

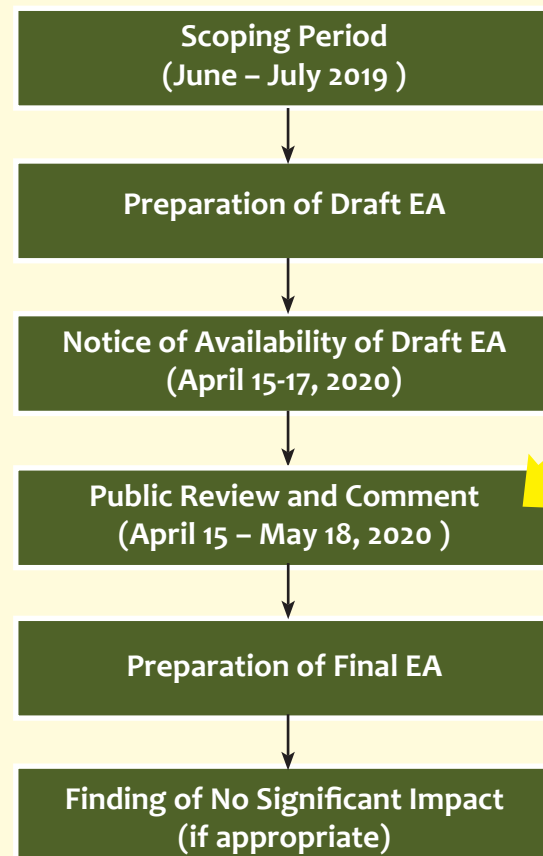
### What is the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA)?

NEPA establishes a framework for considering the scope of environmental issues and concerns early in the Federal decision-making process. Public involvement is an essential part of the process. Through involving the public and completing a detailed environmental analysis, the NEPA process helps the decision-maker arrive at the best possible informed decision.

### How are Stakeholders and the Public Involved?

During the Scoping Period, NASA sought input and suggestions from stakeholders on proposed activities to be addressed in the EA. Following data collection and research, the Proposed Action's potential effects on resources were analyzed and the type and extent of impacts were identified.

NASA is seeking public comments on the analysis and findings presented in the Draft EA during the public comment period (April 15 – May 18, 2020). Written comments will be accepted throughout the public comment period. Responses to relevant comments on the Draft EA will be included in the preparation of the Final EA.



### How Can You Be Involved?

Your involvement in the decision-making process is important to NASA. There are a number of ways to submit a comment on the Draft EA:

1. Visit the project website:  
[https://code200-external.gsfc.nasa.gov/250-WFF/Marsh\\_Fiber\\_EA](https://code200-external.gsfc.nasa.gov/250-WFF/Marsh_Fiber_EA)
2. Mail, email, or fax your comments:

Shari Miller  
NASA Wallops Flight Facility  
Mailstop: 250. W  
Wallops Island, VA 23337  
Shari.A.Miller@nasa.gov  
Fax (757) 824-1819

To ensure consideration in the Final EA, please provide comments no later than **May 18, 2020**.

# FACT SHEET

## Wallops Flight Facility Marsh Fiber Project Environmental Assessment

The National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA) Goddard Space Flight Center's Wallops Flight Facility (WFF), in conjunction with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS), has prepared an Environmental Assessment (EA) to evaluate the potential impacts of installing a new fiber optic cable between the USFWS Wallops Island National Wildlife Refuge (NWR) and NASA's Wallops Island.

### Why Did WFF Prepare an EA?

As required by the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA), NASA must evaluate the potential environmental impacts of a proposed action. The EA has been prepared to determine if impacts would be significant, in which case NASA would be required to prepare an Environmental Impact Statement.

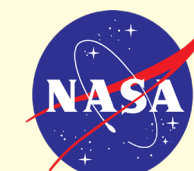
### What is the Purpose and Need of the Marsh Fiber Project?

**Purpose:** To provide a redundant, geographically diverse and reliable means of fiber optic command and communications for NASA, Department of Defense, and commercial systems on Wallops Island. The existing fiber optic cable along Atlantic Road would remain in operation as a backup.

**Need:** WFF has one operational fiber optic cable system providing command and communications data from the Main Base to Wallops Island. Having a single fiber optic cable system puts NASA, its tenants, and the public at risk for unacceptable disruptions to launch command and information technology services if the existing Atlantic Road cable were to become damaged or fail since there is no back-up system.

### What is Evaluated in the EA?

The Draft EA evaluates the environmental consequences of NASA's Proposed Action to install a new fiber optic cable.



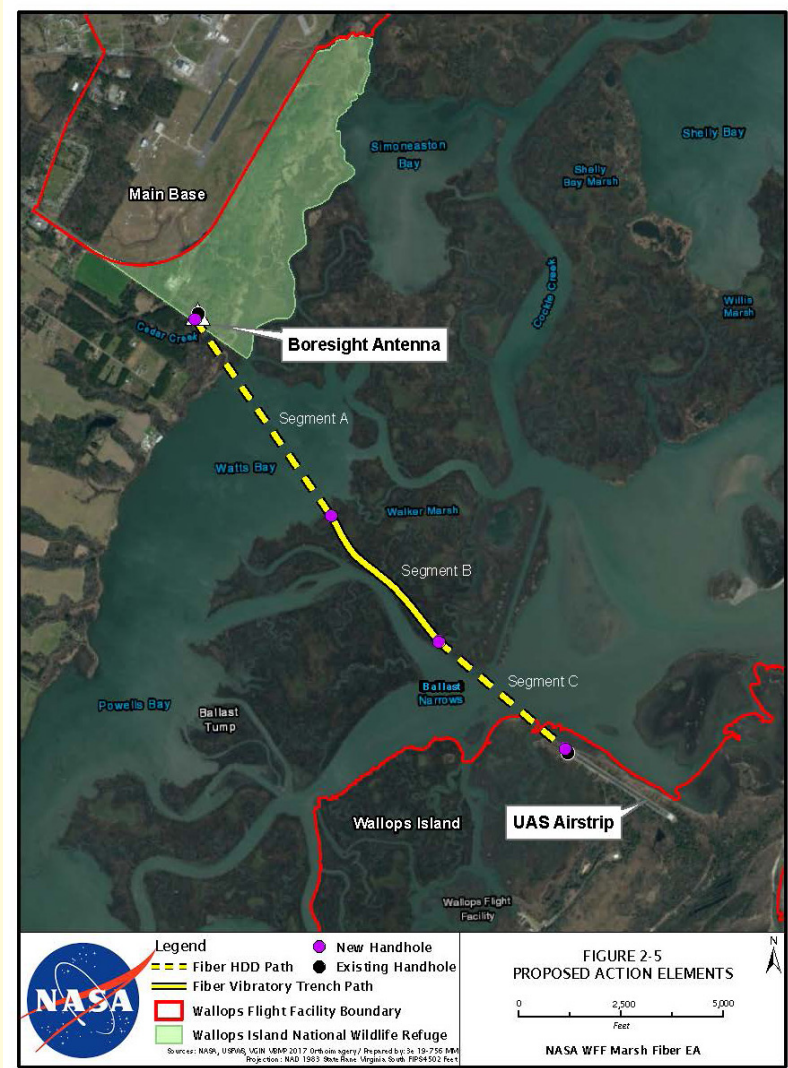
**What is the Proposed Project?** Install a new fiber optic cable between the U. S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) Wallops Island National Wildlife Refuge (NWR) near the Wallops Flight Facility (WFF) Main Base and Wallops Island.

**What Alternatives Were Evaluated?** NASA initially considered seven action alternatives; six were dismissed from evaluation in the EA because they did not pass all screening criteria. NASA is evaluating the Proposed Action and the No Action Alternative in the EA.

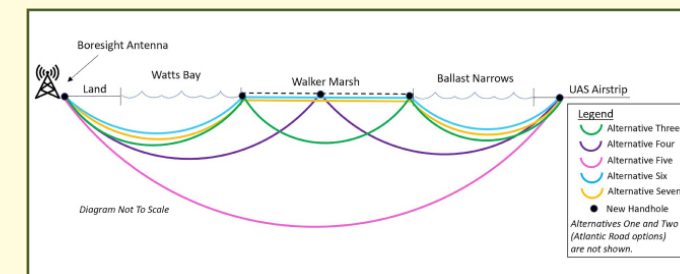
**What is the Proposed Action?** NASA would install a new fiber optic cable between the Boresight Antenna on the USFWS Wallops Island NWR and NASA's Unmanned Aerial Systems Airstrip on Wallops Island using the following methods:

- Horizontal Directional Drilling (HDD) using a full-size drill rig (Maxi HDD) to install the fiber optic cable under Watts Bay (with an exit on the west edge of Walker Marsh), and under Ballast Narrows (with an exit on the east edge of Walker Marsh).
- Vibratory trenching using low-pressure equipment across the saltmarsh and between the guts in Walker Marsh.
- HDD using smaller-scale drilling equipment (Mini HDD) to install the cable beneath three open water guts in Walker Marsh.

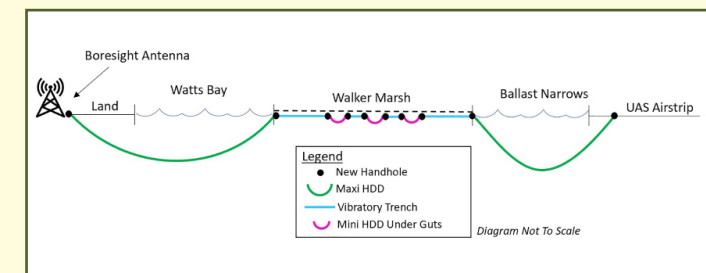
**What is the No Action Alternative?** This alternative is required in NEPA analyses and serves as a baseline for comparing impacts of the Proposed Action. The No Action Alternative for this EA means that NASA would not install a new fiber optic cable and would continue to rely on the existing fiber optic cable, leaving WFF without a backup or diverse command and communication system between the Main Base and Wallops Island.



### Alternatives



### Proposed Action



### Environmental Impacts and Permitting

The EA analyzes the potential effects of the Proposed Action on the following resources: land, water, biological, socioeconomic, and cultural. No significant impacts are anticipated to result from the Project.

The following consultations and permits are required for the Proposed Action. Some have been completed and others are ongoing and will be completed before any action is taken.

- Clean Water Act permits (to disturb wetlands and subaqueous bottomlands):
  - Nationwide Permit 12 from U.S. Army Corps of Engineers
  - Tidal Wetlands Permit from Virginia Marine Resources Commission (VMRC)
  - Subaqueous Bottom Permit from VMRC
  - Accomack County Wetlands Board Permit
- Construction Site Stormwater Permit from Virginia Department of Environmental Quality (VDEQ)
- Endangered Species Act consultation with National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) and U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
- Essential Fish Habitat consultation with NMFS
- National Historic Preservation Act consultation with Virginia Department of Historic Resources
- Federal Coastal Consistency Determination from VDEQ