

**U.S. Department of Transportation
Federal Aviation Administration**

RECORD OF DECISION

**Written Re-evaluation for
Final Environmental Impact Statement for the Relocation of the
Panama City-Bay County International Airport**

Proposed Extension to Runway 16L-34R

Panama City, Florida

November 2009

I. INTRODUCTION

In September of 2006, the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) issued its Record of Decision (ROD) on the Relocation of the Panama City Bay County International Airport. The ROD approved relocation of the airport to a new location in Bay County, Florida identified as the West Bay Site (previously Approved Action). In January 2009, the Panama City Bay County International Airport and Industrial District (Airport Sponsor) submitted to the FAA a request for approval of an updated Airport Layout Plan (ALP) revising the initial primary runway length at the relocated airport from 8,400 feet to 10,000 feet. The FAA prepared a Written Re-evaluation evaluating the environmental consequences of the proposed runway extension. This analysis reaffirmed the conclusions drawn from the information disclosed in the *Final Environmental Impact Statement for the Proposed Relocation of the Panama City-Bay County International Airport, Panama City, Florida, May 2006* (FEIS) and the *Federal Aviation Administration Record of Decision (ROD) for the Proposed Relocation of the Panama City-Bay County International Airport*, September 2006.

II. PROPOSED PROJECT

In its September 2006 ROD, the FAA approved the relocation of the Panama City Bay County International Airport and, as part of that airport relocation, the construction of a primary runway 8,400 feet in length. However, as noted above, in January 2009, the Airport Sponsor submitted to the FAA a request for approval of an updated Airport Layout Plan (ALP) revising the initial primary runway length from 8,400 feet to 10,000 feet (Proposed Change). As noted in Section 1.0 of the Written Re-evaluation prepared in response to that request, the Airport Sponsor is proposing the southerly extension of the primary runway at this time because of the availability of state economic development funding to build the extension. This 1,600 foot extension would occur at the southern end of Runway 16L-34R, which is entirely within the boundaries of the Initial Development Area that was environmentally analyzed in the FEIS.

The updated ALP includes other minor changes for the new airport facilities. These minor changes include the final site location for the Air Traffic Control Tower (ATCT); updated locations of proposed precision approach path indicators (PAPIs), runway end identification lights (REILs), wind cones, and other runway facility equipment (glide slope antenna, Medium Intensity Approach Lighting System and Rail (MALSR)); a designated site for the proposed airport surface observation equipment (ASOS) and radio transmittal receiver (RTR); and a revised rental car service facility configuration. All of the changes

depicted on the updated ALP, including the proposed runway extension to the south for a total of 10,000 feet, will occur within the Initial Development Area.

III. NEED FOR THE WRITTEN RE-EVALUATION

In accordance with FAA Order 5050.4B paragraph 1401, the proposed extension of Runway 16L-34R by 1,600 feet, for a total length of 10,000 feet requires a determination by the FAA as to whether “resultant environmental impacts present significant new circumstances or information relevant to those environmental concerns bearing on the proposed action or impacts.” FAA Orders 5050.4B and 1050.1E provide guidance on preparing written re-evaluations.

In conducting this Written Re-evaluation, the FAA sought to determine whether:

- (1) The proposed action conforms to plans or projects for which a prior EIS has been filed and whether there are substantial changes in the proposed action that are relevant to environmental concerns;
- (2) Data and analyses contained in the previous EIS are still substantially valid and whether there are significant new circumstances or information relevant to environmental concerns and bearing on the proposed action or its impact; and,
- (3) All pertinent conditions and requirements of the prior approval have been, or will be, met in the current action

IV. PROPOSED AGENCY ACTIONS

Below is a list of the Federal actions and approvals required by the FAA before the Airport Sponsor can implement the Proposed Change to the previously Approved Action.

FAA APPROVAL OF THE UPDATED ALP DEPICTING THE PROPOSED CHANGE AND OTHER MINOR CHANGES TO THE PREVIOUSLY APPROVED ACTION: FAA conditional approval of the updated ALP.

FAA INSTALLATION AND/OR RELOCATION OF NAVIGATIONAL AIDS ASSOCIATED WITH THE RUNWAY EXTENSION: FAA determination for the installation and/or relocation of navigational aids associated with the runway extension.

FAA APPROVAL OF AIR TRAFFIC CONTROL PROCEDURES AND MODIFICATION OF FLIGHT PROCEDURES FOR THE RUNWAY EXTENSION: The FAA approval of revised traffic control and instrument procedures for the extended runway. These procedures will be flight tested and published for general use.

FAA EVALUATION AND DETERMINATION OF AIRSPACE OBSTRUCTIONS:

Determinations and actions, through the aeronautical study process of any off-airport obstacles that might be obstructions to the navigable airspace under the standards and criteria of 14 CFR Part 77 *Objects Affecting Navigable Airspace*, and an evaluation of the appropriateness of proposals for on-airport development from an airspace utilization and safety perspective based on aeronautical studies conducted pursuant to the standards and criteria of 14 CFR Part 157, *Notice of Construction, Alteration, Activation, and Deactivation of Airport*.

FAA CERTIFICATION AND OTHER APPROVALS: FAA modification or amendment of existing certificates or specifications is required to comply with FAA design standards and to accommodate, in a safe and efficient manner, the passenger enplanements and aircraft activity forecasts.

- Certification under 14 CFR Part 139, *Certification of Airports*.

- Operating Specifications for scheduled air carriers intending to operate at the airport in the future under FAR 14 CFR Part 121, *Certification and Operations: Domestic, Flag, and Supplemental Air Carriers and Commercial Operations of Large Aircraft*.

V. SUMMARY OF ENVIRONMENTAL ANALYSIS

The following discussion presents the environmental analysis performed for the Written Re-evaluation. The Written Re-evaluation satisfies the requirements of FAA Order 5050.4B, *National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) Implementing Instructions for Airport Actions*, and 1050.1E, *Environmental Impacts: Policies and Procedures*.

In the Written Re-evaluation, it was documented that there is no change in impacts associated with the Proposed Change for the following resource categories: Coastal Barriers; Coastal Zone Management; Department of Transportation Act Section 4(f); Farmlands; Floodplains; Hazardous Materials and Solid Waste; Historic, Architectural, Archaeological and Cultural Resources, Light Emissions and Visual Impacts; Natural Resources and Energy Supply, Environmental Justice; Wild and Scenic Rivers. Only resource categories where environmental consequences could potentially differ from those disclosed in the FEIS are addressed below.

(1) AIR QUALITY

The Proposed Change was compared to the previously Approved Action identified in the FEIS to determine the net change in emissions as discussed in Section 3.1 of the Written Re-evaluation.

Bay County is currently in attainment of the NAAQS for all criteria pollutants. Based on the region's attainment status and the fact that no SIP exists, the General Conformity regulations do not apply to the Proposed Change being evaluated in the Written Re-evaluation.

The Proposed Change would lead to increases in airport operational emissions in 2010 (Table 3.5 of the Written Re-evaluation) when compared to the 2008 operational emissions for the previously Approved Action (Table 5-48 of the FEIS) however, the difference in emissions is nominal.

In the FEIS, calendar year 2018 emissions associated with the previously Approved Action were determined to be less than significant based on emissions inventory modeling and air quality dispersion modeling. As stated in Section 5.7.2.4 of the FEIS, at the request of USEPA and FDEP, dispersion analyses were conducted for two pollutants (NO_x and PM₁₀). As reported in Table 5-56 of the FEIS, the average and maximum concentrations of both NO_x and PM₁₀ were well below the NAAQS for those pollutants. Specifically, the maximum concentration of NO_x as reported in the FEIS would have to increase by more than 34 percent to reach the NAAQS and the maximum concentration of PM₁₀ as reported in the FEIS would have to increase by more than 100 percent to reach the NAAQS. Because calendar year 2018 emissions associated with the Proposed Change are all less than 1.5 percent higher than emission estimates presented in the FEIS for calendar year 2018, further operational air quality analyses, including dispersion modeling, are not necessary to conclude that implementation of the Proposed Change would not be anticipated to cause or contribute to any exceedance of the NAAQS in

2010 and 2018. Therefore, emissions associated with the Proposed Change are expected to be less than significant.

The construction emissions estimates for the Proposed Change (Table 3.7 of the Written Re-evaluation) are similar to the construction emission estimates for the previously Approved Action (Table 5-49 of the FEIS). Construction-related emissions in 2009 and 2010 would be less than significant for the Proposed Change.

(2) COMPATIBLE LAND USE

The results of the noise analysis prepared for the Written Re-evaluation (Section 3.5) show that the 65 DNL noise contour for the Proposed Change would remain within the new airport property boundary, the same as for the previously Approved Action as disclosed in the FEIS.

There is no change in the number of households and population near the new airport site from that disclosed in the FEIS. No residences or persons would be affected by significant noise. As described in Section 2.4 of this Written Re-evaluation, the approved West Bay Sector Plan incorporates an Airfield Compatibility Use Special Treatment Zone to reduce the potential for future noise complaints and to restrict non-compatible development. The Proposed Change would not result in the development of non-compatible land uses as defined in the FAA's Federal Aviation Regulations Part 150, Airport Noise Compatibility Planning, (see Table 3.8, *Land Use Compatibility Guidelines in Aircraft Noise Exposure Areas*, of the Written Re-evaluation). The Proposed Change would not require an amendment to the Bay County Comprehensive Plan.

(3) CONSTRUCTION IMPACTS

Construction of the runway extension would occur within the Initial Development Area.

(a) Air Quality

The peak construction year from an emissions standpoint for the previously Approved Action as evaluated in the FEIS was 2007. The peak construction year for the Proposed Change evaluated in the Written Re-evaluation is 2009. Overall emissions from runway paving activities would be higher with a 10,000 foot Runway 16L-34R (Proposed Change) compared to an 8,400 foot Runway 16L-34R (previously Approved Action) as evaluated in the FEIS. However, differences in the construction emissions estimates are nominal and, as noted in Section 3.1.1.7 of the Written Re-evaluation, construction related emissions would be less than significant in 2009, and 2010.

(b) Noise

Construction vehicles and equipment generate temporary noise when they are in operation. Areas that would experience high levels of temporary construction noise are proximate to the Initial Development Area. Differences in construction noise would be nominal for the Proposed Change as compared to the previously Approved Action. Temporary construction noise levels offsite would be less than significant due to the Initial Development Area's distance to CR 388 (1.5 miles).

(c) Water Quality and Wetland

There would be no additional impacts to water quality and wetlands as a result of construction of the Proposed Change. No wetland impacts will result from construction of the runway extension because the site has been cleared in accordance with the Florida Department of Environmental Protection (FDEP) and

U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE) permits. No water quality impacts beyond those disclosed in the FEIS are anticipated because the Airport Sponsor committed in the 2006 ROD to Best Management Practices (BMP) in accordance with FAA Advisory Circular 150/5370-10B *Standards for Specifying Construction of Airports* and the conduct of construction in accordance with Federal, state and local permit requirements.

(4) BIOTIC RESOURCES INCLUDING THREATENED AND ENDANGERED SPECIES

(a) Terrestrial Vegetation Coverage

There would be no change from what was presented in the FEIS to terrestrial vegetation coverage as a result of the Proposed Change because the site has been cleared in accordance with the Florida Department of Environmental Protection (FDEP) and U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE) permits.

(b) Aquatic Habitat

The streams and wetlands within the Initial Development Area have been filled pursuant to the permits issued for the previously Approved Action. There would no change in the effects to aquatic habitat as a result of the Proposed Change beyond what was presented in the FEIS.

(c) Wildlife and Wildlife Habitat

No wildlife was observed during the February 5, 2009 field reconnaissance. Additional impacts to wildlife and wildlife habitat beyond what was presented in the FEIS are not anticipated as a result of the Proposed Change.

(d) Essential Fish Habitat

The Proposed Change would not result in any additional impacts to Essential Fish Habitat from what was reported in the FEIS. All construction would occur within the Initial Development Area and in accordance with the FDEP and USACE permits.

(e) Invasive Species

The site has been cleared of all vegetation with the exception of a portion of the southern Initial Development Area boundary. No invasive species as defined by the Florida Exotic Pest Council's 2007 List of Florida's Invasive Species were observed during field reconnaissance and none are anticipated to occur within the Initial Development Area boundary.

(f) Endangered and Threatened Species

No federally or state protected species was observed during the February 5, 2009 field reconnaissance. No additional impacts to listed species are anticipated as a result of the Proposed Change. The FAA coordinated with the USFWS regarding the Proposed Change. The USFWS concurred with the FAA's findings that re-initiation of formal consultation is not required for the extension of the runway.

(5) INDUCED SOCIOECONOMIC IMPACTS

The Proposed Change would not result in any relocation of businesses or residences. The Proposed Change would not result in any increase in public service demands from what was reported in the FEIS.

(6) NOISE

The results of the noise analysis show that, consistent with the analysis in the FEIS, no people or households would be exposed to aircraft noise levels of DNL 65 and higher in either 2010 or 2018 with the Proposed Change. Implementation of the Proposed Change would not result in significant noise impacts as defined in FAA Orders 1050.1E and 5050.4B. No persons or households would be exposed to aircraft noise of DNL 65 or higher in 2010 or 2018. No schools, religious facilities, or other noise sensitive facilities would be exposed to aircraft noise of DNL 65 and higher.

(7) SOCIAL IMPACTS INCLUDING SURFACE TRANSPORTATION

The Proposed Change would not displace any existing residences or businesses, nor would it result in any change to surface transportation impacts that were reported in the FEIS.

Based on the analysis contained in the Written Re-evaluation, no disproportionate effects on children's environmental health or safety issues would occur as a result of the Proposed Change.

The Proposed Change would not result in any change to the FEIS conclusions regarding social impacts.

(8) WATER QUALITY

There would be no additional impacts to surface waters or ground waters from what was previously disclosed in the FEIS as a result of the Proposed Change.

Minor revisions to the stormwater management system described in the FEIS were proposed. These minor revisions were made to accommodate airport design changes including the proposed extension of Runway 16-34 extension from 8,400 feet to 10,000 feet. While the proposed runway extension will cause a minor increase in impervious area, the stormwater management system accommodates the additional drainage and impervious area and no additional impacts would be expected. As discussed in Section 2.17.1, no modification of the FDEP permit (FDEP Permit# 03-0212186-003-RG) is required as a result of the revisions to the stormwater master plan.

(9) WETLANDS

The Initial Development Area has been cleared and graded in accordance with the FDEP Wetland Resource Permit (FDEP Permit# 03-0212186-004-DF) and USACE Section 404 Permit (#SAJ-2001-05264(IP-GAH)). The wetlands have been filled within the Initial Development Area in accordance with the permits issued for the previously Approved Action. No modification of the FDEP Wetland Resource permit would be required for the Proposed Change because there are no additional wetland impacts beyond what was originally permitted. The USACE has indicated that a modification of the Section 404 Permit will be required for the Proposed Change. According to the USACE, modification of the Section 404 Permit is required because the runway is being extended from 8,400 feet to 10,000 feet. The Airport Sponsor has submitted a modification for the proposed runway extension to the USACE.

No additional mitigation is required for the Proposed Change as there are no wetland impacts beyond those already permitted within the Initial Development Area.

(10) CUMULATIVE IMPACTS

As discussed in the FEIS for the previously Approved Action, for the new airport site, minimum cumulative impacts were anticipated for the following categories: surface transportation, floodplains,

biotic communities/listed species, noise, compatible land use, cultural resources, and hazardous materials. As identified in the FEIS, potential cumulative impacts were identified with regards to socioeconomic effects, wetlands, and water quality. When evaluating the potential change in cumulative impacts associated with the proposed runway extension, the FAA has considered the previously disclosed cumulative impacts associated with the relocated airport and any potential additional impacts created by the Proposed Change. With respect to wetlands and water quality, no cumulative impacts are expected because the Proposed Change does not create any direct wetland or water quality impacts different than that disclosed in the FEIS for the previously Approved Action. Absent direct impacts in these categories, no cumulative impacts can be expected regardless of other reasonably foreseeable projects in the vicinity of the airport. Similarly, with respect to socioeconomic effects, the proposed runway extension that is the subject of the Written Re-evaluation is not anticipated to create any cumulative impacts beyond those disclosed in the FEIS. The primary reason that cumulative socioeconomic consequences are not expected is because the proposed runway extension does not change aviation forecasts for the airport and therefore will not induce growth or cause off-site land use changes beyond those anticipated in the FEIS for relocation of the airport generally. With aviation activity levels remaining the same, expected additions to the road network in the vicinity of the airport and other reasonably foreseeable development planned under the approved land use plans for the area will not have any synergistic effect with the proposed runway extension.

VI. FINDING AND DETERMINATION

Based on the above review in our Written Re-evaluation and in conformity with FAA Order 1050.1E paragraph 515, the FAA has concluded that:

(1) The proposed action conforms to plans or projects for which a prior EIS has been filed and there are no substantial changes in the proposed action that are relevant to environmental concerns.

The previously Approved Action to relocate the existing Panama City-Bay County International Airport to the West Bay Site with construction of an 8,400 foot primary runway (Runway 16L-34R), is the project approved by the 2006 ROD. The Written Re-evaluation examines the environmental consequences of the Proposed Change (the extension of Runway 16L-24R to 10,000 feet) as compared to the environmental consequences disclosed for the previously Approved Action for which the September 2006 ROD was issued. The FAA has considered this Proposed Change to the previously Approved Action and finds that despite the changed runway length for Runway 16L-24R, the overall environmental impacts remain as anticipated for the previously Approved Action in the May 2006 FEIS and the September 2006 ROD. As described in the environmental consequences section of the Written Re-evaluation and in this ROD at Section V., the changes to the previously Approved Action do not create significant new environmental impacts and therefore the FAA concludes that the Proposed Change is not relevant to environmental concerns.

(2) Data and analyses contained in the previous EIS are still substantially valid and there are no significant new circumstances or information relevant to environmental concerns and bearing on the proposed action or its impact.

Based on the information contained in the Written Re-evaluation for the proposed runway extension, data and analyses contained in the 2006 FEIS and conclusions contained in the September 2006 ROD remain substantially valid. The FEIS continues to provide accurate, applicable, and valid information for pending agency actions.

(3) All pertinent conditions and requirements of the prior approval have, or will be, met in the current action.

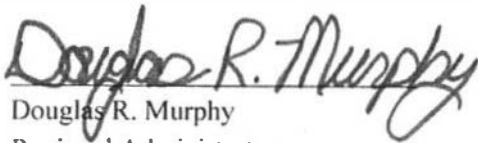
The previously Approved Action that was the subject of the FAA's 2006 ROD was approved with certain conditions, including compliance by the Airport Sponsor with applicable resource permits (such as NPDES and wetland fill permits) and implementation of mitigation measures outlined in the ROD to address unavoidable environmental consequences of the FAA's decision. FAA has reviewed the status of the Airport Sponsor's compliance with these conditions of approval. Following major storm events in the spring of 2009, the Airport Sponsor was found by the Florida Department of the Environment (FDEP) and the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE) to be in a state of non-compliance with applicable water quality and wetland resource permits. The Airport Sponsor took action to address these permit violations under the supervision of the FDEP and USACE. FAA has been in close consultation with the FDEP and the USACE regarding these violations. Based on these agencies' current assessment of the conditions at the relocation site and the Airport Sponsors' compliance with applicable permits, FAA is satisfied that permit compliance issues have been satisfactorily resolved. With respect to mitigation required as a condition of approval of the 2006 ROD, FAA has made a full inquiry into the status of implementation of that mitigation. Based on that review, the FAA is satisfied that required mitigation is being implemented in a timely and appropriate fashion. (See Table 2.1 of the Written Re-evaluation).

VII. ORDER

This document is prepared pursuant to Federal Aviation Administration Order 1050.1E, *Environmental Impacts: Policies and Procedures*, Paragraphs 515 and 516 and Federal Aviation Administration Order 5050.4B, *National Environmental Policy Act Implementing Instructions for Airport Actions*, Paragraph 1401.

After careful and thorough consideration of the facts contained in the Written Re-evaluation and the 2006 Record of Decision for the relocation of the Panama City Bay County International Airport, the undersigned finds that the proposed extension of Runway 16L/34R to 10,000 feet does not represent a substantial change to the previously Approved Action that is relevant to environmental concerns. Furthermore, the undersigned finds that the FEIS for the relocation of the Panama City Bay County International Airport adequately reflects the environmental consequences of the Proposed Change (extension of Runway 16L/34R to 10,000 feet) and that the data and analyses contained in the FEIS therefore remain substantially valid. Accordingly, under the authority delegated to me by the Administrator of the FAA, I conclude that there is no requirement to complete a new or supplemental EIS for the Proposed Change and direct that the requested approval to update the ALP be granted. This ROD incorporates all conditions of approval contained in the 2006 ROD, which remain in effect for approval of the Proposed Change.

APPROVED



Douglas R. Murphy
Regional Administrator
FAA Southern Region

11-24-09
Date

DISAPPROVED

Douglas R. Murphy
Regional Administrator
FAA Southern Region

Date

Right of Appeal: This decision is taken pursuant to 49 U.S.C. §§40101 et seq., and constitutes an order of the Administrator which is subject to review by the Courts of Appeal of the United States in accordance with the provisions of 49 U.S.C. §46110.