

NATIONAL AERONAUTICS AND SPACE ADMINISTRATION (NASA)

NATIONAL ENVIRONMENTAL POLICY ACT: Wallops Island Northern Development

AGENCY: NASA Goddard Space Flight Center's Wallops Flight Facility

ACTION: Finding of No Significant Impact

SUMMARY: Pursuant to the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) of 1969, as amended (42 United States Code [U.S.C.] 4321 et seq.), the Council on Environmental Quality Regulations for Implementing NEPA (40 Code of Federal Regulations [CFR] Parts 1500-1508), and National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA) policy and procedures (14 CFR Part 1216 Subpart 1216.3), NASA has made a Finding of No Significant Impact (FONSI) with respect to its proposed infrastructure developments on the north end of Wallops Island at the Wallops Flight Facility (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, VA
- Eastern Shore Public Library, Accomack, VA
- Northampton Free Library, Nassawadox, VA

An electronic copy of the Final EA is available online at: <https://code200-external.gsfc.nasa.gov/250-WFF/WIND-EA>.

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:

Shari Miller
Center NEPA Manager
Mailstop: 250. W
Wallops Island, Virginia 23337
Phone: 757-824-2327
E-mail: Shari.A.Miller@nasa.gov

SUPPLEMENTAL INFORMATION:

In accordance with the United States (U.S.) Department of Transportation's Maritime Administration (MARAD) "Marine Highway Program's" M-95 Marine Highway, which is among several Marine Highway corridors designated around the U.S. to encourage the expanded use of America's navigable waters, NASA is proposing new infrastructure developments at WFF. These developments would provide a port and operations area, including enhanced operational capabilities for NASA and the Mid-Atlantic Regional Spaceport (MARS). The Virginia Commercial Space Flight Authority (VCSFA), through MARS, operates launch pads on the south end of Wallops Island and the Unmanned Aerial Systems (UAS) airstrip on the south end. The Project Area would be located at, and in the vicinity of, the MARS UAS Airstrip on the north end

of Wallops Island. The Final EA is tiered from the May 2019 *NASA WFF Site-wide Programmatic Environmental Impact Statement (Final Site-wide PEIS)*, and this document is incorporated by reference throughout the EA.

The proposal by NASA generally includes the following actions: channel dredging; construction of a new pier; construction of a second hangar at the UAS Airstrip; installation of new utility infrastructure; installation of new airstrip lighting and hardening of a section of runway; improvements to the UAS Airstrip access road including widening of an existing culvert; construction of a new pier access road; construction of a new project support building; and construction of a new vehicle parking lot. These actions would be completed in phases. Phase 1 would include construction of all onshore components and infrastructure and in-water construction of a fixed pier, turning basin at the end of the pier, and dredging of the vessel approach channel from Chincoteague Inlet Channel. Phase 2 would include extension of the fixed pier and enlarging of the turning basin. Phase 3 would include additional dredging of the turning basin as well as deepening the vessel approach channel. To support ongoing shoreline enhancement and restoration, all dredged material from Phase 1 would be placed at the North Wallops Island beach borrow area while Phase 2 and Phase 3 dredged material may be placed within the previously analyzed Wallops Island Shoreline Enhancement and Restoration Project area.

NASA is the lead agency for the EA. MARAD, VCSFA, and the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers served as Cooperating Agencies in preparing the EA as all have specialized expertise and regulatory authority regarding the proposal.

Alternatives Considered

The EA evaluates in detail three alternatives and the No Action Alternative. Under the Proposed Action, the MARS Port and associated infrastructure components would be located adjacent to the existing UAS Airstrip. The Proposed Action would implement Phase 1, Phase 2, and Phase 3 in consecutive order and as funding becomes available. Alternative 1 would implement Phase 1 only. Alternative 2 would implement Phases 1 and 2 only. Under the No Action Alternative, NASA would not develop the north end of Wallops Island nor construct a new MARS Port.

NASA has selected the Proposed Action, implementation of Phases 1, 2, and 3, as the Preferred Alternative.

Environmental Analysis

The EA examines the potential effects of all alternatives on physical, biological, and social resources. Resources evaluated in detail include airborne noise; munitions and explosives of concern; health and safety; land resources; water resources including surface water, groundwater, wetlands, floodplains, coastal zone, and sea-level rise; vegetation; wildlife; essential fish habitat; special-status species; transportation; infrastructure and utilities; recreation; and cultural resources. In summary, the EA concludes that potential effects to these resources would be negligible to less-than-significant and would fall within the bounds of analysis in the Final Site-wide PEIS.

Public Involvement

NASA initiated consultation with federal, state, and local government agencies on October 9, 2020, to obtain input on the development of the EA.

NASA notified the public of the availability of the Draft EA for review and comment during a 30-day public comment period through advertisements placed in the Chincoteague Beacon, the Eastern Shore News, and the Eastern Shore Post. Federal, state, and local agencies and members of the public were invited to provide written comments on the Draft EA during the comment period from December 15, 2021, to January 17, 2022. An electronic version of the Draft EA along with a summary presentation were available for public viewing online at: <https://code200-external.gsfc.nasa.gov/250-WFF/WIND-EA>. In preparing the Final EA, NASA considered all comments received.

The Final EA and FONSI are also available for review on the project website. As with the Draft EA, notices of availability were placed in the Chincoteague Beacon, the Eastern Shore News, and the Eastern Shore Post.

Related Environmental Reviews

While preparing the EA, NASA conducted consultations pursuant to the Endangered Species Act (16 U.S.C. 1531 et seq.), Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act (16 U.S.C. 1801 et seq.), National Historic Preservation Act (16 U.S.C. 470 et seq.), Clean Water Act (33 U.S.C. 1251 et seq.), and Coastal Zone Management Act (16 U.S.C. 1451 et seq.). As such, NASA has met its obligations with respect to these statutes in parallel with the development of the EA.

Conclusion

In accordance with the Final Site-wide PEIS, NASA prepared the EA prior to constructing and operating new facilities and infrastructure at WFF. On the basis of the Final EA, NASA has determined that the environmental impacts associated with constructing the MARS Port and associated onshore infrastructure, installing the fixed pier, dredging for a vessel turning basin and approach channel, and placement of the dredged material will not individually or cumulatively have a significant impact on the quality of the human environment and that these actions are consistent with the Final Site-wide PEIS. Therefore, a new Environmental Impact Statement is not required.

David L. Pierce
Director, Wallops Flight Facility

Date