



OFFICE OF LOCAL DEFENSE COMMUNITY COOPERATION

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Office of Local Defense Community Cooperation
Finding of No Significant Impact
for
Construction and Operation of Runway Extension
Leesville, Louisiana

Pursuant to the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) (42 U.S.C. §§ 4321-4347), Environmental Analysis of Army Actions (32 CFR Part 651), the Department of Defense (DoD) Office of Local Defense Community Cooperation (OLDCC) gives notice that an Environmental Assessment (EA) was prepared, and an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) is not required for the construction and operation for a runway extension at Leesville Airport. As the federal granting agency for the project, OLDCC is responsible for implementing the procedural provisions of NEPA for this project. OLDCC coordinated the NEPA process with the grantee, City of Leesville, the associated military installation, Fort Johnson, and the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) to ensure that relevant, site-specific environmental information was identified, analyzed, and considered during the decision-making process. The FAA is serving as a cooperating agency (see Appendix A for the FAA's cooperating agency acceptance letter) for this EA.

Purpose and Need: The purpose of the Proposed Action is to provide a runway length to accommodate operations of Army Class A aircraft off-installation as some fixed-wing operations are restricted due to the shorter runway, in proximity to Fort Johnson. The runway is anticipated to provide operational redundancy and auxiliary airfield support. Currently, Army Class A fixed-wing aircraft are unable to land at Fort Johnson because of the insufficient runway length at Maks Army Airfield (KPOE). The additional length will allow the Army Class A aircraft from Fort Johnson (including the C12 (King Air 200/300/350) and the C21 (Lear 35)) to utilize Leesville Airport. The civilian aircraft that will utilize the extended runway in support of Fort Johnson will be typical Class II-B light jet and turboprop aircraft. The action will enable longer range and larger aircraft access to the airport for a wide range of activities, including fixed-wing air ambulance for mass casualty evacuation, logistics and scenario planning operations, and transportation flights to serve organic Fort Johnson units, and our partner nations, Army civilians and the contractor community.

Proposed Action: The Proposed Action is to extend Runway 18-36 by 1,800 ft to a total of 5,607 ft. The Proposed Action would include amending all necessary air traffic procedures to accommodate the Proposed Action, relocating Runway 18 Precision Approach Path Indicators (PAPI), and construction of box hangars, maintenance areas, operations areas, and office space. The FAA has jurisdiction by law and special expertise relating to the Proposed Action at Leesville Municipal Airport. FAA's authorities and special expertise is based on its statutory responsibilities under the Airport and Airway Improvement Act of 1982 [49 U.S.C. Section 47101(a)(16)], Section 743 of the FAA Reauthorization Act of 2024" (P.L. 118-254), and relevant implementing regulations. Because the U.S. Army's Proposed Action involves construction of infrastructure necessary to support the U.S. Army's use of the civil airfield at the Airport, the City of Leesville is requesting approval from the FAA for certain changes to their Airport Layout Plan (ALP). Thus, FAA's federal action is approval of the City of Leesville's ALP. The Proposed Action also includes Operations and activities that would support Fort Johnson with individual and unit training and

flight operations. Support for Unmanned Aerial Systems (UAS) takeoff and landing areas was considered but not included in this Environmental Assessment because it is not directly related to the purpose of the runway extension project and because of unique environmental impacts of UAS operations related to airspace, noise and community safety. If and when UAS operations are considered at the Leesville Airport the appropriate environmental analysis will be conducted.

This action will be implemented as described in the paragraphs entitled “Proposed Action” in Chapter 1.3 and “Federal Actions” in Chapter 1.4 of the EA. OLDCC, Fort Johnson, and FAA Environmental and NEPA subject matter experts reviewed the EA and determined it to be technically sufficient. The EA and supporting documentation are attached.

Alternatives Considered: Screening criteria were used to assess whether an alternative was “reasonable” and would be carried forward for evaluation in the EA. Viable alternatives were identified based on their potential to meet the purpose and need and described in Section 2.1 of the EA.

Four alternatives were considered but dismissed due to not meeting screening criteria and are described in the section titled “Alternatives Considered but Dismissed” in Chapter 2.3 of the EA. These alternatives are referred to as:

- Establishment of a new Army Class A Runway Elsewhere;
- Construction of a new Army Class A Runway to the East of the Existing Runway;
- Extend Runway 18-36 to the South; and
- Extend Runway 18-36 to the North and South.

The EA also considered environmental impacts of the No Action Alternative. Under the No Action Alternative, existing infrastructure at L39 would remain unchanged and the Leesville Airport would not extend the existing runway. Under this alternative, the City of Leesville should not have the ability to provide aerial operations support during emergency and training conditions. Under this alternative, the purpose and need of the action would not be met.

The EA considered all other reasonable alternatives and only one, the Proposed Action, was found that would meet the purpose and need. Therefore, no additional alternatives, beside the No Action Alternative, were carried forward for analysis.

Environmental Effects: No significant direct, indirect, or cumulative environmental impacts would occur from implementing the Proposed Action. Certain environmental resources (land use, coastal resources, geology, socioeconomics, floodplains, climate change, and general compliance) were not analyzed in detail in this EA because implementation of the proposed action would not likely result in any potential environmental impacts on these resources, or impacts would be negligible. Potential environmental impacts on air quality, soils, groundwater, noise, cultural resources including Tribes, biological resources, water resources, transportation and infrastructure, and air space are documented in Chapter 3 of the EA.

Anticipated Environmental Effects: OLDCC, Fort Johnson, and the FAA assessed potential impacts of the No Action Alternative and the Proposed Action at Leesville Airport. Environmental

consequences from the Proposed Action, including discussions concerning related best construction practices, are detailed in Chapter 3 of the EA.

Under the Proposed Action, construction activities would generate minor amounts of fugitive dust (particulate matter) and gaseous emissions of carbon monoxide, volatile organic carbons, nitrous oxides, sulfur dioxide, and particulate matter less than 2.5 microns. from the combustion of fuel by construction equipment and vehicles. These quantities would be below de minimis levels and as the project area is located within an area that is in attainment, no additional analysis is required. There would be short-term, minor, adverse, direct, impacts in air quality due to increase emissions from heavy equipment used during the construction phase. It is assumed that after the construction phase, normal activities would resume. therefore, no impact to air quality during the operation is anticipated.

Under the Proposed Action, approximately 7.62 acres of soils would be disturbed to accommodate the runway extension and proposed additional hanger areas. The majority of the soils located within the footprint of the runway extension are designated with a moderate or severe erosion potential. None of the soils within the proposed project location or within the area directly impacted by the Proposed Acton are designated as “very severe”. No prime farmlands are likely to be impacted.

Ground disturbance to extend the runway under the Proposed Action will not exceed five feet below ground surface (bgs). Given the overall depth of freshwater deposits in the Chicot Aquifer, construction of the Proposed Action would not result in adverse impacts or contamination of the Chicot Aquifer. Based upon the determination from the EPA and the depth to groundwater, no direct or indirect impact to groundwater is anticipated. The proposed project will not impact jurisdictional wetlands or directly affect other surface water resources. The ephemeral streams identified within the boundaries of the airport property are not considered to be jurisdictional and therefore, not subject to permitting under Section 404 of the Clean Water Act. Overall impacts to surface water resources will be minimal and temporary in nature.

According to the noise contours established for the Proposed Action, both the 60 dB and 65 dB noise contours will remain within the existing boundaries of the airport. The noise analysis was based upon the approval of the Aviation Activity Forecast by the FAA Airports District Office (April 12, 2024). Therefore, no noise impacts to residents near the airport are expected as per FAA guidelines found in FAA Orders 1050.1F and 5050.4B and 14 CFR, Part 150, Airport Noise Compatibility Planning. However, with the increase in flights to/from the airport, an increase in overall noise is anticipated. Since the increase in noise is within the acceptable range, the impact would be considered less than significant. Noise from construction could impact residents and commercial occupants on properties near the airport. However, construction equipment and vehicles would be in operation only during daylight hours and only for the duration of construction activities. Overall, noise impacts from construction would be short term and minor. No significant impacts are anticipated.

Suitable habitat for federally and state listed species has not been documented within the area of direct impacts; therefore, no impacts to listed species are anticipated. In a response letter dated March 28, 2024, the Louisiana Department of Wildlife and Fisheries stated that “no impacts to rare,

threatened, or endangered species or critical habitats are anticipated for the proposed project.” Under the proposed action the existing vegetation within the project area would be removed. The typical terrestrial wildlife species and vegetation that could be impacted are widely distributed; thus, loss of some individuals and habitat would not measurably impact population abundance or distribution throughout their range. Equivalent vegetation is located surrounding the Proposed runway extension area and will remain undisturbed and could provide areas for those species that are disturbed, to relocate. The proposed project will primarily impact cleared, grass-covered portions of the airport facility adjacent to the existing runway and support buildings. Suitable habitat for bird species is not within the area of direct impacts.

Required consultation was conducted with the State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO) and Tribes. No historic properties or districts were identified within the area proposed for runway expansion and additional hanger areas nor within 1 mile of the overall Proposed Action location. The SHPO determined that the undertaking would have no effect on historical properties or cultural resources in a letter dated April 2, 2024. A list of Tribes consulted is included in Table 13. A response was received from the Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma on January 6, 2025, which requested a copy of the report titled “*An Intensive Phase I Cultural Resources Survey, Inventory, and Assessment of a 133 Acre (54 HA) Survey Tract within the Boundaries of the Leesville Municipal Airport, Vernon Parish, Louisiana.*” The report was provided, and no follow up comments were received. Overall, due to the lack of known properties, no impacts to cultural resources are anticipated.

The Proposed Action would require construction materials, so construction debris would be generated. The waste generated during the construction activities would be transported to the Vernon Parish Sanitary Landfill as it is able to receive construction related debris. The Vernon Parish landfill has a remaining capacity of 588,069 cubic yards or 27,960 months (approximately 2,330 years). Since the landfill can receive the construction-related debris generated and has capacity, no impact is anticipated. With the increase in length of runway, additional aircraft utilizing the airport is anticipated. The increase in aircraft would sequentially include an increase in the use of the existing facilities and associated utilities. As the airport is connected to a municipal system with available capacity to provide additional drinking water and the number of people utilizing the facilities would not exceed the capacity to provide drinking water.

Under the Proposed Action, the runway extension would allow for a different class of aircraft to utilize the existing airspace. As the airspace above the airport is not dependent upon the type of aircraft (excluding unnamed aircraft) an impact to the designation of the airspace is not anticipated. With the lengthening of the runway, the Proposed Action is anticipated to include an increase in overall traffic within the airspace extending upward from Leesville Airport. The increase in air traffic is anticipated to be associated with the flights to / from Fort Johnson. As airspace associated with Fort Johnson extends over the installation and Leesville Airport, the number of flights within the airspace would remain the same. The only change would be the number of flights touching down at Fort Johnson airfield versus Leesville Airport. Collectively there would be no change in flights within the area.

Mitigation Measures: Although no significant impacts are expected to result from the Proposed Action, the EA identified some environmental avoidance and mitigation measures to minimize the

level of impacts that might occur. Details are provided in Section 6.0 of the attached EA. The City of Leesville will implement BMPs to ensure that during rain events, sediment and debris do not leave the site and increase sediment loading and pollutants entering existing stormwater system. If groundwater is encountered during construction activities, proper engineering controls would be incorporated into the proposed construction and operation of the structure. Construction activities will be conducted during daylight hours and during weekdays to avoid noise impacts during nighttime hours. If buried cultural resources are discovered during construction activities, construction activity should immediately cease and the SHPO notified within 24 hours for further consultation. If federal or state listed ESA species are seen on site during the time of construction, all activities should be halted and a USFWS permitted Wildlife Biologist must be contacted to implement mitigation. If tree removal or tree topping is required to accommodate the required obstacle clearance, prior to removal or modification of the trees, which would occur on private property to the north, the USFWS would be consulted with and a presence and absence survey for tricolored bats and Red-cocked Woodpecker would occur. If a species is identified as present, further consultation with the USFWS would occur and mitigation measures may be required. The City will obtain authorization under LAR100000 for a Stormwater General Permit for Construction Activities, implement a Stormwater Pollution Prevention Plan, implement BMPs to ensure that during rain events, sediment and debris do not leave the site and increase sediment loading and pollutants entering existing stormwater system. If crossing of Louisiana State Highway 8 to either access Airport Road or to turn west from Airport Road to Louisiana State Highway 8 becomes a hazard or impedes travel during construction activities, temporary traffic control devices will be established as needed.

Public Outreach: Public engagement was completed through informing the residents of the City of Leesville of the availability to review the Draft EA through a public notice in *The Town Talk* newspaper and *Capital City Press (The Advocate)*. The Draft EA was made available for review and comment electronically on the City of Leesville website and at City of Leesville City Hall from December 9, 2024 until January 10, 2025. No public comments were received. Entities and Agencies consulted for comment and review of the EA are listed in Table 13. Public engagement documentation is provided in Appendix E.

Finding: Based on the analysis presented in the EA, supporting documentation and review provided by Fort Johnson and the FAA, review by the OLDCC NEPA Compliance Officer, and review by the DoD Office of General Counsel, OLDCC finds that implementation of the Proposed Action will not significantly impact the quality of the human environment. Therefore, an EIS will not be prepared. The EA has been developed in accordance with the requirements of NEPA (42 U.S.C. §§ 4321-4347), Environmental Analysis of Army Actions (32 CFR Part 651, and in coordination with Federal, state, and local agencies as described above and in the EA.

Electronic copies of this EA and Finding of No Significant Impact may be obtained by written request to: The Office of Local Defense Community Cooperation, 2231 Crystal Drive, Suite 520 Arlington, VA 22202.

Patrick J. O'Brien
Director

Attachments:
As stated