2D Advanced Hawkeye, and C-2A Greyhound FCLP operations at WFF, Accomack County, Virginia.

**ADDRESS:** The Final Environmental Assessment (EA) that supports and serves as a basis for this FONSI may be reviewed at:

- Chincoteague Island Library, Chincoteague, Virginia
- Wallops Flight Facility Visitor's Center, Route 175 near Chincoteague, Virginia
- Eastern Shore Public Library, Accomack, Virginia

An electronic copy of the Final EA is available on the Internet at [http://sites.wff.nasa.gov/code250/FCLP\\_EA.html](http://sites.wff.nasa.gov/code250/FCLP_EA.html).

A limited number of copies of the EA may be obtained by contacting the NASA representative at the address or telephone number indicated below.

**FOR FURTHER INFORMATION, CONTACT:** Mr. Joshua Bundick, NASA Wallops Flight Facility, Mailstop: 250.W, Wallops Island, VA, Phone: (757) 824-2319, Email: [Joshua.A.Bundick@nasa.gov](mailto:Joshua.A.Bundick@nasa.gov).

**SUPPLEMENTAL INFORMATION:**

In response to a local shortfall in training capacity for E-2/C-2 squadrons operating from Naval Station Norfolk Chambers Field, Virginia, the U.S. Navy Fleet Forces Command (Navy) prepared an EA to examine the potential environmental effects of conducting such operations at suitable facilities within 90 nautical miles of Chambers Field. NASA served as a Cooperating Agency in preparing the EA.

Subsequent to preparing the Final EA, on January 15, 2013, the Navy issued a FONSI for the proposal, indicating that in accordance with its NEPA policy and procedures, an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) was not required.

Both the Final EA and Navy FONSI are incorporated by reference in this document.

Though the Navy did not identify a preferred alternative in its Final EA or FONSI, on January 24, 2013, the Navy issued a public notice identifying WFF as its preferred site of operation. As such, the focus of this FONSI is NASA's consideration of the Navy's request to use the WFF airfield to meet its E-2/C-2 FCLP training requirements.

#### Alternatives Considered

The EA evaluates in detail three alternatives. Alternative 1 would involve two scenarios for conducting up to 45,000 E-2/C-2 operations annually at Emporia-Greenville Regional Airport. Under Alternative 2, the Navy would conduct the same general type and frequency of operations at NASA's WFF, with up to 30,000 FCLP operations using a five-plane pattern and up to 15,000 operations using a three-plane pattern, for a total of 45,000 operations. Two options were assessed for WFF: 1) use of Runway 04/22 and 2) use of Runway 10/28. In addition to the actual flight operations at WFF, aircraft refueling and overnight detachments could occur at the WFF Main Base, should requirements warrant. At either of the two alternative sites, the Navy would require minor airfield infrastructure improvements, including the installation of concrete pads, runway markings, runway lighting, and utility trenching. The third alternative evaluated in the EA is the No Action Alternative, under which the Navy would continue to conduct E-2/C-2 FCLP operations at both local (e.g., Fentress, Oceana, Virginia) and non-local (Whitehouse, Florida) facilities as practicable; however, periodic capacity shortfalls would continue.

In addition to those alternatives evaluated in detail, the Navy considered multiple airports in both Virginia and North Carolina based upon a defined set of criteria. Of those considered, only Emporia-Greenville and WFF met all selection criteria and indicated a continued interest in hosting the operation.

#### Environmental Analysis

The EA examines potential effects of the proposed action on physical, biological, and social resources. These include, but are not limited to, land use, soils, wetlands, forests, groundwater, surface water, wildlife, terrestrial habitat, aquatic habitat, biological resources, endangered species, cultural resources, and environmental justice. In summary, the EA concludes that potential effects to resources would be negligible to minor. NASA concurs with the Navy's findings in the EA.

#### Public Involvement

The Navy notified the public of the availability of the Draft EA through a combination of press releases, mailed correspondence, and published notices in multiple local newspapers. The Draft EA was also available for public review on the internet, at local libraries, and at the WFF Visitor Center. During the approximately 44-day public comment period, the Navy hosted two public information meetings, one of which was held at the WFF Visitor Center.

Of the comments the Navy received during the public review period, the majority of them were form letters from nearby property owners expressing concerns regarding noise, safety, biological resources, socioeconomics, and other quality of life issues. Other commentors offered support for the proposal, citing economic benefits and the need to maintain a well-trained military. In preparing the Final EA, the Navy considered all comments received. In fact, the Navy modified both the altitude and location of its FCLP holding pattern at WFF in response to concerns raised regarding aircraft noise.


#### Related Environmental Reviews


While preparing the E-2/C-2 FCLP EA, NASA participated in the Navy's consultations pursuant to the Endangered Species Act (16 U.S.C. 1531 et seq.), National Historic Preservation Act (16 U.S.C. 470 et seq.), and Coastal Zone Management Act (16 U.S.C. 1451 et seq.). As such, NASA met its obligations with respect to these statutes in parallel with the development of the EA.

#### Conclusion

NASA has concluded that the EA prepared by the Navy adequately describes its proposed action, the potential environmental effects of its action, and in all other respects meets its requirements for an EA. NASA, therefore, adopts the January 2013 Final E-2/C-2 FCLP EA.

On the basis of the Final EA, NASA has determined that the environmental impacts associated with its authorizing the use of the WFF airfield for U.S. Navy E-2/C-2 FCLP operations will not individually or cumulatively have a significant impact on the quality of the human environment. Therefore, an EIS is not required.

  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Christopher J. Scolese  
Director  
Goddard Space Flight Center

  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Date