

**DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION
FEDERAL AVIATION ADMINISTRATION**

FINDING OF NO SIGNIFICANT IMPACT

FOR

NIGHTMUTE AIRPORT IMPROVEMENTS

Project No. 51809

Nightmute, Alaska

PURPOSE AND NEED (Section 3.0 of EA):

Purpose: The purpose of the proposed project is to resolve current safety and operational issues at the Nightmute Airport, the only year-round means of transportation in the village.

Need: The existing runway was constructed in 1976, and the runway, apron, lack of apron offset from the runway, lack of taxiway, and proximity of the snow removal equipment building do not meet the current FAA design criteria for Airport Reference Code (ARC) A-1 airports. The existing runway provides less than 75% wind coverage for Airplane Design Group (ADG) I aircraft, and less than 83% wind coverage for ADG II aircraft. The airport provides the only year-round transportation for the community and is limited by the lack of airport lighting to visual flight rules during daylight hours, decreasing the available flight times in winter months. The airport access road which connects the airport to the community has shown signs of eroding by the Toksook River. Both the airport and access road suffer permafrost-related damage and differential settlement.

PROPOSED ACTION (Section 2.0):

The proposed project will use federal funding to improve the existing airport to provide an ARC B-II airport with 24 hour Visual Flight Rules. The proposed project will also rehabilitate the airport access road, to provide a reliable route between the community and the airport.

The proposed project will:

- Expand the existing runway from 50 feet (ft) by 1,600 ft to 75 ft by 3,200 ft
- Expand the existing 100 ft by 2,000 ft runway safety area to 150 ft by 3,800 ft
- Construct a 50 ft by 260 ft taxiway on a 79 ft wide safety area.
- Construct a new 150 ft by 255 ft parking apron.
- Provide a 100 ft by 100 ft pad for two single bay Snow Removal Equipment Buildings (SREB)
- Install insulation under the runway extension to prevent permafrost thaw.
- Install a medium intensity lighting system.
- Install a lighted wind cone and segmented circle on a 125 ft by 125 ft pad.
- Provide a 30 ft by 60 ft Automated Weather Sensor System (AWSS) Pad, two Precision Approach Path Indicator (PAPI) Pads, four Runway Edge Identifier Lighting (REIL) pads and install an unlighted wind cone.

- Fund a power line from the village to the airport.
- Rehabilitate and protect from erosion the existing 4,800 ft by 15 ft airport access road.
- Acquire approximately 200 acres of land for airport property.

REASONABLE ALTERNATIVES (Section 4.0):

The proposed action (preferred alternative) and the no-action alternative were evaluated in the Environmental Assessment (EA) for the Nightmute Airport. Four additional alternatives were proposed and later dismissed due to environmental impacts, prohibitive costs, and/or failing to meet the purpose and need of the project.

No Action Alternative:

Under the No Action alternative, no improvements would occur at the Nightmute Airport. The current airport would remain unchanged and would remain deficient in wind coverage as well as FAA design criteria. Flights would be limited to visual flight rules during daylight hours, and differential settlement to the airport and access road will likely worsen with time. Eroding of the airport access road would continue, impacting the usability of the road, as well as potentially affecting essential fish habitat. The erosion would introduce fine soils and sediments into the river and eventually cutoff access to the community.

ASSESSMENT:

Based on the EA analysis, the proposed project would not have significant adverse impacts on any impact category. (See Section 6.0 of the EA). By utilizing the existing airport and access road, potential impacts were reduced. Below is a summary table of the environmental consequences discussed in the EA.

Consequences:

Environmental Element	Description of Impact
Noise	No Significant Impact-possible short term noise increase during construction
Compatible Land Use	Compatible
Social Impacts	None
Induced Socioeconomic Impacts	Possible short term economic benefits
Air Quality	No Significant Impact-possible temporary construction impacts
Water Quality	No Significant Impacts-possible temporary construction impacts
Section 4(f) / Section 6(f)	None
Historic, Archeological, & Cultural Resources	No Adverse Effect (See Appendix E, pg. 102)
Biotic Communities	No Significant Impacts
Essential Fish Habitat	No Adverse Impacts (See Appendix E, pg. 34)
Endangered & Threatened Species	No Significant Impacts
Wetlands	19 acres of Palustrine wetlands filled

Floodplain	No increase in flooding potential to community
Coastal Zone Management Program	No Significant Impacts
Coastal Barriers	None
Wild & Scenic Rivers	None
Farmlands	None
Light Emissions	No Significant Impacts
Energy Supply & Natural Resources	No Significant Impacts
Solid Waste	No Significant Impacts
Hazardous Waste and Materials	No Significant Impact -Potential to encounter contaminated soils during removal of SREB
Construction Impacts	Temporary, minor positive & negative impacts

Coordination:

Agency:

Agency coordination was completed for the proposed project, and a permit for the wetland fill has been approved by the United States Corps of Engineers (USACE). In addition, the project has been found consistent with coastal zone regulations by the Alaska Department of Natural Resources Office of Program Management and Permitting, and has been certified for water quality by the Alaska Department of Environmental Conservation (ADEC). (Documentation of agency coordination is located in Section 8.2 of the EA, permitting is located in Section 8.3.)

The Draft EA was sent out for agency review on October 23, 2006 with comments due on December 1, 2006. No comments were received from the agencies. The USACE, National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration National Marine Fisheries Service, and the United States Fish and Wildlife Service stated that they would not be commenting on the project.

Public:

Public meetings were held in Nightmute in 1995 and 2004, and a preliminary meeting with local government officials was held in 1996. The community was in support of the proposed project. (Documentation of public involvement is located in Section 8.1 of the EA.)

A public hearing notice for the Draft EA was published in the Anchorage Daily News and the Delta Discovery on October 25, 2006 and the Tundra Drums on October 26, 2006 with an original hearing date of November 28, 2006. Copies of the ad were mailed to the Nightmute post office for circulation, and a copy was posted at the City Office. Copies of the EA were available in the Nightmute Community Center, as well as at the local government offices. Due to weather, the hearing was rescheduled for December 12, 2006, and the updated date and time was announced on two radio stations, (KNOM and KYUK), as well as posted around the community. The public hearing was held at the Nightmute Community Center on December 12, 2006. Thirteen community members signed in, and no public comments were received.

MITIGATION MEASURES:

Specific mitigation measures are listed below. All additional minimization measures and Environmental Commitments outlined in Section 7.0 of the EA will be followed, as well as the stipulations and conditions to the permits and approvals located in Appendix G.

Wetlands: As stipulated in the USACE permit, an in-lieu fee of \$9,500.00 will be paid to The Conservation Fund to mitigate wetland habitat loss.

Historic, Archeological and Cultural Resources: Shovel testing will be completed by an archeologist prior to construction between stationing 33+70 and 36+80, left side of the airport access road, near an identified archeological site as agreed by the State Historic Preservation Officer to determine if monitoring during construction will be necessary.

Temporary construction impacts will be minimized through:

- Development of a Storm Water Pollution Prevention Plan and use of Best Management Practices in accordance with the National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System General Permit for Construction Activities in Alaska;
- Stabilization of bank cuts, slopes, or fills susceptible to erosion;
- Implementation of a traffic control plan addressing timing and frequency of traffic during construction;
- Removal of solid waste in accordance with ADEC regulations;
- Prohibition of construction vehicles, equipment, and activities in non-permitted wetland areas after break-up;
- Limiting refueling and servicing of equipment to the top of the embankment;
- Prohibiting clearing between May 5 and July 25 to prevent impacts to migratory birds.

FEDERAL FINDING AND APPROVAL:

I have carefully and thoroughly considered the facts contained in the attached EA. Based on that information, I find the proposed Federal action is consistent with existing national environmental policies and objectives of Section 101(a) of the National Environmental Policy Act of 1969 (NEPA). I also find the proposed Federal Action, with the required mitigation referenced above, will not significantly affect the quality of the human environment or include any condition requiring any consultation pursuant to section 102(2) (C) of NEPA. As a result, FAA will not prepare an EIS for this action.

APPROVED: _____



Date: _____

3/5/07

Environmental Assessment

NIGHTMUTE AIRPORT IMPROVEMENTS

Project No. 51809

Nightmute, Alaska

Prepared by the

Alaska Department of Transportation & Public Facilities

for the

U.S. Department of Transportation
Federal Aviation Administration
Alaska Region

This Environmental Assessment becomes a Federal document when evaluated, signed, and dated by the responsible FAA official.



1/10/07

Responsible Federal Aviation Administration Official

Date

Comments regarding this document should be addressed to:

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