

NATIONAL AERONAUTICS AND SPACE ADMINISTRATION (NASA)

NOTICE: 11-WFF-06

National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA); Reconfiguration of the Wallops Flight Facility (WFF) Main Entrance

AGENCY: NASA Goddard Space Flight Center's 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 the Procedural Provisions of NEPA (40 CFR Parts 1500-1508); and NASA policy and procedures (14 CFR Part 1216, Subpart 1216.3); NASA is issuing this FONSI with respect to the reconfiguration of the WFF main entrance. The Proposed Action would be completed in either two or four phases and would include construction of a badge office and accompanying parking area, a truck inspection area, a security personnel parking area, a guard house and canopy, a traffic roundabout, and a shipping and receiving facility. The number of phases would be directly related to available funding but would result in the same design at final buildout.

ADDRESS: The Final Environmental Assessment (EA) that serves as the basis for this FONSI may be viewed at the following locations:

- Chincoteague Island Library, 4077 Main Street, Chincoteague, Virginia 23336
- Eastern Shore Public Library, 23610 Front Street, Accomac, Virginia 23301
- NASA WFF Technical Library, Building E-105, Wallops Island, Virginia 23337
- Northampton Free Library, 7745 Seaside Road, Nassawadox, Virginia, 23413

On the Internet at: http://sites.wff.nasa.gov/code250/MERP_Final_EA.html

A limited number of copies of the Final EA are available by contacting Mr. Joshua Bundick at the address below.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Joshua Bundick, NASA WFF, Code 250.W, Wallops Island, Virginia, 23337; (757) 824-2319 (phone); (757) 824-1819 (fax); Joshua.A.Bundick@nasa.gov (email)

SUPPLEMENTAL INFORMATION: NASA has reviewed the Final EA prepared for the reconfiguration of the WFF main entrance and has concluded that the EA represents an accurate and adequate analysis of the scope and level of associated environmental impacts. NASA hereby incorporates the EA by reference in this FONSI.

Public Involvement

NASA solicited public and agency review and comment on the environmental impacts of the Proposed Action through:

1. Publishing notices of availability of Draft EA in local newspapers;
2. Making the Draft EA available for review at local public libraries;
3. Publishing the Draft EA on the WFF Environmental Office Web site;
4. Consulting with Federal, state, and local agencies; and
5. Mailing notices directly to nearby residents and property owners to notify them of the availability of the Draft EA.

Concerns were raised during the review of the Draft EA by agencies, organizations, and individuals about the location of Alternative One, as well as potential safety, traffic, and noise impacts. Comments received were considered in the Final EA.

Purpose and Need for the Project

The purpose of the Proposed Action is to separate vehicles, trucks, and people at the WFF main entrance, which would increase personnel safety and decrease congestion. The project is needed because there are multiple substantial safety risks associated with the continued use of the main entrance in its current configuration.

Alternatives Considered

The EA addresses the construction of a badge office and accompanying parking area, a truck inspection area, a security personnel parking area, a guard house and canopy, a traffic roundabout, and a shipping and receiving facility, and describes the potential impacts from the No Action Alternative, the Proposed Action/Preferred Alternative (two different phasing options), and one Action Alternative.

Under the No Action Alternative the main entrance to WFF would not be reconfigured and the existing (and expected increase in) safety issues due to congestion among vehicles, trucks, and people would remain.

The Preferred Alternative would be completed in either two or four phases, and would entail the construction of a badge office and accompanying parking area, a truck inspection area, a security personnel parking area, a guard house and canopy, a traffic roundabout, and a shipping and receiving facility in a forested area along Atlantic Road. The number of phases would be directly related to available funding, resulting in the same design at final buildout.

Alternative One would be a four-phased process. The major difference between Alternative One and either of the Preferred Alternative options is the location of the new badge office and parking lot, which would be located further south on Atlantic Road, approximately 0.9 kilometers (0.6 miles) from the existing badge office, immediately west of the existing U.S. Coast Guard family housing, and approximately 0.2 kilometers (0.1 miles) from the intersection of Virginia Route 175 and Atlantic Road.

The remaining components of the project would be constructed in the same location as in either of the Preferred Alternative options.

SUMMARY OF POTENTIAL ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACTS: A full comparative discussion of environmental effects of all Alternatives is contained in the Final EA. Potential environmental impacts resulting from NASA's Proposed Action/Preferred Alternative are summarized below:

Land Use: Improvements to the WFF main entrance would be consistent with NASA's master plan and the industrial zoning of the adjacent Wallops Research Park (WRP) (directly across Atlantic Road); therefore no adverse impacts would occur.

Soils: Soils could be transported off-site during construction by wind or precipitation during storm events. Any losses would be expected to be minor as NASA would implement strict erosion and sediment controls. Inadvertent spills or leaks from construction equipment could adversely affect soils. NASA would require its contractors to implement Best Management Practices (BMPs) for equipment fueling and maintenance. Implementation of spill prevention and control measures would also be required prior to starting work.

Coastal Zone Management: All activities would occur within Virginia's Coastal Management Area. NASA has determined that the Proposed Action is consistent with the enforceable policies of the Coastal Zone Management Program; the Virginia Department of Environmental Quality concurred with this determination.

Stormwater: There is the potential for minor adverse impacts from sediment-laden runoff entering drainage ways during land-disturbing construction activities. To mitigate potential effects, NASA would obtain Virginia Stormwater Management Program construction site stormwater permits and implement a site-specific Stormwater Pollution Prevention Plan. In the long term, NASA would construct stormwater BMPs to ensure that post-construction runoff quality and quantities meet state and Federal standards.

Air Quality: Minor and temporary air emissions would occur from land disturbance and from the use of fossil-fuel burning equipment during construction. To minimize impacts during construction, dust suppression methods would be implemented to minimize windblown and vehicular-borne fugitive dust. NASA would also require its contractor to maintain vehicles and equipment in good working order and to keep idling of construction equipment at a minimum.

Climate Change: The removal of trees combined with the addition of asphalt and use of petroleum fuel-consuming construction equipment would contribute to Greenhouse Gas (GHG) emissions. It is anticipated that GHG emissions would be transient and have a negligible adverse impact on global warming.

Noise: Construction activities (tree clearing, grading, paving, etc.) for reconfiguring the main entrance have the potential to generate temporary increases in noise levels. NASA would comply with local noise ordinances and State and Federal standards and guidelines for potential impacts on humans caused by construction activities, rendering impacts from construction noise both minor and temporary.

There would be no impacts on the occupational health of construction workers as NASA would require hearing protection to be worn in accordance with Occupational Safety and Health Administration standards.

In the long term, the loading and unloading of trucks at the combined shipping and receiving facility would increase background noise levels during normal daytime business hours, however levels are not expected to exceed those produced during construction, and accordingly would not be expected to perceptibly alter levels currently experienced at the closest sensitive receptor, the Navy family housing.

Re-routing visitor traffic to Atlantic Road would result in greater vehicle-related noise. Traffic noise modeling indicates that noise levels would drop below the Federal Highway Administration's Noise Abatement Criteria (67 A-weighted decibels [dBA]) at distances greater than 11.5 meters (38 feet) from the centerline of Atlantic Road. No homes or recreational structures (e.g., porches, gazebos, etc.) are located within the modeled 67 dBA contour.

Hazardous Materials and Waste Management: Construction activities would include the use of hazardous materials and may generate hazardous waste (i.e., solvents, hydraulic fluid, oil, and antifreeze). NASA would require its contractors to manage all hazardous materials and wastes in accordance with the WFF Integrated Contingency Plan and Federal, state, and local regulations.

Vegetation: Long-term adverse impacts to vegetation would be anticipated due to the permanent conversion of forest to developed land. All land clearing activities would employ Virginia Department of Forestry-recommended BMPs as feasible. Since the majority of the area cleared would be paved, little revegetation would be possible. Vegetation would be established on any remaining bare soil by planting native landscaping and grasses.

Terrestrial Wildlife and Migratory Birds: Short-term adverse impacts to wildlife and migratory birds may be anticipated during construction activities due to temporary noise disturbances, especially during spring and fall bird migrations; however most of the area surrounding the proposed project site is developed and is currently affected by human-related noise including the Main Base airfield. Long-term adverse impacts to terrestrial wildlife and migratory birds would be anticipated due to the loss of forested land to developed land. However, given the amount of suitable habitat nearby, impacts would not be substantial.

Threatened and Endangered Species: No impacts on threatened and endangered species would occur under the Proposed Action.

Health and Safety: Construction related activities could result in worker injuries with a resulting minor increased usage of local fire, police, and medical services. To mitigate potential adverse impacts, NASA would implement mandatory construction safety procedures on the jobsite. Under the Proposed Action, safety would improve markedly following the first phase of construction; vehicles would be separated from trucks, employees would no longer have to cross active traffic lanes, and exiting the new badge office parking lot would no longer be a dangerous maneuver.

Transportation: Temporary impacts to traffic flow would occur during construction activities due to an increase in the volume of construction-related traffic on roads in the immediate vicinity of the proposed project site. NASA would coordinate all transportation activities that would have the potential to affect public roads, including closures, traffic control, and safety issues with Accomack County and the Virginia Department of Transportation. The subsequent long-term increase in traffic (over the 20 year lifetime of the project) on Atlantic Road from re-routing visiting vehicles and trucks would be minor.

Cultural Resources: No structures would be impacted by the Proposed Action. NASA consulted with the Virginia Department of Historic Resources (VDHR) regarding potential effects; VDHR concurred with NASA's "no adverse effect" determination. However, if unanticipated archaeological artifacts or remains are identified during construction of the new badge office, the contractor would be required to halt work and immediately contact the WFF Facility Historic Preservation Officer.

Environmental Justice: Disproportionately high or adverse impacts to low-income or minority populations are not anticipated. Throughout the preparation of the EA, NASA provided project-related information via several different media outlets such that all interested persons, regardless of income or ethnicity, could remain informed of project progress and/or provide input.

Cumulative Impacts: NASA has determined that minor cumulative impacts to resources could occur when the impacts of the main entrance reconfiguration are considered along with the impacts of the WRP and residential development adjacent to the project site. Minor adverse cumulative impacts are anticipated for air quality; vegetation, terrestrial wildlife, and migratory birds; noise levels; and transportation.

Conclusion: NASA has identified no other potential environmental impacts resulting from the Proposed Action. Therefore, based on the Final EA for the reconfiguration of the WFF main entrance, NASA has determined that the environmental impacts associated with the Proposed Action would not individually or cumulatively have a significant impact on the quality of the human environment. Therefore, an environmental impact statement is not required.



William A. Wrobel
Director
NASA Wallops Flight Facility

3 AUGUST 2011

Date