

U.S. Department of the Interior
FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE
Region 1, Portland, Oregon

Selection of Alternative

and

FINDING OF NO SIGNIFICANT IMPACT

for the

**Refuge Logistics and Operations Support
and Public Use Program at Midway Atoll National Wildlife Refuge
Midway Islands, Northwestern Hawaiian Islands**

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service has prepared an environmental assessment to evaluate a proposed logistics and operations support and public-use program at the Midway Atoll National Wildlife Refuge (Refuge) that will be managed under a cooperative partnership between the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and a private contractor (Midway Phoenix Corporation). Copies of the draft environmental assessment were sent to more than 150 interested parties (see list in section 6 of the assessment). Because the final environmental assessment is not substantially different from the draft and the majority of public input was highly supportive of the proposed action, only an announcement of the decision is being made through local news media, and copies of this Finding of No Significant Impact are being distributed to those on the mailing list.

The environmental assessment evaluated two alternatives — no action, and the proposed action. The proposed action (Alternative 2) has been selected for implementation and will provide a high level of logistical and operational support for Refuge management programs. The proposed action also provides for the establishment of a compatible public use program.

Alternative 2 was selected based upon the following factors:

- Through implementation of the proposed action, the Service can continue to meet its responsibilities for national trust resources by providing an effective level of natural resources management that will benefit endangered and threatened species, migratory birds, and other native fish, wildlife, and plant resources on the Refuge.
- Alternative 2 provides a cost-effective means to maintain and operate the airfield. This will allow for the continuation of vital transportation services that benefit Refuge operations and public health and safety. In addition to supporting Refuge management programs, maintenance of the airfield will provide an emergency landing airfield for private and commercial airplanes, and will provide ongoing support for the U.S. Coast Guard's search and rescue, border patrol, and fishery law enforcement activities.
- Alternative 2 provides for greater protection and maintenance of nationally significant historic resources at Midway Atoll.
- Alternative 2 provides opportunities for the public to see, to learn about, and to enjoy the unique natural and historic resources on Midway Atoll.

- Alternative 2 establishes an innovative partnership with a private sector company that will allow private enterprise to flourish while the Service continues to carry out the mission of the National Wildlife Refuge System. The partnership will reduce the cost to the Service of logistics support (such as transportation) and will allow the Service to devote more of its limited funding directly to natural resources management activities.

Alternative 1, the no-action alternative, provides for a low level of Refuge logistical and operational support and does not provide for public use. If selected, Alternative 1 would result in a low level of Refuge management. Alternative 1 was not selected because it does not meet several refuge management goals. This alternative would lead to a decrease in the opportunity to protect and recover listed species, it would lead to a decline of native natural biodiversity, it would result in the loss of a number of historical properties, it offers no opportunities for public visitation or education, and it does not serve other public interests such as safety and law enforcement.

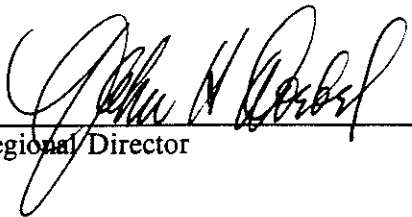
The following summary of effects (see also section 4 of the environmental assessment) is the basis for the finding of no significant impact:

- Compared with recent historical levels of human activity at the former Midway Naval Air Facility, the proposed action represents a reduction in the level of human activity and supplants military land uses with Refuge management and controlled public use.
- Because Midway Atoll is located far from any municipality, effects on society are minimal. There are no significant economic effects of the proposed action and no residents would be displaced.
- Midway Atoll has significant natural and historical resource values including endangered and threatened species, critical habitat, migratory birds, and nationally significant historic properties. The proposed action has been evaluated with respect to the continued conservation, protection, and management of these resources. Measures to avoid or reduce potential adverse effects have been incorporated into the proposal and include provisions for carefully controlled public use (including restrictions on activities, limits to use levels, and restrictions on areas). The proposed action calls for a high degree of education and training for residents and visitors. Monitoring programs will be implemented to detect adverse effects and to help ensure programs are compatible with Refuge purposes. The Service bears the responsibility of ensuring compatibility with Refuge purposes and retains the ability to modify use levels, practices, or institute new limitations to protect wildlife and historic resources.
- There would be no significant effects of the action on human health and safety, although the proposed action would benefit public health and safety.
- The environmental assessment considered long-term and cumulative effects. Although some details for some of the proposed construction projects were not available, these were analyzed programmatically over the long term. No significant adverse long-term or cumulative effects were found to result from implementing the proposed action.

Based upon my review and evaluation of the information contained in the environmental assessment, I have determined that the logistics and operations support program and the establishment of a public-use program at Midway Atoll National Wildlife Refuge on the Midway Islands, northwestern Hawaiian Islands, is not a major Federal action that would significantly affect the quality of the human environment within the meaning of section 102(2)(c) of the National Environmental Policy Act of 1969. Accordingly, the preparation of an environmental impact statement on the proposed action is not required.

This Finding of No Significant Impact (FONSI) and the supporting environmental assessment and public-use plan will be available for public review for 30 days from the signature date. During this 30-day period, the FONSI will not be final, nor will the Service implement the selected alternative. The final decision will be made on whether to carry out the proposed action at the conclusion of the 30-day period.

The final environmental assessment is on file at: U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Pacific Islands Ecoregion Office, 300 Ala Moana Boulevard, Room 3108, Box 50088, Honolulu, Hawaii 96850 (telephone: 808-541-2749). Copies of the final environmental assessment are available upon request.

ACTING 
Regional Director

4/22/96
Date

Supporting Reference

U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, 1996. *Final Environmental Assessment for the Proposed Refuge Logistics and Operations Support and Public Use Program at Midway Atoll National Wildlife Refuge.*