

DRAFT FINDING OF NO SIGNIFICANT IMPACT (FONSI)

Integrated Natural Resources Management Plan at New Boston Space Force Station, Hillsborough County, New Hampshire

Pursuant to provisions of the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA), Title 42 United States Code (USC) Sections 4321 to 4347, implemented by Council on Environmental Quality (CEQ) Regulations, Title 40, Code of Federal Regulations (CFR) §1500-1508, and 32 CFR §989, Environmental Impact Analysis Process, the U.S. Space Force (USSF) has prepared an environmental assessment (EA) to assess the potential environmental consequences associated with implementation of the 2021 Integrated Natural Resources Management Plan (INRMP) at New Boston Space Force Station (NBSFS) in Hillsborough County, New Hampshire. The decisions included in this FONSI are based upon information contained in the EA, which analyzed potential environmental consequences that could result from implementation of the Proposed Action and the No Action Alternative.

Purpose and Need for the Proposed Action

The Purpose of the Proposed Action is the implementation of the INRMP to support the military mission of the NBSFS by ensuring long term sustainability of those species, habitats, and ecosystems located at NBSFS. The Need for the Proposed Action is to proactively avoid conflicts associated with natural resource compliance issues (USAF 2021). The 2021 INRMP is the five-year mandated update to the existing INRMP and provides guidance and assigns responsibility for management of natural resources located on NBSFS, as required in accordance with the Sikes Act (16 USC 670 et seq.) and Air Force Manual (AFMAN) 32-7003 *Environmental Conservation*. The 2021 INRMP establishes natural resources management goals and objectives for the entirety of NBSFS that are consistent with the installation mission and ensures no net loss in the capability of NBSFS lands to support that mission and ensures that natural resources conservation and other mission activities are integrated and consistent with Federal mandates for land stewardship.

Description of Action and No Action Alternatives

Proposed Action (Preferred Alternative): Implementation of natural resources projects and grounds maintenance activities at the NBSFS as comprised in the INRMP, dated 9 July 2021 (2021 INRMP). The Proposed Action would be executed in accordance with all applicable regulatory requirements and is subject to review under Section 7 of the Endangered Species Act (ESA), Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act (NHPA), and Section 404 of the CWA. It is intended that all USFWS-imposed northern long eared bat (NLEB) seasonal timing restrictions and guidance will be adhered to for implementation of the 2021 INRMP projects, including the use of pesticides, as required. However, in the event that an individual project or group of projects cannot be implemented in accordance with USFWS-imposed NLEB seasonal timing restrictions, NBSFS will consult with USFWS, on an individual or group project basis, and provide a new, or updates to the existing, Biological Assessment, as necessary and required by USFWS, prior to implementation of the subject project or group of projects. The INRMP identifies goals, objectives, and projects for natural resources management and focuses on seven topical areas: (1) threatened, endangered, and rare species; (2) wetlands; (3) rare natural communities; (4) forest management; (5) invasive nonnative plant and insect species control; (6) outdoor recreation; and (7) UXO remediation activities. The remediation project included in the INRMP will be conducted in accordance with the Comprehensive Environmental Response, Compensation, and Liability Act (CERCLA) process, with the support from the installation, and therefore, will not be evaluated for the potential for impacts within the confines of this NEPA EA process and document. INRMP activities on the 2,864-acre

installation include periodic timber harvesting, prescribed burning, mowing invasive species treatment, nuisance wildlife work, and survey work.

No Action Alternative: The No Action Alternative is to not execute any of the 2021 INRMP policies, goals, or individual projects. Under the No Action Alternative, NBSFS would operate without an INRMP, and natural resources management activities would be limited to wildland fire management, as prescribed by the 2024 Wildland Fire Management Plan and individual NEPA assessments of proposed activities that have the potential to affect the human environment. Prescribed burning projects as outlined in the WFMP would not be implemented under the No Action Alternative. Recreational planning would continue to be performed by NBSFS, but without the coordination provided by an INRMP. Under the No Action alternative, activities affecting natural resources would be conducted without benefit of integration or overall natural resources planning. In addition, data on important natural resources of the installation would not be collected, and therefore the knowledge base used for operational planning would be relatively limited (USAF 2006). This action would not address the requirement, per AFMAN 32-7003, Environmental Conservation, or Federal law requiring an updated INRMP for the management of natural resources at NBSFS. Because the No Action Alternative fails to meet the purpose and need for the Proposed Action, it is not a viable alternative, and was evaluated in the EA document for comparative purposes only.

Summary of Findings

The analysis of the Affected Environment and Environmental Consequences of implementing the Proposed Action presented in the EA concluded that by implementing environmental protection measures, including existing best management practices, seasonal timing restrictions for work associated with timber harvesting activities, the creation of no-harvest buffers to protect raptor nests, preventative actions and avoidance measures in proximity to known resources, and compliance with federal, state, and U.S Air Force (USAF) and USSF regulations, policies, contingency plans, and management guidelines, NBSFS, the USAF, and USSF would be in compliance with all terms and conditions and reporting requirements.

The USAF has concluded that no significant adverse impacts would result to the following resources as a result of the Proposed Action: biological resources, water resources, cultural resources, geological resources, topography and soils, air quality and climate change, contaminated materials and hazardous wastes, noise levels, facilities, infrastructure, and utilities, land use, recreation, visual resources, traffic and transportation, socioeconomics, Environmental Justice, and protection of children, or public health and safety. No significant adverse cumulative impacts would result from activities associated with the Proposed Action when considered with past, present, or reasonably foreseeable future projects.

Finding of No Significant Impact (FONSI)

Based on my review of the facts and analyses contained in the attached EA, conducted under the provisions of NEPA, CEQ Regulations, and 32 CFR §989, I conclude that the Preferred Alternative for the implementation of INRMP would not have a significant environmental impact, either by itself or cumulatively with other known projects. Accordingly, an Environmental Impact Statement is not required. The signing of this Finding of No Significant Impact completes the environmental impact analysis process.

DEVIN L. ZUFELT, Lt Col, USSF

Commander