NATIONAL AERONAUTICS AND SPACE ADMINISTRATION

NOTICE: 02WFF-01

National Environmental Policy Act; Finding of No Significant Impact

AGENCY: National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA)

ACTION: PPF at the NASA, Goddard Space Flight Center's (GSFC) Wallops Flight Facility (WFF), Wallops Island, Virginia

SUMMARY: NASA proposes to construct and operate a Payload Processing Facility (PPF) in the current Coast Guard housing area at WFF. Pursuant to the National Environmental Policy Act (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); NASA policy and procedures (14 CFR Part 1216, Subpart 1216.3); and the Environmental Assessment (EA) for a PPF at WFF (80.03.34.1876), NASA has made a Finding of No Significant Impact (FONSI) with respect to the proposed construction and operation of the PPF at the WFF, Wallops Island, Virginia. Based on the analyses and evaluations in the EA, it is concluded that an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) is not required.

DATE: Upon publication of this FONSI, NASA will proceed immediately to implement the proposed action.

RESPONSIBLE OFFICIAL:

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SUPPLEMENTAL INFORMATION:

NASA reviewed the EA prepared for the construction and operation of a PPF in the current Coast Guard housing area at WFF. It was concluded that this 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. The EA reviewed applicable environmental statutes and regulations for the proposed action and concluded that the construction and operation of the PPF at WFF are in complete compliance.

WFF plans to augment the number of missions currently being launched by increasing the capabilities for medium and light-lift Expendable Launch Vehicles (ELV's), Reusable Launch Vehicles (RLV's) and Space Launch Initiative (SLI) technologies. These launches will require final prelaunch payload processing. Due to the sophisticated and complex nature of satellites and other payloads, it is necessary to accomplish the final prelaunch payload processing in a specially designed facility located close to the launch site. For this purpose, NASA proposes to construct and operate a PPF (PPF) in the current Coast Guard housing area at WFF. The requirements and characteristics of specific payloads will vary. However, for the purpose of establishing criteria for the PPF siting and design, and for performing this EA, Virginia Space Flight Center (VSFC) developed a model that encompasses the requirements and characteristics of all foreseeable and projected payloads. The VSFC derived the model from the maximum weights and dimensions of medium and light lift ELV's, RLV's, and SLI vehicles currently in use or in design. The proposed PPF will be designed with two Class 100,000 cleanroom bays, a larger bay with a 60 foot (18 meter) hook height for a 40 ton (36 tonnes) crane, and a smaller bay with a 30 foot (9 meter) hook height for each of two 20 ton (18 tonnes) cranes. The combination of the cleanroom capability and tall hook heights will allow for the integration of sensitive payloads into modern launch vehicles.

The EA identifies potential impacts on humans or the environment that may occur during implementation of the proposed actions:

Land Use: Neither construction nor operational activities will alter existing land use at WFF. WFF Main Base has been zoned for industrial use by Accomack County. Moreover, construction of the PPF, at this location, represents an advantageous redevelopment of this area to a use more consistent with the surrounding land use.

Water Quality: Neither construction nor operational activities will have an impact on water quality. All activities will be in accordance with WFF's Storm Water Pollution Prevention Plan (SWPPP) and Integrated Contingency Plan (ICP). These plans are in place to minimize the likelihood of releases to the environment.

Wetlands, Floodplains, and Coastal Zone Management: The PPF site is not located in either a wetlands, the 100-year floodplain, or the Coastal Zone. Therefore, no impact is anticipated to either wetlands, floodplains or the Coastal Zone from the Proposed Action

Air Quality: The demolition, site work, and exterior construction phases are estimated to take 5 ½ months to complete. Calculations yielded a generation of 13.2 tons of particulate matter emissions. Given the highly conservative nature of the model employed, an insignificant impact is expected to the air quality from construction related emissions.

Noise: Construction activities may produce between 76 to 89 decibels of noise at the construction site. Noise impacts will be lessened by limiting the hours of construction and heavy equipment travel. The combination of operational and mission-related noise and increased vehicular traffic will result in no impact of concern on the environment.

Hazardous Waste Management: Limited amounts of hazardous wastes, such as chemical solvents and some waste hydrazine, are necessarily associated with the processing of payloads. Mature programs for addressing hazardous waste and hazardous materials already exist. The incremental increases in hazardous waste requirements are well within the capabilities of the existing infrastructure for handling hazardous waste at WFF.

Solid Waste Management: Generation of solid waste during demolition of the required, vacant, Coast Guard housing units includes asbestos and debris coated with lead-based paint. Industrial solid waste management will endure impacts associated with construction activities. Over the longer term, wastes generated by payload processing operations should not overtax the existing solid waste management system.

Flora: Construction activities will disturb some vegetation. No impact to vegetation is anticipated from the operation of the facility.

Fauna: Construction activities will not disturb wildlife in the vicinity. No impact to wildlife is anticipated from the operation of the facility.

Threatened and Endangered Species: No federal or state listed threatened, endangered, or rare plant or animal species are known to occur at the PPF site. Therefore, no impact to these species is anticipated.

Economic Environment: Construction activities will create temporary employment opportunities for construction contractors. No permanent employees will be assigned to this facility, therefore, there will be no increase or decrease in employee local base.

Health and Safety: Construction and operational activities will comply with established NASA health and safety guidelines. Neither construction nor operational activities will present increased risk to the health and safety of WFF employees or the general public.

Cultural Resources: The existing 5 Coast Guard houses that are scheduled to be demolished for this project are greater than 50 years old, which could qualify them as historic resources. However, these houses are standard military housing structures with no exceptional cultural significance. Moreover, they no longer resemble their original design and, in their current state of disrepair, it is unlikely that the structures can be considered of exceptional importance.

Environmental Justice: No low-income or minority communities occur along the borders of WFF, therefore no Environmental Justice impacts are anticipated.

Utilities: Consumption of WFF utilities will increase due to the construction and operation of the PPF. Facility-wide ground water appropriations will increase by an estimated 0.25 percent. Main Base electricity consumption is conservatively estimated to increase by a maximum of 11 percent. One possible future consideration may be an appeal to the Virginia Department of Transportation requesting a reworking of the intersection of Atlantic Avenue and Mill Dam Road. Currently, there is a grassy median at the intersection. This median is directly in front of the entrance to Cartlidge Drive and vehicles must veer around it to access Atlantic Avenue

NASA has identified no other issues of potential environmental concern.

The following alternative locations were considered alternative sites to the proposed action: on Wallops Island near Building V-55, on the Mainland near the Spandar antenna, at the Ball Field/Pavilion area, between Buildings N-159 and N-161, and the no action alternative.

Based on the EA for the PPF at WFF, and review of underlying reference documents, NASA has determined that the environmental impacts associated with the proposed action will not individually or cumulatively have a significant effect on the quality of the human environment. Therefore, an EIS is not required.

NASA has received public and agency review and comment on the environmental impacts of the proposed action through:

1. A notice of availability of the draft EA concerning construction and operation of a PPF at WFF was published in the Eastern Shore News on November 30, 2002;
2. Consultations with local, state, and federal agencies; and
3. Direct mailing of the draft EA to interested parties. Any environmental concerns raised during the 30-day public comment on the draft EA were assessed.

ORIGINAL SIGNED BY

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