FINDING OF NO SIGNIFICANT IMPACT/RECORD OF DECISION FOR
PHASE I PROJECTS

AT

BEAUFORT COUNTY AIRPORT
BEAUFORT, SOUTH CAROLINA

FEBRUARY 2017

DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION
FEDERAL AVIATION ADMINISTRATION
ATLANTA AIRPORTS DISTRICT OFFICE
U.S. DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION
FEDERAL AVIATION ADMINISTRATION
FINDING OF NO SIGNIFICANT IMPACT/RECORD OF DECISION

I. INTRODUCTION/BACKGROUND

In compliance with the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA), this Finding of No Significant Impact (FONSI) and Record of Decision (ROD) announces final agency determinations and approvals for those Federal actions by the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) that are necessary to support implementation of the Phase I projects shown on the approved Airport Layout Plan as requested by the airport sponsor, Beaufort County, South Carolina.

This FONSI/ROD provides the FAA's final determinations and approvals based on analyses described in detail in the Final Environmental Assessment for the Phase I Projects, Beaufort, South Carolina, February 2017. The agency decision is based on information contained in the Final Environmental Assessment (EA), incorporated herein by reference, and all other applicable documents available to the agency.

This ROD is issued in accordance with the requirements of the Council on Environmental Quality (CEQ) Regulations, 40 Code of Federal Regulations (CFR) 1505.2.

II. PROPOSED FEDERAL ACTION

The Sponsor has requested FAA Airport Improvement Program (AIP) financial assistance and approval to implement a capital improvement project that would include construction of Phase I projects on the AIP at the Beaufort County Airport (ARW), located on Lady's Island, South Carolina. Elements of the proposed capital improvement project include:

- Bringing the runway safety areas (RSA) for Runway 07/25 into compliance with FAA design requirements.
- Completing the parallel taxiway to Runway 25
- Expanding aircraft parking apron and adding two helipads
- Relocating the existing fuel farm

III. PURPOSE AND NEED

The Sponsor has defined the purpose and need for implementing the Proposed Action as necessary to meet the FAA standards and enhance operational safety of aircraft using ARW now and in the future. The Proposed Action is required to ensure that ARW continues to provide general aviation service to Beaufort County, the region, and within the national air transportation system.

Each Proposed Action at ARW has a different need, as discussed below.
• Bringing the RSAs for Runway 07/25 into compliance with FAA design standards.

Currently, the RSAs beyond the ends of Runway 07/25 at ARW do not meet FAA design standards per FAA Advisory Circular (AC) 150/5300-13A Airport Design. The Runway 25 RSA currently provides approximately 130 feet off the end of the runway (170 feet short) and Runway 07 provides approximately 125 feet (175 feet short).

• Completing the parallel taxiway to Runway 25.

Runway 07/25 currently has a partial length parallel taxiway, Taxiway C, which extends from the departure end of Runway 07 to Taxiway A and the aircraft parking apron. Aircraft departing Runway 25 must taxi on the runway and use the turnaround at the end of Runway 25 to utilize the runway’s full length in this direction. The extension of the taxiway would increase safety and result in the taxiway meeting Runway Design Code (RDC) B-II design standards, which is ARW’s designation.

• Expanding the aircraft parking apron and adding two helipads.

Expansion of the aircraft parking apron and construction of two helipads is necessary to accommodate the two medical evacuation helicopters that the airport receives during inclement weather. In addition, the Sheriff’s office has two helicopters that are stored on airport property in the old fire station. The helicopters currently utilize the existing aircraft parking apron, which is asphalt. The continual use of the existing asphalt apron by helicopters landing and taking off is degrading the pavement and creating foreign object debris (FOD). The rutting from the helicopter skids and FOD are creating maintenance issues for the airport and need to be eliminated.

• Fuel farm relocation.

Fuel is stored in a fuel farm located next to the terminal building and aircraft parking apron and provides self-serve fueling. The fuel farm has a capacity for 12,000 gallons of aviation gasoline and 12,000 gallons of Jet A fuel. In addition, two fuel trucks are used to support aircraft fueling at the airport. The fuel farm is being relocated to improve safety on the aircraft parking apron and allow for future expansion, as needed, to maintain an adequate level of service for users of ARW, as well as to accommodate the future expansion of the airport terminal.

IV. REASONABLE ALTERNATIVES

Federal guidelines concerning the environmental review process require that all reasonable and practicable alternatives that might accomplish the objectives of a proposed project be identified and evaluated. Such an examination ensures that an alternative that addresses the project's purpose and that might enhance environmental quality, or have a less detrimental effect, has not been prematurely dismissed from consideration. In the EA, reasonable and practicable alternatives were carefully examined. The alternatives considered are described below:

• No-Action
• Runway 07/25 RSA Improvements
  o Alternative 1: Displacing the landing thresholds on each end of Runway 07/25
  o Alternative 2: Extending the RSA’s into the Warsaw Flats of St. Helena Sound
• Completing the parallel taxiway to Runway 25
• Expanding the aircraft parking apron and adding two helipads
• Relocating the fuel farm

After applying preliminary screening criteria, the following alternatives were considered in greater detail in the EA and are described below:

**No-Action Alternative**
The No-Action Alternative is included in the Alternatives Analysis as part of the NEPA process. It describes the existing conditions at the Airport, and provides a baseline for comparing the Reasonable Alternatives in terms of fulfilling the Purpose and Need of the proposed project and impacts to resources within and in the vicinity of the project area.

**Runway 07/25 RSA Improvements**

**Alternative 1 includes: Displacing runway 07/25 landing thresholds.** In order to comply with FAA AC 150/5300-13, *Airport Design, Change 1*, the thresholds would have to be displaced 175 feet and 170 feet respectively. However, the AC also states threshold displacement should be undertaken only after a full evaluation reveals that displacement is the only practical alternative.

**Alternative 2 (Sponsor’s preferred alternative) includes: Extending RSA into the Warsaw Flats of St. Helena Sound.** The RSA’s would extend into salt marsh by 175 feet on the Runway 07 end and 170 feet on the Runway 25 end. This alternative would require the placement of approximately 1.7 acres of fill into the South Carolina Department of Health and Environmental Control – Office of Coastal Resource Management (SCDHEC-OCRM) critical areas, thereby requiring permitting in accordance with the Clean Water Act.

**Extending Parallel Taxiway C to Runway 25**

Runway 07/25 currently has a partial length parallel taxiway, Taxiway C, which extends from the departure end of Runway 07 to Taxiway A and the aircraft parking apron. Aircraft departing Runway 25 must taxi on the runway and use the turnabout at the end of Runway 25 to utilize the runway’s full length in this direction. Extension of the parallel taxiway removes the need for aircraft to back taxi when arriving and departing on Runway 25, which would improve the safety of aircraft operations.

**Expand Aircraft Parking Apron and Construct Two Helipads**

The proposed aircraft parking apron expansion will be approximately 51,000 square feet to accommodate two 82-foot by 82-foot (6,724 square feet) helipads. Construction of the two concrete helipads will be to the north of Taxiway B and accommodate both the medical evacuation helicopters and Beaufort County Sheriff’s Office helicopters, which use ARW. Construction of the helipads provides a designated area for helicopter operation at ARW; thereby reducing the mixing of fixed wing and rotorcraft operation.
Fuel Farm Relocation

The fuel farm is being relocated to improve safety on the aircraft parking apron and allow for future expansion, as needed, to maintain an adequate level of service for users of ARW; as well as to accommodate the future expansion of the airport terminal. The designated fuel farm area will remove the mixing of automobiles and aviation operations.

V. ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACTS

As documented in the attached EA, the Proposed Action and No-Action Alternatives were evaluated for potential impacts to all environmental resource topic areas outlined in FAA Order 1050.1F, Environmental Impacts: Policies and Procedures, FAA’s Order implementing the NEPA.

Under the No-Action Alternative, no action would be taken and there would be no associated environmental impacts.

The following is a discussion of those resources identified as present and with potential to be significantly affected under the Proposed Actions (Sponsor’s Preferred Alternatives):

Runway 07/25 RSA Improvements

Alternative 2 (Sponsor’s preferred alternative) includes: Extending RSA into the Warsaw Flats of St. Helena Sound.
This alternative would require the placement of approximately 1.7 acres of fill into the South Carolina Department of Health and Environmental Control – Office of Coastal Resource Management (SCDHEC-OCRM) critical areas/Waters of the United States; thereby requiring permitting with the United States Army Corps of Engineers (USACE) in accordance with the Clean Water Act.

Extending Parallel Taxiway C to Runway 25

Extending the parallel taxiway to Runway 25 into the Warsaw Flats would require the placement of approximately 2.53 acres of fill into the SCDHEC-OCRM critical area/Waters of the United States; thereby requiring permitting with USACE in accordance with the Clean Water Act.

Expand Aircraft Parking Apron and Construct Two Helipads

Expansion of the existing parking apron would require the piping of approximately 0.25 acre of jurisdictional freshwater ditch, which would require permitting with USACE in accordance with the Clean Water Act.

VI. ENVIRONMENTAL MITIGATION

There are regulatory permits or certifications that impose mitigation requirements to minimize environmental impacts during implementation of the Proposed Action. The Sponsor is responsible to acquire and comply with all applicable permits and certifications throughout the implementation/construction of the Proposed Action.
A conceptual mitigation plan has been developed for the 4.23 acres of fill in the SCDHEC-OCR M critical area/Waters of the United States and the piping of 0.25 acre of freshwater ditch. The plan includes salt water marsh restoration and enhancement activities on a tract of land currently held in Beaufort County’s preservation land program.

Since no significant impacts have been identified in association with implementing the Proposed Action, aside from those required by FAA grant assurances as outlined in FAA Advisory Circular (AC) 150/5370-10, Standards for Specifying Construction of Airports,” and minimization and mitigation measures mandated by permitting requirements and/or other special purpose laws, no additional mitigation measures are necessary to ensure less than significant impacts, with the exception of those described in the previous section related to wetlands.

VII. SPECIAL CONDITIONS TO BE INCLUDED ON ALL FAA GRANTS PROVIDED TO SUPPORT THE COMPLETION OF ALL PROJECTS INCLUDED IN THE PROPOSED ACTION

The Sponsor or the Sponsor’s designated consultant must provide the FAA with courtesy copies of all Section 404 Permit deliverables and reporting documentation required by the USACE until such time as the permit requirements are fulfilled.

VIII. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

The Sponsor held a public hearing to outline the results of field work performed and for preparation of the EA. The hearing was held on August 18, 2016, between 4:30 p.m. and 7:30 p.m., at the Beaufort County Airport, 39 Airport Circle on Lady’s Island. The meeting allowed the project team to provide an opportunity for the public to ask questions. To facilitate the process, each attendee was asked to sign in and complete a public comment form. These forms could be completed at the public hearing, mailed, or e-mailed. The project team set up displays that included the results of the impacts on the environmental categories outlined in the EA. Project team representatives were available to answer questions. A table was set up for those who wished to fill out the public comment form at the meeting. No one attended the August 18, 2016 public hearing. No comment forms were turned in at the meeting and no comments forms were received by mail during the 45-day comment period.

IX. AGENCY FINDINGS

In accordance with applicable law, the FAA makes the following findings/determinations for the Proposed Action, based upon the appropriate information and data contained in the EA.

The following determinations are prescribed by the statutory provisions set forth in the Airport Airway Improvement Act of 1982, as codified in 49 U.S.C. Sections 44502, 47106 and 47107.

- The proposed improvement project is reasonably necessary for use in air commerce or for national defense [49 U.S.C. §44502(b)].

- The project is reasonably consistent with existing plans of public agencies for development of the area surrounding the airport [49 U.S.C. §47106(a)(1)].
• The interests of the community in or near which the project may be located have been given fair consideration [49 U.S.C. §47106(b)(2)].

• The airport sponsor certifies that it has provided an opportunity for a public hearing [49 U.S.C. §47106(c)(1)(A)(i)].

• The airport sponsor certifies that the airport management board has voting representation from the communities in which the project would be located or that the sponsor has advised communities they have a right to petition the secretary of transportation about a proposed project [49 U.S.C. §47106(c)(1)(A)(ii)].

• The airport sponsor has taken or will take actions to restrict land uses in the airport vicinity, including adoption of zoning laws, to ensure the uses are compatible with airport operations [49 U.S.C. §47107(a)(10)].

• In accordance with Executive Order 11990, Protection of Wetlands, there is no practicable alternative to the proposed action, and the proposed action includes all practicable measures to minimize resultant unavoidable harm to wetlands.

X. DECISION AND ORDER

The FAA has determined that environmental and other relevant concerns presented by interested agencies and private citizens have been addressed sufficiently in the EA, hereby acknowledged and fully and properly considered in the decision-making resulting in this FONSI/ROD. The FAA concludes there are no outstanding environmental issues to be resolved by it with respect to the proposed project.

The No-Action Alternative fails to meet the purpose and need for the proposed project. For reasons summarized earlier in this FONSI/ROD, and supported by disclosures and analysis detailed in the EA, the FAA has determined that the Sponsor's proposed project is a reasonable, feasible, practicable and prudent alternative for a Federal decision in light of the established goals and objectives. An FAA decision to take the actions and approvals required by the Sponsor is consistent with its statutory mission and policies supported by the findings and conclusions reflected in the environmental documentation and this FONSI/ROD.

After reviewing the EA and all of its related materials, I have carefully considered the FAA's goals and objectives in relation to various aeronautical aspects of the proposed development actions discussed in the EA, including the purpose and need to be met by this project, the alternative means of achieving them, the environmental impacts of these alternatives, the mitigation necessary to preserve and enhance the environment, and the costs and benefits of achieving the purpose and need.

While this decision does not approve Federal funding for the proposed airport development and does not constitute a Federal funding commitment, it does provide the environmental findings and approval for proceeding to funding actions in accordance with established procedures and applicable requirements.
After careful and thorough consideration of the facts contained herein, the undersigned finds that the proposed Federal action is consistent with the national environmental policies and objectives as set forth in Section 101(a) of the National Environmental Policy Act of 1969 (NEPA) and that with the mitigation that is a part of the project, it will not significantly affect the quality of the human environment or otherwise include any condition requiring consultation pursuant to Section 101 (2) (C) of NEPA.

Issued in College Park, Georgia

[Signature]
Larry F. Clark, Manager
FAA, Atlanta Airports District Office

2.23.17
Date
FINAL ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT

Beaufort County
in cooperation with the
Federal Aviation Administration
and
South Carolina Aeronautics Commission

Phase I Projects
Beaufort, South Carolina

February 2017

Documentation Prepared by:

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February 13, 2017  
Date

February 13, 2017  
Date

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For the:

BEAUFORT COUNTY DEPARTMENT OF AIRPORTS

February 13, 2017  
Date

Jonathan Rembold, Airports Director

This environmental document becomes a federal document when evaluated and signed by the responsible FAA official.

Responsible FAA Official  
Date

2/23/17