Environmental Fact Sheet

National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA)

The National Environmental Policy Act of 1969 (NEPA), together with the Council on Environmental Quality (CEQ) implementing regulations, establish a broad national policy to protect and enhance the quality of the human environment by requiring Federal agencies to consider the potential environmental consequences of their proposed actions. More specifically, NEPA and the CEQ regulations require preparation of an environmental impact statement when, after a careful and delineated process of review has been conducted, it is determined that a proposed action significantly affect the quality of the human environment. As with other Federal agencies, the FAA has developed its own policies and procedures for complying with NEPA and the CEQ regulations as outlined in FAA Order 1050.1F, *Environmental Impacts: Policies and Procedures*.

For additional information, visit:
FAA Order 1050.1F, Environmental Impacts: Policies and Procedures
http://www.faa.gov/about/office_org/headquarters_offices/apl/environ_policy_guidance/policy/faa_nepa_order/

National Environmental Policy Act Council on Environmental Quality Regulations and Guidance
https://ceq.doe.gov/ceq_regulations/regulations.html

FAA NEPA Noise Metric and Noise Significance Criteria

When evaluating noise during an environmental review, the Day-Night Average Sound Level (DNL) is used by the FAA as the standard metric for purposes of NEPA and is the primary noise metric used by the FAA to determine levels of significance on and around the airport environs.

DNL has been continually recommended by technical experts as the best available metric for evaluating long-term noise exposure, and is the only noise metric supported by a substantial body of scientific survey data focused on community reaction to aircraft noise exposure.

Key characteristics of the DNL metric include:

- DNL level increases with both the loudness and duration of noise events
- DNL takes into account the number of noise events during a 24-hour day
- DNL calculations take into account the increased sensitivity to noise at night by including a 10 dB nighttime penalty between 10 p.m. and 7 a.m. local time

The FAA uses thresholds that serve as indicators of significant impacts for some environmental impact categories and has identified the following as a significance threshold for noise:

> The action would increase noise by DNL 1.5 dB or more for a noise sensitive area that is exposed to noise at or above the DNL 65 dB noise exposure level, or that will be exposed at or above the DNL 65 dB level due to a DNL 1.5 dB or greater increase, when compared to the no action alternative for the same timeframe. For example, an increase from DNL 65.5 dB to 67 dB is considered a significant impact, as is an increase from DNL 63.5 dB to 65 dB.

NEPA Process

NEPA requires Federal agencies to use an interdisciplinary approach in planning and decision-making for proposed actions that may adversely impact the environment. NEPA also requires that a process be established for incorporating public involvement and integrating the requirements of other applicable environmental laws and regulations into the Federal decision-making and planning process. This requires the FAA evaluate the environmental and related social and economic effects of a proposed action and provide opportunities for public involvement, where appropriate.

For Air Traffic procedure actions, FAA first conducts an internal, preliminary review of any potential environmental impacts, including a noise screening assessment. For the DCA alternative LAZIR "B" procedure proposed action, a Noise Screening Report was prepared (see TARGETS AEDT Environmental Plug-In Report for Ronald Reagan Washington National Airport KDCA Arlington, VA).

The FAA is currently seeking public input into the DCA alternative "B" procedure as part of the scoping process under NEPA. Input from the public will be used to assist the FAA in determining the appropriate level of NEPA review.

Based on the preliminary screening, the FAA then determines the appropriate level of NEPA review. The three levels of NEPA review are:

Categorical Exclusion (CATEX)
A CATEX may apply to categories of actions that normally do not individually or cumulatively have significant adverse effects on the human environment. A CATEX must however take into account any extraordinary circumstances, as defined in Paragraph 5-2 of FAA Order 1050.1F, in which a normally categorically excluded action may have a significant environmental effect.

Environmental Assessment (EA)
An EA is a concise document which evaluates the expected environmental effects of a proposed action to determine if there is a potential for significant impacts. An EA summarizes the most important facts and conclusions surrounding the proposed action and its reasonable alternatives, as well as document all technical and supporting materials and make this information available for public comment. If, at the conclusion of an EA, it is determined that there are no significant impacts, a Finding of No Significant Impacts (FONSI) is prepared. The FAA may also decide to prepare a formal decision document called a Record of Decision (ROD). When combined with the FONSI it may be referred to as a FONSI/ROD.

Environmental Impact Statement (EIS)
An EIS is a detailed written statement that must be prepared for proposed actions that have significant impacts. The EIS allows the FAA to evaluate the environmental impacts that the no action, the proposed action, and its reasonable alternatives would cause. The EIS must fully document all technical and supporting materials and make them available for public comment. At the conclusion of the EIS, the FAA prepares a ROD that explains what is being proposed and why, identifies actions the FAA or any other Federal agencies must take, explains the alternatives analyzed and which one is environmentally preferred, and identifies required mitigation measures.