

**ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT SUMMARY AND  
FINDING OF NO SIGNIFICANT IMPACT FOR  
NATIONAL OCEANIC AND ATMOSPHERIC ADMINISTRATION  
AIRCRAFT OPERATIONS CENTER RELOCATION**

**ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT SUMMARY**

**Purpose and Need**

The Office of Marine and Aviation Operations (OMAO) manages and operates National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration's (NOAA) fleet of aircraft. The purpose of the proposed Aircraft Operations Center (AOC) relocation is to enable OMAO to continue its vital support of NOAA's mission in an efficient and cost-effective manner. OMAO's aircraft fleet provides capable, mission-ready aircraft and professional crews to support the scientific community in data gathering for research and environmental monitoring. In addition to research and monitoring activities critical to NOAA's mission, OMAO ships and aircraft provide immediate response capabilities for unpredictable events. AOC is committed to the safe, efficient and economical use of NOAA aircraft and has more than four decades of experience developing, coordinating and successfully and safely conducting airborne environmental data gathering missions.

The NOAA AOC has been housed at MacDill Air Force Base (AFB) since 1993. The need for the proposed action is due to a Department of Defense (DoD) realignment of aircraft assets, for which MacDill AFB is required by its command to make appropriate space available for housing additional staff and equipment associated with the expanded refueling aircraft support mission at MacDill AFB. This will result in other non-DoD-essential occupants such as the OMAO's AOC to be relocated off of MacDill AFB.

**Proposed Action**

NOAA is proposing to relocate its AOC aircraft and operations center to an airport that provides between 95,000 to 99,000 square feet (SF) of contiguous space consistent with American National Standards Institute/Building Owners and Managers Association Office Area definitions.

The space provided would accommodate the aircraft hangar, offices, shop/laboratory equipment, conferencing facilities, and other spaces as generally described below. A minimum hangar area of 56,000 SF (of the up-to 99,000 SF) would provide fully enclosed housing for all 9 of NOAA's aircraft, which is comprised of:

- Two (2) Lockheed WP-3D Orion (P-3) aircraft
- One (1) G-IV SP
- Four (4) DHC-6 Twin Otters
- One (1) King Air 350 ER
- One (1) Gulf Stream AC-695 Turbo Commander

**Site Alternatives Considered**

Under Site Alternative 1, facilities have been offered at Lakeland-Linder Regional Airport (LAL) located in the 1/4NW, Section 9, Township 29 North, Range 23 East on the Nichols, Florida U.S. Geological Survey (USGS) quadrangle map. The airport is on 1,700 acres with 1 million square feet of facilities at an elevation of 142 feet above mean sea level (MSL). From the 1970s until 1999, the airfield

operated as a joint civil-military facility when it hosted Army Aviation Support Facility. Prior to the airport being used by the military, it was a strictly commercial airline service property. According to the FAA Airport Master Record, LAL has 219 based aircraft, including 36 jet aircraft. The airport's primary runway, Runway 9/27 is 8,499 feet long and is equipped with an Instrument Landing System (ILS); the secondary runway, Runway 5/23 is 5005 feet by 150 feet (Global Air, 2016a). LAL is home to the Central Florida Aerospace Academy, which provides an aviation-based high school curriculum; and Polk State College's Aerospace Center, which offers a four-year aviation degree. The airport is also home to large, nationally renowned fly-in events, including the SUN'n FUN International Fly-In & Expo.

Under Site Alternative 2, facilities have been offered at St. Petersburg-Clearwater International Airport (PIE), located in the 1/4NE, Section 3, Township 30 North, Range 16 East on the Safety Harbor, Florida, USGS quadrangle map. PIE is a public/military airport serving the St. Petersburg-Clearwater-Tampa Bay Metro Area that surrounds Tampa Bay. PIE is within an unincorporated area of Pinellas County, nine miles north of downtown St. Petersburg, Florida, and seven miles southeast of Clearwater. The airport covers 1,900 acres at an elevation of 11 feet MSL. It has two asphalt runways: Runway 18/36 is 9,730 by 150 feet and ILS-equipped, and Runway 4/22 is 5,903 by 150 feet (Global Air, 2016b). The National Plan of Integrated Airport Systems for 2011–2015 categorized it as a primary commercial service airport since it has over 10,000 passenger-boardings per year.

### **No Action Alternative**

The No-Action Alternative is a condition in which the AOC operations are not relocated from their current location at MacDill AFB, under the condition in which no DoD action affecting the space used for existing AOC activities at MacDill AFB would occur. The location and intensity of operations and existing facilities associated with AOC at MacDill AFB would remain unchanged.

### **Alternatives Considered and Rejected**

Prospective interest by Tampa International Airport in response to the NOAA OMAO solicitation for bids was withdrawn by the Hillsborough County Aviation Authority. It was withdrawn primarily due to the schedule requirements for OMAO AOC occupancy. No other offers that would meet the requisite airport runway, facilities, and service requirements necessary within fifty 'driving' miles of MacDill AFB were received and considered.

### **Environmental Impacts and Mitigation Measures**

NOAA prepared an EA analyzing the proposed action in conformance with procedural requirements of the National Environmental Policy Act of 1969 (NEPA). The document adheres to requirements of NOAA Administrative Order 216-6, Environmental Review Procedures for Implementing the National Environmental Policy Act (amended May 20, 1999).

Based on an evaluation of the proposed action's effect on the human environment, it was determined that no significant impacts would result.

The EA analyzed the following topics:

- Land Use
- Geological Resources
- Air Quality
- Water Resources
- Recreational Resources
- Cultural Resources
- Flora and Fauna
- Wetlands
- Floodplains
- Agricultural Resources
- Noise
- Transportation
- Utilities and Solid Waste
- Aesthetics and Visual Resources
- Hazardous Materials
- Socioeconomics
- Climate and Greenhouse Gas Emissions
- Cumulative Impacts

No anticipated environmental impacts were identified in relation to the No-Action Alternative. Table 4-1 summarizes the anticipated environmental impacts to environmental resources identified in the Final EA for each action alternative and any mitigation measures required to support this Finding of No Significant Impact.

**Table 4-1: Summary of Anticipated Environmental Impacts and Suggested Mitigation**

Resource	Anticipated Impact	Suggested Mitigation
Land Use	<p><b>Action Alternative 1:</b> No effect.</p> <p><b>Action Alternative 2:</b> No effect.</p>	<p><b>Action Alternative 1:</b> No mitigation measures are recommended.</p> <p><b>Action Alternative 2:</b> No mitigation measures are recommended.</p>
Geological Resources	<p><b>Action Alternative 1:</b> Negligible.</p> <p><b>Action Alternative 2:</b> Negligible.</p>	<p><b>Action Alternative 1:</b> No mitigation measures are recommended.</p> <p><b>Action Alternative 2:</b> No mitigation measures are recommended.</p>
Air Quality	<p><b>Action Alternative 1:</b> No effect.</p> <p><b>Action Alternative 2:</b> No effect.</p>	<p><b>Action Alternative 1:</b> No mitigation measures are required. Standard BMPs to reduce construction related emissions can be applied.</p> <p><b>Action Alternative 2:</b> No mitigation measures are required. Standard BMPs to reduce construction related emissions can be applied.</p>
Water Resources	<p><b>Action Alternative 1:</b> Negligible.</p> <p><b>Action Alternative 2:</b> Negligible.</p>	<p><b>Action Alternative 1:</b> Mitigation for the water quantity and quality impacts would consist of designing a proposed project drainage system that meets State water quality standards as set forth in Chapter 17-3, FAC, by apply its recommended BMPs and/or those published in the Florida Airports Stormwater Best Management Practices Manual.</p> <p><b>Action Alternative 2:</b> Mitigation for the water quantity and quality impacts would consist of designing a proposed project drainage system that meets State water quality standards as set forth in Chapter 17-3, FAC, and its recommended BMPs.</p>
Recreational Resources	<p><b>Action Alternative 1:</b> No effect.</p> <p><b>Action Alternative 2:</b></p>	<p><b>Action Alternative 1:</b> No mitigation measures are recommended.</p> <p><b>Action Alternative 2:</b></p>

No effect.

No mitigation measures are recommended.

**Table 4-1: Summary of Anticipated Environmental Impacts and Suggested Mitigation**

<b>Resource</b>	<b>Anticipated Impact</b>	<b>Suggested Mitigation</b>
Cultural Resources	<b>Action Alternative 1:</b> No effect. <b>Action Alternative 2:</b> No effect.	<b>Action Alternative 1:</b> No mitigation measures are recommended. <b>Action Alternative 2:</b> No mitigation measures are recommended.
Flora and Fauna	<b>Action Alternative 1:</b> Minor effect. <b>Action Alternative 2:</b> Minor effect.	<b>Action Alternative 1:</b> NOAA shall ensure that the commitments listed below will be followed by the site owner and the construction- related contractors implementing the proposed action at this site: <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• The USFWS' Standard Protection Measures for the eastern indigo snake shall be adhered to during construction of the proposed action;</li><li>• Prior to construction, appropriate habitats at the site shall be surveyed for gopher tortoise. If any burrows are located within the site, the site owner shall inform NOAA and coordinate with the FWC to secure any permits needed to relocate gopher tortoises prior to construction.</li></ul> <b>Action Alternative 2:</b> NOAA shall ensure that the commitments listed below will be followed by the site owner and the construction- related contractors implementing the proposed action at this site: The USFWS' Standard Protection Measures for the eastern indigo snake shall be adhered to during construction of the proposed action.
Wetlands	<b>Action Alternative 1:</b> No effect. <b>Action Alternative 2:</b> No effect.	<b>Action Alternative 1:</b> No mitigation measures are recommended. <b>Action Alternative 2:</b> No mitigation measures are recommended.
Floodplains	<b>Action Alternative 1:</b> No effect. <b>Action Alternative 2:</b> Negligible effect.	<b>Action Alternative 1:</b> No mitigation measures are recommended. <b>Action Alternative 2:</b> No mitigation measures are recommended.
Coastal Zone Management	<b>Action Alternative 1:</b> No effect. <b>Action Alternative 2:</b> No effect.	<b>Action Alternative 1:</b> No mitigation measures are recommended. <b>Action Alternative 2:</b> No mitigation measures are recommended.
Agricultural Resources	<b>Action Alternative 1:</b> No effect. <b>Action Alternative 2:</b> No effect.	<b>Action Alternative 1:</b> No mitigation measures are recommended. <b>Action Alternative 2:</b> No mitigation measures are recommended.

**Table 4-1: Summary of Anticipated Environmental Impacts and Suggested Mitigation**

Resource	Anticipated Impact	Suggested Mitigation
Noise	<p><b>Action Alternative 1:</b> Negligible effect.</p> <p><b>Action Alternative 2:</b> Negligible effect.</p>	<p><b>Action Alternative 1:</b> No mitigation measures are recommended.</p> <p><b>Action Alternative 2:</b> No mitigation measures are recommended.</p>
Transportation	<p><b>Action Alternative 1:</b> Negligible effect.</p> <p><b>Action Alternative 2:</b> Negligible effect.</p>	<p><b>Action Alternative 1:</b> No mitigation measures are recommended.</p> <p><b>Action Alternative 2:</b> No mitigation measures are recommended.</p>
Utilities and Service Systems	<p><b>Action Alternative 1:</b> No effect.</p> <p><b>Action Alternative 2:</b> No effect.</p>	<p><b>Action Alternative 1:</b> No mitigation measures are recommended.</p> <p><b>Action Alternative 2:</b> No mitigation measures are recommended.</p>
Visual and Aesthetic Resources	<p><b>Action Alternative 1:</b> No effect.</p> <p><b>Action Alternative 2:</b> No effect.</p>	<p><b>Action Alternative 1:</b> No mitigation measures are recommended.</p> <p><b>Action Alternative 2:</b> No mitigation measures are recommended.</p>
Hazardous Materials	<p><b>Action Alternative 1:</b> Minor effect.</p> <p><b>Action Alternative 2:</b> Minor effect.</p>	<p><b>Action Alternative 1:</b> NOAA shall ensure that the lease agreement includes conditions requiring that the owner prepare the existing building in a manner consistent with all applicable federal, state and local laws pertaining to hazardous materials handling, storage, transportation and disposal, including (but not limited to) relevant laws pertaining to asbestos and lead-based paint.</p> <p><b>Action Alternative 2:</b> NOAA shall ensure that the lease agreement includes conditions requiring that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The owner prepare the existing building in a manner consistent with all applicable federal, state and local laws pertaining to hazardous materials handling, storage, transportation and disposal, including (but not limited to) relevant laws pertaining to asbestos and lead-based paint.</li> <li>• The owner is responsible for remediating existing soil and groundwater contamination at the site to required federal, state, and/or local standards.</li> </ul>

Environmental Justice and Socioeconomics	<b>Action Alternative 1:</b>	<b>Action Alternative 1:</b>
	Negligible effect.	No mitigation measures are recommended.
	<b>Action Alternative 2:</b>	<b>Action Alternative 2:</b>
	2: Negligible effect.	No mitigation measures are recommended.

**Table 4-1: Summary of Anticipated Environmental Impacts and Suggested Mitigation**

Resource	Anticipated Impact	Suggested Mitigation
Climate Change and Greenhouse Gas Emissions	<b>Action Alternative 1:</b>	<b>Action Alternative 1:</b>
	No effect.	No mitigation measures are recommended.
	<b>Action Alternative 2:</b>	<b>Action Alternative 2:</b>
	No effect.	No mitigation measures are recommended.
Cumulative	<b>Action Alternative 1:</b>	<b>Action Alternative 1:</b>
	No effect.	No mitigation measures are recommended.
	<b>Action Alternative 2:</b>	<b>Action Alternative 2:</b>
	No effect.	No mitigation measures are recommended.

## FINDING OF NO SIGNIFICANT IMPACT

The Council on Environmental Quality (CEQ) Regulations state that the determination of significance using an analysis of effects requires examination of both context and intensity, and lists ten criteria for intensity (40 CFR 1508.27). In addition, NOAA Administrative Order (NAO) 216-6, Section 6.01(b) 1 – 11, provides eleven criteria, the same ten as the CEQ Regulations and one additional for determining whether the impacts of a proposed action are significant. Each criterion is discussed below with respect to the proposed action and considered individually as well as in combination with the others.

*1. Can the proposed action reasonably be expected to cause both beneficial and adverse impacts that overall may result in a significant effect, even if the effect will be beneficial?*

No. The EA analyzes the proposed action at a preferred site alternative and the no-action alternative. No other viable alternatives were considered. The EA describes the proposed action and environmental settings, and analyzes associated environmental consequences based on established standards and criteria. Analyses for each of the following topics and resource areas were undertaken: Land Use, Geological Resources, Air Quality, Water Resources, Recreational Resources, Cultural Resources, Flora and Fauna, Essential Fish Habitat, Wetlands and Navigable Waters, Floodplains, Coastal Zone Management, Agricultural Resources, Noise, Transportation, Utilities and Solid Waste, Visual and Aesthetic Resources, Hazardous Materials, Socioeconomics, and Cumulative Impacts.

*2. Can the proposed action reasonably be expected to significantly affect public health or safety?*

No. Public health and safety effects are not expected to be significant. NOAA shall ensure the lease agreement includes conditions requiring that the owner prepare the existing building in a manner consistent with all applicable federal, state and local laws pertaining to hazardous materials handling, storage, transportation and disposal, including (but not limited to) relevant laws pertaining to asbestos and lead-based paint.

*3. Can the proposed action reasonably be expected to result in significant impacts to unique characteristics of the geographic area, such as proximity to historic or cultural resources, park lands, prime farmlands, wetlands, wild and scenic rivers, or ecologically critical areas?*

No. Action Alternatives are not expected to have an adverse effect to historic properties, due to the absence of historic properties at the sites, and a lack of substantial alterations to the existing historic property at MacDill AFB and the characteristics that make it significant. No ecologically sensitive areas would be affected, including parkland, prime farmland, wetlands, river and estuarine areas or karst environments.

*4. Are the proposed action's effects on the quality of the human environment likely to be highly controversial?*

No. The proposed action involves the relocation of NOAA's AOC aircraft and operations center to an airport.

This EA analyzes the effects of proposed action on the human environment. A draft of this document was circulated and made available for review and comment by interested members of the public and government agencies. NOAA accepted comments on the draft during a formal 30-day public comment period beginning September 22, 2016, and ending October 22, 2016. No highly controversial topics were raised during the comment period.

*5. Are the proposed action's effects on the human environment likely to be highly uncertain or involve unique or unknown risks?*

No. The anticipated effects of the proposed action on the human environment are evaluated the EA based on conceptual plans and worst-case conditions. There is a minimal level of uncertainty in these anticipated effects because final design details have not been used for the final analysis. However, while effects may occur, mitigation measures were recommended that would eliminate the potential for uncertain levels of effect or other unique or unknown risks.

*6. Can the proposed action reasonably be expected to establish a precedent for future actions with significant effects or represent a decision in principle about a future consideration?*

No. The project consists of a stand-alone facility that is limited in scope and extent. It would neither be a catalyst or precedent for other future actions by NOAA or others that would result in significant effects, nor would it influence a future action under consideration.

*7. Is the proposed action related to other actions that when considered together will have individually insignificant but cumulatively significant impacts?*

No. The proposed action is not reliant upon or connected to other actions, nor is it relied upon for the occurrence of other actions. For each of the subject areas analyzed in the EA, the contribution of the proposed project to a cumulatively significant impact is not considerable, provided the recommended mitigation measures are implemented. Therefore, the proposed action will not result in a significant cumulative impact to the human environment.

*8. Can the proposed action reasonably be expected to adversely affect districts, sites, highways, structures, or objects listed in or eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places or may cause loss or destruction of significant scientific, cultural, or historical resources?*

No. The Florida State Historic Preservation Officer has determined that the project would not affect archaeological resources or have a direct or indirect impact to other structures either eligible for or listed on the Nation Register of Historic Places.

*9. Can the proposed action reasonably be expected to have a significant impact on endangered or threatened species, or their critical habitat as defined under the Endangered Species Act of 1973?*

No. Proposed Action may have a minor effect on flora and fauna. NOAA shall ensure that the commitments listed below will be followed by the site owner and the construction- related contractors implementing the proposed action at this site:

The USFWS' Standard Protection Measures for the eastern indigo snake shall be adhered to during construction of the proposed action. Prior to construction, appropriate habitats at the site shall be surveyed for gopher tortoise. If any burrows are located within the site, the site owner shall inform NOAA and coordinate with the FWC to secure any permits needed to relocate gopher tortoises prior to construction.

*10. Can the proposed action reasonably be expected to threaten a violation of Federal, state, or local law or requirements imposed for environmental protection?*

The effect of the proposed action on the human environment has been analyzed relative to applicable Federal, state and local environmental laws or regulations. No regulatory violations or other significant environmental effects are expected to result provided that mitigation measures recommended in the EA are implemented.

*11. Can the proposed action reasonably be expected to result in the introduction or spread of a non-indigenous species?*

No. No transport, release, propagation or spread of non-indigenous species is associated with the proposed action.

### **DETERMINATION**

In view of the information presented in this document and the analysis contained in the supporting Environmental Assessment prepared for the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration for its proposed Office of marine and Aviation Operations' Aircraft Operations Center relocation, it is hereby determined that the undertaking of the proposed action will not significantly impact the quality of the human environment. In addition, all beneficial and adverse impacts of the proposed action have been addressed to reach the conclusion of no significant impacts. Accordingly, preparation of an environmental impact statement for this action is not necessary.



Edward Horton  
NOAA Chief Administrative Officer

11/23/2016  
Date