

**U.S. DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION
FEDERAL AVIATION ADMINISTRATION**

FINDING OF NO SIGNIFICANT IMPACT

Bowers Field Improvements Project
Bowers Field Airport
Ellensburg, Washington
May 2022

Introduction

This document serves as the Federal Aviation Administration's (FAA) Finding of No Significant Impact (FONSI) and provides the final agency determinations and approvals for the federal actions necessary to implement the improvements described below at the Bowers Field Airport. This FONSI is based on the information and analysis contained in the Final Environmental Assessment (FEA) dated May 2022, which is incorporated herein by reference. The FEA has been prepared pursuant to Section 102(2)(c) of the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) and the President's Council on Environmental Quality (CEQ) Regulations Title 40 CFR §§ 1500-1508, and in accordance with FAA Order 1050.1F *Environmental Impacts: Policies and Procedures* and FAA Order 5050.4B *National Environmental Policy Act Implementing Instructions for Airport Actions*.

Proposed Action

Kittitas County (the Airport Sponsor) owns and operates the Bowers Field Airport (ELN) in Ellensburg, Washington. Kittitas County proposes to construct a series of airport improvement projects to safely and efficiently accommodate current and forecasted aircraft activity at ELN. There are five projects that comprise the Proposed Action, including:

- Parallel Taxiway for Runway 11/29
- Various Other Taxiway Improvements
- Runway 11/29 Rehabilitation
- Flood Reduction and Drainage Improvements
- Hangar Development and Taxilanes

Chapter 1 and Figure 1-4 of the FEA provide a description and a graphic depiction of the Proposed Action.

Federal Actions

The requested Federal actions and approvals necessary for this project to proceed are:

- Unconditional approval of the Airport Layout Plan (ALP) to depict those portions of the Proposed Action subject to FAA review and approval pursuant to 49 USC 47107(a)(16)(B).
- Determination that Environmental Analysis Prerequisites associated with any future Airport Improvement Program (AIP) funding application have been fulfilled pursuant to 49 United States Code § 47101.

Purpose and Need

Chapter 1 of the FEA presents the Purpose and Need. Kittitas County's purpose of the Proposed Action is to comply with FAA B-II design standards, meet the objectives of the Airport Master Plan, and improve safety and operational efficiency at the Airport. The proposed improvements are needed to address safety and operational deficiencies resulting from non-standard taxiway configurations, deteriorating pavement, and seasonal flooding that impacts the airport. The project is also needed to meet the growing operational needs as operation of business jet and large turboprop

aircraft at the Airport is projected to increase above 500 annual operations by 2025. The current deficiencies and the need for each of the specific improvements associated with the Proposed Action are discussed in more detail in Section 1.5 of the FEA.

Alternatives

Chapter 2 of the FEA presents the alternatives analysis. The FEA identified and evaluated reasonable alternatives that may accomplish the objectives of the Proposed Action in accordance with NEPA, FAA Orders 1050.1F and 5050.4B, and FAA design standards. Section 2.3 describes the alternatives and/or alternative components that were eliminated from consideration. The FEA carried two alternatives forward for evaluation:

No Action Alternative:

Under the No Action Alternative, no improvements to ELN would be constructed including the parallel taxiway, non-standard taxiway improvements, runway rehabilitation, flood reduction and drainage improvements, and hangar development area with taxilanes, and the current ALP would not change. The existing airport configuration would not comply with FAA design standards and would not fulfill the project purpose and need.

Proposed Action Alternative:

The Proposed Action meets the project purpose and need as stated in Chapter 1 of the FEA by addressing the following elements: Parallel Taxiway, Various Taxiway Improvements, Runway 11/29 Rehabilitation, Flood Reduction and Drainage Improvements, Hangar Development Area with Taxilanes as follows:

- **Parallel Taxiway for Runway 11/29:** Under the Proposed Action, a full-length parallel taxiway on the south side of Runway 11/29 will be constructed. The parallel taxiway will improve operational efficiency and safety, by eliminating the existing need for back-taxiing on the runway. The 4,300' x 35' parallel taxiway will have four 90-degree exit taxiway connections to the runway. An aircraft hold area will be constructed adjacent to the Runway 29 threshold, on Taxiway B.
- **Various Other Taxiway Improvements:** Under the Proposed action, five various taxiway improvements will take place:
 - Modify the existing connector Taxiway A intersection with Runway 7-25, to correct the taxiway's existing non-standard configuration.
 - Demolish existing Taxiway C, which currently has non-standard configuration.
 - Demolish existing Taxiway D, which currently has non-standard configuration.
 - Modify existing Taxiway F to correct the taxiway's existing non-standard configurations.
 - Construct a new infield taxiway to connect the Airport's terminal area landside facilities to the runway-taxiway system.
- **Runway 11/29 Rehabilitation:** Under the Proposed Action, Runway 11/29 will be narrowed by demolishing the existing asphalt pavement sections and providing a standard 75-foot runway width. The improvements would also remove 300 feet of paved overrun located beyond the north end of the runway and remove the existing 167-foot aligned taxiway (another non-standard condition) at the Runway 29 threshold. Additionally, as part of the Runway 11/29 rehabilitation project, the runway safety area (RSA), runway obstacle free zone (OFZ), and runway object free area (OFA) will be graded to meet FAA obstruction clearance and/or gradient standards. The project will also replace and upgrade the existing runway systems (drainage, electrical/lighting, and signage).
- **Flood Reduction and Drainage Improvements:** Under the Proposed Action, drainage improvements include clearing out and expanding existing ditches in the vicinity of Runway 11/29 so as to provide for additional ditch storage capacity. Additionally, the

project will construct seven open-outlet flood storage berms along Whiskey Creek (west of Runway 11-29 on the Airport, and upstream from the Airport, but on County owned property, just north of Hungry Junction Rd). This added capacity for flood storage along Whiskey Creek will reduce the resultant flow to the existing ditches in the vicinity of Runway 11/29 during storm events and eliminate flooding at the Airport. As an added benefit of the proposed action, the flood reduction improvements will reduce flooding downstream of the Airport (off Airport property).

- **Hangar Development Area and Taxilanes:** Under the Proposed Action, infrastructure within the hangar development area will be developed. The project will also include the design and construction of hangar taxilanes to serve the hangar development area located adjacent to the main apron.

The construction of the Proposed Action described above would result in a net reduction of approximately three acres of impervious surface at the Airport. This alternative meets the purpose and need as described in Chapter 1 of the FEA.

Environmental Consequences

Chapter 4 of the FEA evaluates each of the environmental impact categories identified in FAA Orders 1050.1F and 5050.4B. No thresholds of significance are expected to be exceeded with the Proposed Action for any of the categories. The Proposed Action is expected to have temporary construction impacts related to noise from equipment use, noise and dust from the transport of equipment and personnel to the site, and water quality impacts from erosion and potential spills. The impacts will be reduced through avoidance and minimization techniques and best management practices for construction.

The remaining categories with any impact by the Proposed Action are discussed below. A full discussion of these categories, as well as the complete analysis conducted for all categories, can be found in the FEA.

Air Quality: Under the Proposed Action, anticipated impacts to air quality are minor and would be limited to construction activities. Construction activities would result in temporary, localized direct negative impacts to air quality from exhaust generated by diesel and gasoline-powered equipment including bulldozers, trucks, and chainsaws; and fugitive dust generated on the construction site during dry conditions. Air quality emissions for construction-related activities were calculated and found to be below *de minimis* thresholds and thus the Proposed Action would not have a significant impact.

Biological Resources: Under the Proposed Action, the construction of seven open-outlet flood storage berms along Whiskey Creek would affect larger (100-year flood events) downstream flood flows by temporarily (<12 hours) detaining some of the floodwater behind the chevron-shaped earthen berms. Based on an analysis of potential downstream effects to fish species, the Proposed Action would have no effect on Endangered Species Act (ESA)-listed species or those proposed for listing under purview of USFWS, nor any designated critical habitat for these species. While small numbers of ESA-listed steelhead may be present in reaches of Whiskey Creek in and downstream of the Airport, construction activities would not negatively affect steelhead nor would they lower surface water elevations downstream of the project site. The project would have no effect on designated critical habitat for steelhead. The FAA has determined that the Proposed Action would not result in significant impacts to biological resources.

Water Resources: The flood reduction and drainage improvements and runway improvements associated with the Proposed Action would result in land disturbance activities that would directly impact wetland and surface water (i.e., stream) resources. Under the Proposed Action Alternative, approximately 0.55-acre of direct, permanent impacts to wetlands and 0.03 acre of stream (fill) would occur, resulting from the installation of flood storage berms as well as proposed runway improvements. An additional 0.46-acre of direct, temporary impacts to wetlands would occur as a result of construction.

The Proposed Action Alternative would occur within the 100-year floodplain of Whiskey Creek. Portions of several flood storage berms located south of Hungry Junction Road would be constructed within the floodplain, resulting in 0.77 acre of direct and permanent impacts to floodplain. However, these flood storage berms detain flood flows temporarily and then meter waters back to the stream to minimize flooding at the Airport and flood occurrence downstream. Therefore, even though the flood reduction component of the project would result in the placement of fill, flood storage capacity would increase and no impacts to floodplains are anticipated.

Once constructed and stabilized, the flood storage berms are not expected to result in direct impacts on water quality. By reducing the area of developed Airport surfaces inundated during flood conditions – including pollution generating impervious (PGIS) from the runway and taxiways – the flood storage improvements would benefit water quality by reducing surface water exposure to pollutants, including petroleum hydrocarbons, metals, and sediment. Additionally, no indirect impacts to water quality are expected post-construction as an increase in aircraft operations or runway use is anticipated.

Kittitas County intends to apply for Section 404 and Section 401 (Clean Water Act) permits for the proposed disturbance to water resources. As part of early coordination, consultation was initiated with US Army Corps of Engineers (USACE) and Washington Department of Ecology (DOE). USACE determined that the Proposed Action is authorized by Nationwide Permit (NWP) No. 39, Commercial and Institutional Developments. Mitigation for impacts would be required in accordance with agency permit requirements and the County is pursuing permittee-responsible mitigation for permanent impacts. Proposed mitigation would remove approximately 1.1 acres of derelict pavement either between or adjacent to wetlands in the northwest corner of the Airport. Mitigation would be developed to meet federal, state, and local requirements through the re-establishment of impacted wetlands, improved wetland connectivity, and restoration of lost functions and values. Mitigation acreages proposed would follow Washington State Joint Guidance from the USACE and DOE and provide a replacement ratio of 2:1. With the mitigation of impacts, there would be no long-term impacts to wetlands or streams. Therefore, the Proposed Action will not result in significant impacts to water resources.

Mitigation

No significant impacts were identified as a result of the Proposed Action; however some mitigation measures are included as part of the Proposed Action and to bring the project into permit compliance. These mitigation measures are provided below. Additional measures to avoid, reduce, or minimize impacts during project construction are provided in Chapter 4 of the FEA.

Water Resources:

- Provide mitigation for impacts to water resources (0.55-acre of wetland and 0.03 acre of stream) resulting from the installation of storage berms for flood reduction and drainage improvements as well as runway improvements.
- Proposed mitigation includes removal of approximately 1.1 acres of derelict pavement adjacent to wetlands in the northwest corner of the Airport. Mitigation would be developed to meet federal, state, and local requirements through the re-establishment of impacted wetlands, improved wetland connectivity, and restoration of lost functions and values. Mitigation acreages proposed would follow Washington State Joint Guidance from the USACE and Ecology and provide a replacement ratio of 2:1.
- Provide monitoring and adaptive management of mitigation site per the requirements of the permittee-responsible mitigation plan approved by USACE and Ecology.
- Avoid and minimize impacts to Whiskey Creek water quality during construction by implementing the following requirements of the USACE Nationwide 401 Water Quality Certification.

Public and Agency Involvement

Chapter 5 of the FEA summarizes the public outreach, agency, and tribal coordination undertaken for the project.

The FAA and Kittitas County conducted early coordination meetings with several federal, state, and local agencies to discuss potential impacts to biological resources and water resources. Coordination with Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife (WDFW) was conducted in 2021 regarding the presence of ESA-listed species. Communication with Corps started in 2018 and multiple coordination meetings were held in 2021. Additionally, DOE attended multiple meetings regarding documentation of existing conditions and permit application requirements.

FAA initiated National Historic Preservation Act (NHPA) Section 106 consultation with the Washington State Department of Historic Preservation (DAHP) and four affected tribes regarding cultural and historic resources. Cultural resource surveys were conducted in April 2018 and March 2021, and FAA initiated consultation in June 2021 and concluded in July 2021. A detailed summary is included in Chapter 5 of the FEA.

A notice requesting public comment on the Draft EA was published in The Daily Record newspaper and the comment period began March 16, 2022, and ended April 15, 2022. The Draft EA was available for viewing through multiple outlets. A hard copy of the Draft EA was available for viewing, by appointment during normal business hours, at the Kittitas County Public Works Office. An electronic copy of the Draft EA was posted on the County's website. One comment letter was received and it was from WDFW. The comment letter and responses to the comments are included in Appendix H of the FEA.

Environmental Finding and Approval

After careful and thorough consideration of the facts contained herein, the undersigned finds that the proposed Federal action is consistent with existing national environmental policies and objectives as set forth in Section 101 of NEPA and other applicable environmental requirements and will not significantly affect the quality of the human environment or otherwise include any condition requiring consultation pursuant to Section 102(2)(C) of NEPA. As a result, the FAA will not prepare an environmental impact statement for this action.

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