

**DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE
DEPARTMENT OF THE NAVY**

**FINDING OF NO SIGNIFICANT IMPACT FOR THE E-2/C-2 FIELD CARRIER
LANDING PRACTICE OPERATIONS AT EMPORIA-GREENSVILLE REGIONAL
AIRPORT, GREENSVILLE COUNTY, VIRGINIA AND NATIONAL AERONAUTICS
AND SPACE ADMINISTRATION WALLOPS FLIGHT FACILITY, ACCOMACK
COUNTY, VIRGINIA.**

INTRODUCTION

Pursuant to the Council on Environmental Quality regulation (40 CFR 1500-1508) implementing the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) of 1969, Navy Regulations (32 CFR Part 775), and Chief of Naval Operations Instruction 5090.1C, the Department of the Navy gives notice that an Environmental Assessment (EA) has been prepared and a Finding of No Significant Impact (FONSI) has been issued evaluating the potential environmental consequences of the U.S. Department of the Navy's (Navy's) proposed action to conduct regular, scheduled E-2C Hawkeye, E-2D Advanced Hawkeye, and C-2A Greyhound (E-2/C-2) Field Carrier Landing Practice (FCLP) operations at a local airfield. For the purposes of this document, local is defined as within 90 nautical miles of Naval Station (NS) Norfolk Chambers Field, in Norfolk, Virginia.

PURPOSE AND NEED

The purpose of the proposed action is to provide additional local FCLP training capacity for E-2/C-2 squadrons operating from NS Norfolk Chambers Field. Naval Auxiliary Landing Field (NALF) Fentress, the single, local FCLP outlying landing field (OLF) supporting two major naval air installations, Naval Air Station (NAS) Oceana and NS Norfolk Chambers Field, provides the only dedicated local FCLP training environment specifically for meeting both fleet squadron and Fleet Replacement Squadron (FRS) FCLP requirements for three airframes (FA-18, E-2, and C-2). NALF Fentress lacks the capacity to support local E-2/C-2 FCLP training requirements under all operational conditions. As a result, FCLP training is routinely conducted at NALF Fentress during late night and early morning hours (from 10:00 p.m. to 7:00 a.m.). Having only one OLF to support two major naval air installations can also result in periodic FCLP training capacity shortfalls, necessitating the use of alternative airfields that are configured and equipped to support FCLP, such as Naval Outlying Landing Field Whitehouse, Florida, and NAS Oceana.

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DESCRIPTION OF THE PROPOSED ACTION

The proposed action is to acquire the use of an additional local airfield to support FCLP for E-2/C-2 squadrons operating from NS Norfolk Chambers Field. The proposed action also includes minor modifications to the airfield infrastructure to support FCLP operations.

ALTERNATIVES

The EA analyzed two action alternatives and a No Action Alternative.

Alternative 1. The Navy would conduct up to 45,000 E-2/C-2 FCLP operations annually at Emporia-Greensville Regional Airport (Emporia-Greensville). Given the transit distance from NS Norfolk Chambers Field, there would not be a need to refuel aircraft at Emporia-Greensville during routine FCLP training operations. In addition, pilots would not detach to Emporia-Greensville, i.e., stay overnight, or conduct full stop landings at the airport under normal conditions.

This alternative evaluates the impacts of two operational scenarios for Emporia-Greensville. Scenario 1 is a pattern with up to three planes. This scenario would include up to 30,000 FRS E-2/C-2 operations and up to 15,000 fleet squadron operations, for a total of up to 45,000 operations. Scenario 2 would include up to 30,000 FCLP operations using a five-plane pattern and up to 15,000 FCLP operations using a three-plane pattern for a total of up to 45,000 FCLP operations.

Under either scenario evaluated under Alternative 1, minor airfield infrastructure modifications would be required, including the installation of concrete pads, runway markings, runway lighting, and utility trenching.

Alternative 2. The Navy would conduct up to 45,000 E-2/C-2 FCLP operations annually at the National Aeronautics and Space Administration Wallops Flight Facility (WFF). Aircraft refueling and overnight detachments could occur at NASA WFF Main Base if this alternative is chosen.

This alternative evaluates a combination of three- and five-plane patterns, where up to 30,000 FCLP operations would be conducted using a five-plane pattern and up to 15,000 FCLP

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operations would be conducted using a three-plane pattern for a total of up to 45,000 FCLP operations. There are also two scenarios analyzed under this alternative: Scenario 1 would include use of Runway 04/22, while Scenario 2 would include use of Runway 10/28.

Two of the four runway ends at WFF could be utilized for E-2/C-2 FCLP operations if operations could be conducted during the day and at night (i.e., under either Scenario 1 or Scenario 2); however, daytime-only FCLP operations could be conducted on up to four runway ends if the Navy equipped all four locations. "Night" is defined as flying after sunset and, at times during the year, could begin as early as 5:30 p.m. This option (conduct daytime operations on four runway ends) is covered under the analysis for Scenarios 1 and 2 for WFF since noise contours and flight tracks for this option would fall within those modeled for these two scenarios.

Under either scenario evaluated under Alternative 2, minor airfield infrastructure modifications would be required, including the installation of concrete pads, runway markings, runway lighting, and utility trenching.

ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACTS OF THE PROPOSED ACTION

Direct, indirect, and cumulative environmental impacts that would occur with implementation of the proposed action at either site under Navy analysis, would result in no significant impacts to the human environment. Therefore, the preparation of an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) is not required.

Aircraft operations and airspace. The proposed action would not result in significant impacts to aircraft operations or airspace at either Emporia-Greensville or WFF Main Base. During FCLP operations, non-participating aircraft would be prohibited from using the runway while Navy FCLP training is taking place except in the case of an emergency; however, no permanent airspace designations at either airport would change as a result of the Navy's proposed action.

Safety. The proposed action would not result in significant impacts to airfield safety under any of the alternatives. The runway protection zones and associated land use controls at Emporia-Greensville would not change as a result of the Navy's

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proposed action. As well, the clear zones, potential accident zones, and restrictions on lands that fall within these zones at WFF Main Base would not change as a result of the Navy's proposed action. Emporia-Greensville or WFF Main Base airport staff would issue a Notice to Airmen (NOTAM) announcing the closure of the airfield during FCLP operations. The airfield universal communications (UNICOM) frequency would be monitored continuously during FCLP operations at Emporia-Greensville or WFF Main Base. Any non-FCLP aircraft approaching the airfield would be informed of the airfield status and directed to remain clear. Bird/Animal Aircraft Strike Hazard (BASH) management would be provided by the chosen airfield or a third-party services contract, as needed, to assist in managing any potential increase in the risk of bird/animal-aircraft interactions. WFF Main Base already has a robust BASH program which would be expanded, as necessary, as part of a service agreement with the Navy. A similar agreement would need to be put in place at Emporia-Greensville to manage the BASH risk.

Air quality. Conducting FCLP operations at either alternative would not result in significant impacts to air quality. Emporia-Greensville and WFF Main Base are located in regions that are in attainment for all criteria pollutants; therefore, the Clean Air Act General Conformity Rule does not apply. Both temporary construction emissions and annual operating emissions would be below 250 tons per year for all criteria emissions. Therefore, there would be no significant impact on air quality in the regions analyzed.

Noise. Although noise levels would increase at Emporia-Greensville under Alternative 1, under both scenarios, there would be no significant noise impacts for either scenario. The 70 Decibel (dB) Day-Night Level (DNL) noise contours would be wholly contained within the Emporia-Greensville airport property and only one residence is located within the 65 dB DNL noise contour. Additionally, noise generated from the Navy's proposed action would be temporary and intermittent, and the noise would be consistent with the existing uses of the airport, including existing military operations (helicopter noise). The two identified E-2/C-2 holding patterns in the draft EA have been reduced to only one holding pattern with the pattern altitude elevated to at or above 3,500 feet instead of 2,000 feet. These adjustments reduce potential aircraft noise associated with the Navy's proposed action and minimize noise

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over more populated areas. Therefore, there would be no significant noise impact under Alternative 1 for either scenario.

Because the proposed airport infrastructure changes at the Emporia-Greenville Regional Airport are subject to Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) approval, the FAA is participating in the analysis of Alternative 1 as a cooperating agency. For the purpose of supporting the FAA's action, the analysis of Alternative 1 has been expanded to include specific FAA requirements. For FAA-regulated airports, FAA policy designates the DNL 65 dB contour as the cumulative noise exposure level above which residential land uses are not considered compatible. Based on the land use compatibility analysis, local land use controls, and comments received from the FAA, one residence is identified within the proposed 65 dB contour near Emporia-Greenville for either scenario under Alternative 1. Prior to taking action, the FAA requires the land use designation for this property be changed to reflect a non-residential status, and the Emporia-Greenville Regional Airport Commission has agreed to purchase the property under their authority and convert the land use to non-residential use.

Under Alternative 2 for both Scenarios 1 and 2, at WFF, there would be no significant noise impacts when compared to existing conditions. Only a small percentage of the total population of Accomack County would be impacted by the minor increase in noise around WFF Main Base. For Alternative 2, Scenario 1, this would impact approximately 268 individuals who were previously not within the greater than 65 dB DNL noise contour, or about 0.8 percent of the total population of Accomack County. For Alternative 2, Scenario 2, the increase in noise would impact approximately 173 individuals, which would equate to 0.5 percent of the population of Accomack County.

The majority of individuals that would be impacted by the increase in noise under Alternative 2, Scenario 1 or 2, would be in the Trails End community. Trails End is a private waterfront campground resort, zoned for agricultural use, which was built near the end of the WFF main base preexisting active runway. The campground is advertised and operated as a temporary lodging/camping resort; therefore a majority of the residents do not live in the community full-time. The increase in noise would also be temporary and intermittent, and the aircraft

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operations generating the noise would be consistent with the existing operations at WFF. Additionally, there would not be a significant risk for potential loss of hearing associated with either scenario from the Navy's proposed action at WFF Main Base. The two identified E-2/C-2 holding patterns in the draft EA have been reduced to only one holding pattern with the pattern altitude elevated to at or above 3,500 feet instead of 2,000 feet. These adjustments reduce potential aircraft noise associated with the Navy's proposed action and minimize noise over more populated areas. Therefore, there would be no significant impact from noise as a result of the Navy's implementation of Alternative 2 for either Scenario 1 or 2 at WFF Main Base. Furthermore, there would also be no significant impact from noise if the option of conducting daytime operations on both Runways 04/22 and 10/28 is chosen, as the noise contours for this option would fall within the modeled noise contours for Scenarios 1 and 2.

Land Use. Neither of the two action alternatives would result in significant impacts to land use. One residence is identified within the proposed 65 dB noise zone for either scenario under Alternative 1. To meet FAA-specific NEPA requirements, the Emporia-Greensville Regional Airport Commission has agreed to purchase the residence property under FAA authority and convert the land use to non-residential use. All existing land use, except for the zoning change to the one residence near Emporia-Greensville as a result of FAA requirements, would be expected to continue under both Alternative 1 and Alternative 2. Given the existing noise environments and the minimal increase in the size of the noise contours over baseline conditions at Emporia-Greensville and WFF Main Base, the increase would not be considered a significant impact to land use by the Navy for either alternative.

Infrastructure and Utilities; Visual Landscape; Geology, Topography, and Soils; Cultural Resources; and Environmental Management. Neither of the two action alternatives would result in significant impacts to infrastructure and utilities; visual landscape; geology, topography and soils; cultural resources; or environmental management. Under either alternative, the new telephone and electric lines associated with the proposed airfield infrastructure improvements would attach into the grid at existing connections and would operate within existing capacity. During FCLP training, the existing airport runway

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lights would be turned off and only the semi-flush, unidirectional deck lights emitting white light to simulate aircraft carrier decks would be used. No increase in off-site lighting at ground level is projected from either airfield. Standard soil erosion and sedimentation controls, best management practices, and appropriate re-vegetation would be carried out to mitigate any potential impacts. The Navy consulted with the Virginia State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO) and the SHPO concurred with the Navy's determination that Alternatives 1 and 2 would have no effect on historical resources. Under Alternative 1, no aircraft or personnel would be permanently stationed or homebased at Emporia-Greenville; therefore, the Navy would not have a need to store any oil or hazardous materials at the airfield. Under Alternative 2, there could be some temporary oil and hazardous materials associated with aircraft maintenance stored at the airfield. However, the Navy would conform to WFF's standard operating procedures, and there would be a negligible increase in solid waste; therefore, there would be no significant impact to pollution prevention or the level of solid waste produced.

Water Resources. There would be no significant impacts to water resources for either action alternative. No construction would occur within floodplains or wetlands under either alternative. Under Alternative 1, minor construction would disturb less than 1 acre and, with employment of erosion control measures, would have no significant impacts to stormwater. Under Alternative 2, a maximum of 0.05 acres of new impervious surface would be constructed which would not significantly contribute to additional stormwater discharge to surface waters. Since WFF falls within Virginia's Coastal Zone, the Navy submitted a Coastal Consistency Determination (CCD) to the Virginia Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ) in accordance with the Coastal Zone Management Act (CZMA) of 1972. The Virginia DEQ concurred with the Navy's finding that the proposed action under Alternative 2 would be consistent with the Virginia Coastal Zone Management Program.

Biological Resources. Construction activities would not result in significant impacts to biological resources. Under both action alternatives, installation of buried utility lines would result in temporary impacts on maintained grassland. Due to the small area impacted, the unlikelihood of maintained grassland supporting many wildlife/bird species, and the temporary nature

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of the impact, construction would not have a significant impact on wildlife or avian resources under either alternative.

Under Alternative 1 at Emporia-Greenville, the increase in noise from aircraft operations could have direct impacts on wildlife, however, scientific literature indicates that intensities and durations of wildlife startle responses decrease with the number and frequency of exposures. Most wildlife in the vicinity of Emporia-Greenville Airport would likely already be or become acclimated to aircraft noise. Therefore, noise associated with aircraft operations would have no significant impact on wildlife for the duration of the Navy's proposed action.

Federally threatened or endangered species were identified as potentially occurring in the vicinity of Emporia-Greenville. However, no suitable habitat for the identified species occurs within the action areas or would be affected by the implementation of Alternative 1. Therefore, there would be no significant impact on and no effect on federally listed species under Alternative 1, either scenario.

An increase in air operations due to the Navy's proposed action could result in a minor increase in the potential of an in-air bird strike at Emporia-Greenville; however BASH management measures would be implemented and standard operating procedures would be followed to minimize the strike risk. Given these considerations, there would be no significant impact to birds in flight under Alternative 1.

Under Alternative 2 at WFF, the increase in noise from aircraft operations could have direct impacts on wildlife, however, scientific literature indicates that intensities and durations of wildlife startle responses decrease with the number and frequency of exposures. Most wildlife in the vicinity of WFF airfield would likely already be or become acclimated to aircraft noise.

An increase in air operations due to the Navy's proposed action could result in a minor increase in the potential of an in-air bird strike; however, BASH management measures are already in place at WFF, and the base has an active management team along with standard operating procedures to minimize the strike risk. Under Alternative 2, aircraft would fly over the Wallops Island

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National Wildlife Refuge (NWR) and a portion of the Barrier Island/Lagoon System Important Bird Area (IBA). However, the flights under the proposed action would be temporary and intermittent in nature. It is also expected that most birds/wildlife in these areas are already habituated to the aircraft noise from existing operations at Wallops Flight Facility and rocket launches from Wallops Island. Given these considerations, there would be no significant impact to birds or wildlife from Alternative 2.

Given the current air operations at WFF under baseline/existing conditions, Bald Eagles nesting near WFF are likely habituated to aircraft activity and noise. Pursuant to the Migratory Bird Treaty Act, 16 U.S.C. 703-712, and the Bald and Golden Eagle Protection Act, 16 U.S.C. 668-668d, there would be no "takes" or significant impacts to the Bald Eagles occurring near WFF under Alternative 2.

No significant impact to marine mammals, fish, or sea turtles would occur at WFF under Alternative 2. The bottlenose dolphin is the only marine mammal species expected to occur in the waters of Chincoteague Bay adjacent to WFF. Although sea turtles and two federally protected fish species (Atlantic and shortnose sturgeons) have been known to occur in Chincoteague Bay near WFF, sea turtles are not known to nest on the shores near WFF. When compared to baseline/existing conditions at WFF, the change in the projected noise contours under Alternative 2 are negligible, therefore it is unlikely that a bottlenose dolphin, fish, or sea turtle would be in the proposed action impact area during Navy over flights. Moreover, any bottlenose dolphins, fish, or sea turtles occurring regularly in Chincoteague Bay are already habituated to aircraft activity and noise from current and ongoing aircraft over flights, as well as rocket noise from Wallops Island. Therefore, the increase in aircraft operations at WFF Main Base associated with Alternative 2 would not result in Level A or Level B harassment to the bottlenose dolphins, as defined under the Marine Mammal Protection Act, and would be expected to have no effect on sea turtles and sturgeons under the Endangered Species Act, 16 U.S.C. 1531. Likewise, there would be no significant impact to the bottlenose dolphins, fish, or sea turtles.

Socioeconomics. Emporia-Greensville and WFF Main Base are currently operating airport facilities. The projected noise

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resulting from the proposed action would not extend significantly outside the airport property at Emporia-Greenville and the projected noise resulting from the proposed action at WFF would not be substantially different from existing conditions. Results of studies conducted on the effects of aircraft noise on property values have been inconclusive and suggest that numerous factors influence property values. Therefore, the potential increase in noise levels resulting from the proposed action would not be expected to have a significant impact on residential property values around Emporia-Greenville or WFF Main Base.

Under Alternative 1, there is one house within the 65 dB DNL noise zone and the percentage of the minority population for this house is below that of Greenville County. While this area is projected to have a higher percentage of people under the age of 21 than that of Greenville County and Southampton County, the noise would be temporary, intermittent, and low-level. A potential environmental justice community was identified under Alternative 2, Scenario 2. However, the percentage of the population that is minority is below that of Accomack County. Census Tract 9802, Block Group 1, has a higher percentage of people under the age of 21 than the rest of Accomack County. However, all of the people in this block group appear to be members of the same household, and this residence would not be within the modeled noise contours under any of the scenarios under Alternative 2. Block Groups 2 and 3 in Census Tract 902 have lower percentages of people under the age of 21 than the rest of Accomack County. Based on this analysis, the two action alternatives would not cause disproportionately high and adverse environmental effects on low income or minority populations or environmental health or safety risks that would disproportionately affect children.

Cumulative Impacts. Based on a review of past, present, and reasonably foreseeable actions at Emporia-Greenville, WFF Main Base, and their surrounding regions, several actions were considered when analyzing the potential cumulative impacts. Projects at Emporia-Greenville include the ongoing construction of Oak Grove Baptist Church, the ongoing development of the Mid-Atlantic Advanced Manufacturing Center, the reasonably foreseeable runway shift at Emporia-Greenville Regional Airport to bring the airfield into compliance with FAA design standards, and the reasonably foreseeable Parachute/Paraglide and Related

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Airborne Jump Training. Projects at WFF include the ongoing build-out of Wallops Research Park, the ongoing expansion of NASA's WFF Launch Range, the ongoing NASA WFF alternative energy project (80 acres of solar panels), the ongoing construction of the Olde Mill Pointe residential development, and the reasonably foreseeable NASA Site-wide Programmatic Environmental Impact Statement at WFF. Current operations at both sites would be expected to continue during non-FCLP periods. Based on the analysis in this EA, the proposed action would not have significant cumulative impacts on any resource area when considered with these other actions.

PUBLIC OUTREACH

The Navy issued a press release on June 17, 2011, announcing the intent to study the potential environmental impacts of conducting E-2/C-2 FCLP operations at Emporia-Greensville. On October 20, 2011, the Navy announced its decision to also include WFF Main Base as a potential site for the proposed action.

The Navy released the Draft EA for public review and comment on September 6, 2012. The Draft EA public comment period began with the Public Notice that was published in The Virginian Pilot, The Richmond Times Dispatch, Eastern Shore News, Independent Messenger, Chincoteague Beacon, Eastern Shore Post, and The Daily Times (Maryland), indicating the availability and locations where the Draft EA could be reviewed. Additionally, the Draft EA was made available at Chincoteague Island Library, Eastern Shore Public Library, Richardson Memorial Library, at the Emporia-Greensville Regional Airport and the Wallops Visitor Center. Copies are also available at the following websites: https://portal.navfac.navy.mil/portal/page/portal/navfac/navfac_ww_pp/navfac_navfacmidlant_pp/midlant_ps/environmental_norfolk/tab3987837 (for 60 days) and http://sites.wff.nasa.gov/code250/docs/Navy_FCLP_Ops.pdf.

A press release was also distributed to media outlets serving the areas surrounding Emporia-Greensville and WFF Main Base, as well as Hampton Roads, VA. Public Notice letters were also sent directly to federal and state agencies and to the Emporia-Greensville Airport Commission and NASA Wallops staff.

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A 30-day public comment period was scheduled from September 6, 2012, until October 5, 2012. In response to requests from elected officials and members of the public, the Navy extended the public comment period until October 19, 2012. The Navy issued a press release on October 4, 2012, announcing this extension.

The Navy held two open house public information meetings, each from 5:00 p.m. to 8:00 p.m. The first meeting was conducted September 25, 2012, at the Golden Leaf Commons at the Greenville County government complex at 1300 Greenville County Circle, Emporia, Virginia. The second meeting was conducted September 27, 2012, at the NASA Visitor Center at WFF. Comments were collected during the meetings, via e-mail, and through regular mail.

A total of 597 comments were received during the public review period, of which 124 dealt with Emporia-Greenville and 468 with WFF Main Base. Of the 468 comments related specifically to WFF Main Base, 419 were form letters from Chincoteague Bay Trails End Association, Inc. property owners, expressing concerns about noise, safety, biological resources, socioeconomics, and other personal issues. When individual comments were added to the form letters, those comments were read and considered in our responses.

The Navy received comments both in support of and in opposition to the proposed action. Several comments expressed a preference for one site or the other or for use of Runway 10/28 over Runway 04/22 at WFF to avoid impacts to the Trails End and Captain's Cove communities. The comments expressing support for the proposed project noted that there may be long-term economic benefits for the community chosen; that the FCLP training at WFF would be a good use of existing federal resources; that the E-2/C-2 are quiet aircraft; and that Navy pilots need the training to protect our country. Public and agency comments received in response to the Draft EA were addressed in the Final EA.

FINDING

After review of the EA prepared in accordance with the requirements of NEPA and U.S. Navy procedures for implementing NEPA (32 CFR Part 775), no significant impacts were identified.

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Therefore, the preparation of an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) is not required.

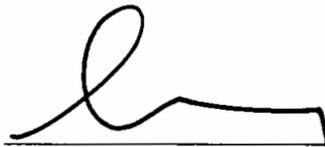
For the purpose of supporting the FAA's action, the analysis of Alternative 1 has been expanded beyond Navy NEPA requirements to look at specific FAA requirements. For FAA-regulated airports, FAA policy designates the DNL 65 dB contour as the cumulative noise exposure level above which residential land uses are not compatible. Based on the land use compatibility analysis, local land use controls, and comments received from the FAA, one residence has been identified within the proposed 65 dB DNL noise zone near Emporia-Greensville under either Scenario 1 or 2. Prior to taking action, the FAA requires the land use designation for this property be changed to reflect a non-residential status. The Emporia-Greensville Regional Airport Commission has agreed to purchase the property under their authority and convert the land use to non-residential use.

The Navy also finds that, under Alternative 2, the use of either Runway 04/22 or Runway 10/28 at NASA Wallops Flight Facility for E-2/C-2 FCLP would not significantly affect the quality of the human environment.

A copy of the EA, including this FONSI, can be obtained from: United States Fleet Forces Command, 1562 Mitscher Avenue, Suite 250, Norfolk, VA 23551 or Naval Facilities Engineering Command, Atlantic, 6506 Hampton Blvd., Norfolk, VA 23508 or downloaded from the identified websites.

1/15/13

DATE



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