
Preface



How to Use This Document

Our goal is to give you a reader-friendly document that provides an in-depth, accurate analysis of the proposed action, the alternative beddown locations, the no-action alternative, and the potential environmental consequences for each base. The organization of this Draft Environmental Impact Statement, or Draft EIS, is shown below.

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Detailed Guide for Reading the Draft EIS

→ The Preface provides a detailed guide for reading the Draft EIS.

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Purpose and Need for the Initial F-22 Operational Wing Beddown

→ Go to Chapter 1 to learn about the purpose and need for the Initial F-22 Operational Wing Beddown.

Chapter 2

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Information Specific to Each Base

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PREFACE

This Draft Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) provides an in-depth analysis of the Air Force proposal to beddown 72 operational F-22 aircraft at an existing Air Force base. The environmental process is designed to

- ensure the public is involved in the process and fully informed about the beddown's effect on the natural and human environment, and
- help decisionmakers take environmental factors into consideration when making their decision.

The United States Congress identified and approved the next-generation F-22 air dominance fighter to replace and supplement the aging F-15C aircraft fleet. Since the time the F-15C achieved its initial operational capability in 1976, the F-15C has functioned as the primary air superiority fighter for the United States Air Force. The F-22 Raptor is the air dominance fighter that will fulfill near-term and long-term combat requirements using its stealth technology, sophisticated radar and electronic systems, ability to fly at supersonic speeds without using afterburners, enhanced maneuverability, and efficient maintenance logistics. This makes the F-22 a formidable weapon that will enable the United States to maintain and enhance its combat superiority over potential adversaries.

Guide to this Document

This Draft EIS is designed to give you a reader-friendly document that describes the proposed action, the four alternative beddown locations, the no-action alternative, and the potential environmental consequences for each alternative. As depicted on the inside of the divider pages, this Draft EIS contains six chapters, numerous appendices, a glossary, and an acronym and abbreviation list.

Chapter 1 presents the purpose and need for the Initial F-22 Operational Wing beddown. It explains the purpose of the beddown and the features of the F-22 Raptor as a superior replacement and supplement for the F-15C.

Chapter 2 describes the process used to identify the proposed action and four basing alternatives analyzed in the Draft EIS. The beddown of the Initial F-22 Operational Wing at Langley AFB, Virginia, is the proposed action. The four alternative bases analyzed in the Draft EIS are Eglin AFB, Florida; Elmendorf AFB, Alaska; Mountain Home AFB, Idaho; and Tyndall AFB, Florida. All five of these bases currently have an F-15C mission. Chapter 2 presents a comprehensive description of the characteristics associated with the Initial F-22 Operational Wing of 72 fighter aircraft (3 squadrons with 24 aircraft in each squadron). It describes how the F-22 will be based, the F-22's space and facility needs, and pilot and aircrew training requirements. Chapter 2 also includes a description of no-action or not selecting a beddown location at this time. This chapter concludes with a summary comparison of the alternative base locations that is drawn from the base-specific analyses in Chapter 3. The comparison takes into consideration the environmental features of each alternative location and associated airspace and directs readers to the Draft EIS sections that address the environmental features. Readers who wish to quickly review the document and compare the alternatives will benefit from these Summary Comparison Tables found at the end of Chapter 2.

Chapter 3 is divided into five base-specific sections that explain how the beddown would be implemented at each base. These sections describe each base's affected environment, identify and evaluate potential environmental consequences of the beddown, and provide a comparison of consequences among the bases in each resource section. Each base-specific section also presents the consequences of the no-action alternative. Readers who have read Chapters 1 and 2 and are interested in a specific base can then go to Chapter 3 to review the analysis for that base and its associated airspace.

The affected environment descriptions and environmental consequences contained in each Chapter 3 base-specific section are organized into five main groups: *Aircraft Operations*, *Natural Resources*, *Cultural and Traditional Resources*, *Human Resources*, and *Community and Infrastructure*. Each group is further divided into related topics; for example, the first group, *Aircraft Operations*, provides the analyses for *Airspace Management and Use*, *Noise*, *Air Quality*, and *Safety*. Chapter 3 also includes a discussion of cumulative projects for the base and the region. Any potential aircraft inventory changes that are not yet proposed are not included. Any future aircraft inventory proposals would constitute a separate action and would be addressed through a distinct environmental analysis.

Chapter 4 contains references, **Chapter 5** is the list of preparers, and **Chapter 6** is the index. **Appendices** provide resource definitions, analytical methods, and detailed background data for the analysis. For your convenience, a **glossary** and an **acronyms and abbreviations** list is located at the end of the document. The acronyms and abbreviations list is an 11" x 17" fold-out that can be used as a quick reference while reading the Draft EIS.

Attention to Public Comments



This Initial F-22 Operational Wing Beddown Draft EIS has undergone an extensive 8-month public scoping period, with 33 scoping meetings in five states.

This environmental analysis focuses on the issues raised during the public and agency scoping period.



We have summarized the primary issues identified during scoping and placed them throughout the Draft EIS. This attention to public comments is designed to help the decisionmaker understand items of interest to the public and agencies.



The NEPA Process

This Initial F-22 Operational Wing Beddown Draft EIS has been prepared in accordance with the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) and its implementing regulations. NEPA is the basic national charter for identifying environmental consequences of federal government decisions. NEPA ensures that environmental information is available to public officials and citizens before decisions are made and before actions are taken.

An Environmental Impact Statement, or EIS, is prepared as a tool for compiling all the information about a proposed action and providing a full and fair discussion of significant impacts to the natural and human environment. Reasonable alternatives to the proposed action are also evaluated in an EIS, as well as a no-action alternative. In this Draft EIS, the no-action alternative means not selecting a beddown location for the Initial F-22 Operational Wing at this time. By analyzing multiple alternatives, the Air Force ensures that fully informed decisions are made after reviewing a comprehensive, multidisciplinary analysis of potential environmental consequences.

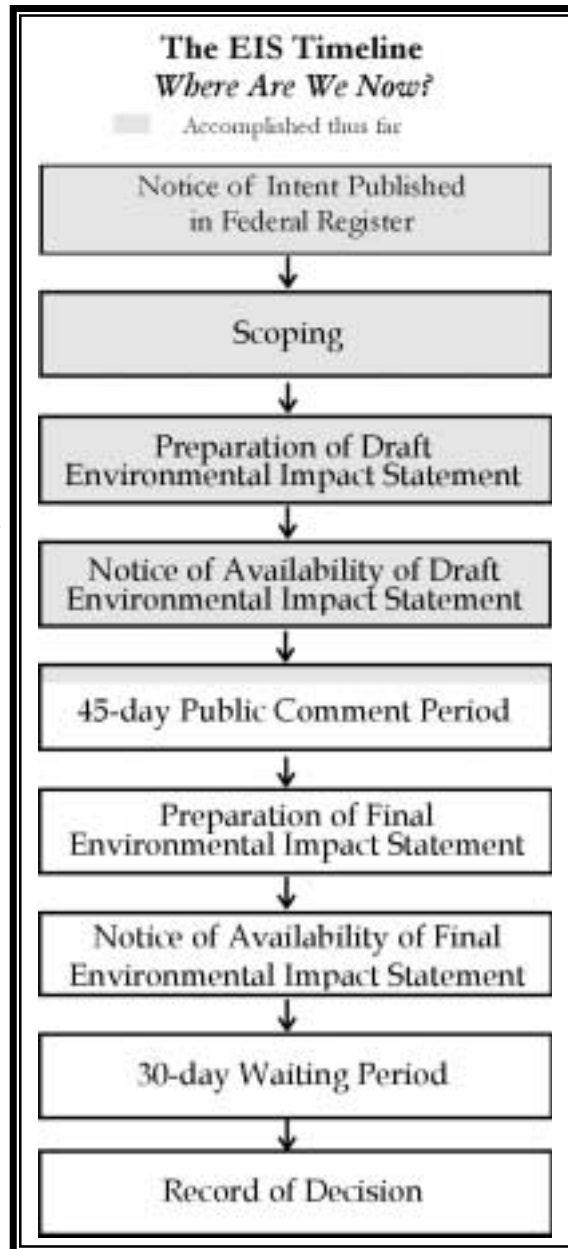
Compliance with NEPA guidance for preparation of an EIS involves several critical steps.

1. *Announce that an EIS will be prepared.* For this Initial F-22 Operational Wing Beddown EIS, a Notice of Intent was published in the *Federal Register* on March 3, 2000.
2. *Conduct scoping.* This is the first major step to identify the relevant issues to be analyzed in depth and eliminate issues that are not relevant. Scoping for this EIS ran from March through November 2000. Within that 8-month period, the Air Force actively solicited comments from the public, local governments, federal and state agencies, Native Americans, Alaska Natives, and environmental groups to make sure their concerns and comments about the proposed beddown were included in the analyses. For the Initial F-22 Operational Wing beddown environmental process, the Air Force held scoping meetings in two phases. A Phase-One Scoping meeting was held at each of the five candidate bases during March and April 2000. The purpose of these meetings was to provide the public an opportunity to learn about the proposal and solicit public input for an alternative refinement process. Following the Phase-One Scoping meetings, the Air Force considered operational requirements and environmental data, as well as public comments, for the purpose of narrowing down the candidate bases. After this initial review, and based on current information, the Air Force determined that all five candidate bases continued to be reasonable alternatives for the Initial F-22 Operational Wing beddown and should be analyzed in the Draft EIS. A total of 28 Phase-Two Scoping meetings were held from July through November 2000 in communities near the alternative bases and in the vicinity of the associated training airspace. In addition to receiving verbal and written comments at the scoping meetings, the Air Force also received written comments through the mail from the public and agencies.
3. *Prepare a Draft EIS.* The Draft EIS is a comprehensive document for public and agency review. Scoping comments were used to focus the preparation of this Draft EIS. The Draft EIS presents the existing conditions for the proposed action, four alternative locations, and the no-action alternative, and provides analysis of the environmental consequences of the proposed action and each alternative. To ensure the widest dissemination possible, this Draft EIS has been distributed to agencies, numerous libraries, and members of the public who have requested copies. The 45-day public comment period began when the Notice of Availability for this Draft EIS was filed in the *Federal Register*.

4. *Have a public comment period.* Our goal during this public comment period is to make sure we receive oral and written comments about the Draft EIS. We accomplish this through public hearings and receipt of comments through the mail. The hearings give citizens and agencies an opportunity to comment on the Draft EIS after their review and evaluation of the document. The hearings provide a direct feedback mechanism for the public and agencies for submitting oral or written comments to the Air Force. All of the comments documented during the public comment period are included in the Final EIS. Comments presented at public hearings or comments mailed to the Air Force are equally important.

5. *Prepare a Final EIS.* The Final EIS will be prepared following the public comment period and will address all of the issues submitted during the public comment period or presented at the public hearings. As appropriate to the analysis, these issues are included in the Final EIS. The Final EIS revises the Draft EIS to reflect public and agency comments, the Air Force's responses, and additional information received from reviewers. The Final EIS provides the decisionmaker with a comprehensive review of the potential environmental consequences of selecting a beddown location from among the proposed action and four basing alternatives, and the consequences of the no-action alternative.

6. *Publish a Notice of Availability (NOA) and Issue a Record of Decision (ROD).* The final steps in the NEPA process are publishing the NOA of the Final EIS and issuing the ROD. The NOA announces that the Final EIS has been published. This begins a 30-day waiting period before the ROD is signed. The ROD identifies which alternative has been selected by the Air Force decisionmaker and what management actions or other measures would be carried out to reduce, where possible, adverse impacts to the environment.



A Focus on Environmental Resources

NEPA requires focused analyses on the areas and resources, such as wildlife or socioeconomics, that are potentially affected by the proposed action or an alternative. An EIS should consider, but not analyze in detail, those areas or resources not potentially affected. In so doing, an EIS should not be encyclopedic. These overarching NEPA principles guided the focus on environmental resources in this Draft EIS. To define the affected area and environmental resources, the Air Force

- identified the types and location of all elements involved in the proposed action and each alternative;
- determined the possible interaction of these elements with the resources in potentially affected locations;
- correlated the issues raised in scoping to the potentially affected locations and resources; and
- assessed whether, how, and to what degree the resources may be affected.

Combined, the affected areas and affected resources comprise the affected environment for the proposed action and the four basing alternatives.

Seventeen environmental resource categories, arranged in five resource groups, are separately evaluated in this Draft EIS. In addition, the Draft EIS evaluates cumulative consequences and the irreversible commitment of resources. The table on the next page shows the 17 environmental resource categories and how they are organized into five resource groups. The numbers in the first column are the Draft EIS sections that address these resources in each base-specific evaluation.

Environmental resources at Langley AFB include areas for recreation.



Eglin AFB is a large base with extensive training ranges that provide excellent habitat for wildlife.



Bald eagles, moose, and bear are common on or near Elmendorf AFB.



Native vegetation on and near Mountain Home AFB consists of sagebrush and other high-desert plants.



Tyndall AFB is on a peninsula with extensive wetlands, waterways, and beaches.

The affected environment for 11 of the 17 resource categories includes both the base environs and the areas under the associated airspace. For the 6 other resources, the affected environment includes only the base environs, since no element of the proposal would affect these resources under the airspace. Flight activities by the F-22 would not interact with certain resources associated with the ground (soil and water, hazardous materials and waste, and transportation). No construction or development is proposed under the airspace, so no effects to socioeconomics or public services would occur under the airspace. Because the proposed F-22 flight activities would be conducted mostly (80 percent) above 10,000 feet, and such flights would be transitory, the F-22 would not be prominent in the visual settings under the airspace. Similarly, noise generated by the F-22 and other aircraft in the airspace would remain below 65 DNL, or the Day-Night Average Sound Level.

Resources Focused on in the Environmental Impact Analysis Process										
Resource Group Category	Langley AFB		Eglin AFB		Elmendorf AFB		Mountain Home AFB		Tyndall AFB	
	Base	Airspace	Base	Airspace	Base	Airspace	Base	Airspace	Base	Airspace
Aircraft Operations										
3.1 Airspace	Yes ¹	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
3.2 Noise	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
3.3 Air Quality	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
3.4 Safety	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Natural Resources										
3.5 Soils & Water	Yes	No ²	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No
3.6 Terrestrial Communities	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
3.7 Wetlands & Freshwater Communities	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
3.8 T & E Species ³	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
3.9 Marine Communities	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	No	No	No	Yes	Yes
Cultural and Traditional Resources										
3.10 Visual Resources	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No
3.11 Cultural & Traditional Resources	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Human Resources										
3.12 Land Use	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
3.13 Socioeconomics	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No ⁴	Yes	No	Yes	No
3.14 Environmental Justice	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Community and Infrastructure										
3.15 Hazardous Waste	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No
3.16 Public Services	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No
3.17 Transportation	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No

- Notes:
- Yes** The affected environment section discusses both the base environs and the areas under the associated airspace.
 - No** The affected environment section only discusses the base environs, since no element of the proposal would affect these resources under the airspace.
 - T&E** Threatened and Endangered
 - Alaska Native concerns regarding subsistence economics are documented under the base discussion.