

FINDING OF NO SIGNIFICANT IMPACT

ADDITIONS TO AND OPERATIONS OF AEROSPACE DATA FACILITY BUCKLEY AIR NATIONAL GUARD BASE AURORA, COLORADO

1. PROPOSED ACTION

The United States Air Force (USAF) operates the Aerospace Data Facility (ADF) at Buckley Air National Guard Base (ANGB), located in Aurora, Colorado. USAF proposes to modify the ADF to provide additional secure, permanent office and computer operations space. Modification is needed to provide response capability to USAF directives requiring the expansion of ADF's mission and to provide permanent work space for staff currently located in temporary trailers.

ADF is a space tracking and data processing center completely contained within the perimeter fence of Buckley ANGB and located approximately 12 miles east of Denver, Colorado. Main features of the ADF include an operations building (Building 401), radomes housing receiving antennae, a chiller plant, a power plant housing emergency power diesel generators, temporary office trailers, warehouses and other storage facilities, and a recreation complex.

USAF is proposing to add approximately 150,000 square feet to Building 401. This expansion would provide permanent office space for approximately 500 employees, currently located in trailers adjacent to Building 401, and additional computer operations space. Utility modifications proposed to support the addition include adding two 2,500-kilowatt emergency generators to the existing power plant; two 1,000-ton-capacity chillers to the existing chiller plant; tree cooling tower cells adjacent to existing cooling towers; and miscellaneous additions and modifications to integrate additions with existing facilities. Construction, scheduled to begin in late spring 1993, would last approximately 18 months. Cost for the Proposed Action has been estimated at \$40,000,000.

Alternatives to the Proposed Action that were analyzed were No Action and sitting elsewhere within the ADF complex, outside of the ADF complex but inside of Buckley ANGB, and outside of Buckley ANGB. The No-Action alternative would eliminate environmental impacts but would adversely affect national security since the ADF would not have computer space needed to meet

expanding mission requirements. The sitting alternatives were found to result in operational deficiencies, primarily due to the need for additional construction to duplicate existing ADF support facilities. The additional construction would also result in environmental impacts at least as great as, or greater than, those associated with the Proposed Action.

2. SUMMARY OF ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACTS

Socioeconomic Resources – Construction activities are expected to cause minor impacts to local transportation resources because the activities would be temporary (18 months) and because the increase (worst-case peak estimate of 400 vehicles per day) would be a small percentage increase in a community population of more than 200,000. Operations would result in little permanent change because the existing staff level (1,300) would remain the same.

Utilities – The peak construction workforce may account for a temporary, localized increase in domestic water consumption of approximately 20,000 gallons per day (gpd), with a proportionate increase in wastewater generation rates. Existing operations impacts (approximately 65,000 gpd consumption and wastewater) are expected to remain approximately the same because staffing levels would remain unchanged. The estimated maximum operations electrical demand, based on maximum capacity, would be 6 megawatts, approximately doubling current demand but being less than 1 percent of system reserve capacity. The commercial power source (Public Service Company of Colorado) has determined that the project would not necessitate upgrading its lines or substation. Four additional hot water and steam units would increase ADF natural gas demand by 20 percent, which is less than 1% of system capacity and is expected to be a negligible impact.

Cultural Resources – The absence of important cultural resources in the project area was determined in consultation with the Office of Archaeological and Historic Preservation of the Colorado Historical Society.

Noise – Calculated existing emergency power diesel generator noise emissions at the site boundary [48 A-weighted decibels (dBA)] are expected to increase by 1 dBA under the Proposed Action. The cumulative impact would be approximately the same as that of typical daytime suburban noise levels.

Air Resources – Uncontrolled construction-phase fugitive particulate emissions are estimated to total 2.4 tons per month. These emissions would be reduced by as much as 50 percent, however, by use of control measures such as wetting and placing covers over soil in transport trucks, and are

not expected to be significant. Estimated operations emissions would increase existing emissions by approximately 25 percent but, because these amounts are small, the cumulative impact is expected to be minor.

Surface Water Resources – Due to the small area of disturbance, the relatively flat topography, and the distance to the nearest natural waterway, construction-related impacts to surface water resources are expected to be minimal and would be mitigated by use of best management practices (BMPs) and implementation of the Buckley ANGB Spill Prevention, Control, and Countermeasure (SPCC) Plan. Because operations would be staffed with existing personnel, operations impacts are not expected to change.

Geology, Soils, and Groundwater – Routine construction and operation activities are not expected to impact these resources. Impacts from spills and other inadvertent activities would be minimized by use of BMPs and the SPCC Plan.

Biological Resources – Impacts are expected to be limited to loss of fewer than 5 acres of marginal small mammal and reptile habitat and, possibly, some minor losses of small mammals and reptiles rendered more vulnerable to predation as a result of displacement. As a result of informal consultation undertaken in accordance with Section 7 of the Endangered Species Act, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Colorado Field Office has determined that the Proposed Action is not likely to impact any Federally-listed species or jeopardize the continued existence of threatened or endangered species' critical habitat.

Floodplains and Wetlands – The Proposed Action is not located in a floodplain or wetland, and impacts to the nearest of these resources are not expected due to the project's small size and its distance from these resources (2,600 feet).

Visual Resources – The existing facility is a visually important element in the landscape due to the four 110-foot-high radomes which contrast with the predominately commercial and residential context. The proposed addition is not expected to increase visual impacts since its low profile (one-story), color, and surface would be similar to existing structures.


Waste Management – Construction impacts are expected to be limited primarily to generation of excess excavated soil, which will be transported to the Buckley ANGB Overburden Stockpile because it is suitable for use as fill material for other Buckley ANGB projects. Operations impacts are expected to be minimal because the addition would be staffed by existing personnel.

3. FINDINGS

Based upon the above discussion and the supporting Environmental Assessment, a Finding of No Significant Impact is made. Copies of the Environmental Assessment of the Proposed Action, dated November 1992, can be obtained from the following:

Department of the Air Force
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Attn: Mr. Daniel Pilson

APPROVED: HQ SMC Environmental Protection Committee



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