FEDERAL AVIATION ADMINISTRATION

Alaskan Region

FINDING OF NO SIGNIFICANT IMPACT

and

RECORD OF DECISION

for the

Final Environmental Assessment for

Construction of a Land-Based Airport on Akun Island, Alaska

Akutan Airport

December, 2007

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The Federal Aviation Administration's (FAA) Alaska Region prepared this Finding of No Significant Impact/Record of Decision (FONSI/ROD) per Order 5050.4B, paragraph 805. In preparing this FONSI/ROD, FAA used the applicable information Chapter 13 of Order 5050.4B as a template.

The FONSI/ROD includes:

- a description of the project proposed by the Airport Sponsor
- reasonable alternatives to the proposed project;
- environmental impacts associated with the action and alternative; and
- mitigation measures required to avoid or minimize environmental harm.

This FONSI/ROD provides FAA's final determinations and approvals for the federal actions needed to construct a land-based airport to serve the community of Akutan, Alaska. The State of Alaska, Department of Transportation & Public Facilities' (DOT&PF) is the airport sponsor.

The federal actions identified in this FONSI/ROD are:

- FAA's unconditional approval of the Sponsor's proposed Airport Layout Plan (ALP).

- FAA's approval of federal funds from the Airport Improvement Program (AIP) to partially finance some of the proposed project components discussed on page 3 of this document.

DOT&PF prepared the Environmental Assessment (EA) supporting this FONSI/ROD. The EA presents an evaluation of the environmental consequences due to constructing and operating the Akutan airport facility and its reasonable alternatives. The evaluation follows the requirements of the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) of 1969, as amended, and FAA Order 5050.4B, dated April, 2006.

FAA is responsible for the accuracy of all information the EA contains. FAA finds that the EA meets the requirements of the applicable FAA Orders and CEQ and accepts it. The EA is made a part of this FONSI/ROD.

This FONSI/ROD also discloses the federal, state, and local actions needed before each of the projects may be implemented and provides findings, certifications, and determinations concerning resources of special concern. The FONSI/ROD lists the conditions of approval that the Sponsor must meet. Finally, this FONSI/ROD identifies the FAA's Preferred Alternative and the environmentally preferred alternative.

For more information concerning the contents of this FONSI/ROD or the EA, please contact:

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LOCATION

The proposed airport would be located on Akun Island, Alaska, located in Akutan Harbor, the Aleutians East Borough. The airport will be 7 miles east of the City of Akutan, Alaska. A hovercraft will transport passengers, supplies and equipment the 7-mile distance across Akutan Harbor from the City of Akutan to the proposed airport.

The community of Akutan is located on a small bay on Akutan Island in the eastern region of the Aleutian Islands (Figure 1.1 of EA). The City of Akutan has a full-time population of about 741. The community is located 35 miles east of Unalaska and 766 miles southwest of Anchorage.

INTRODUCTION AND PROPOSED FEDERAL ACTIONS

The proposed action and reasonable alternatives considered to meet the defined needs are described in detail in Sections 2 and 3 of the EA. They are summarized in this FONSI/ROD. A full description of FAA's Preferred Alternative is provided below.

As noted earlier, this FONSI/ROD provides FAA's final determinations and approvals for the federal actions needed to construct a land-based airport to serve the community of Akutan, Alaska. The federal actions identified in this FONSI/ROD, unconditional approval of the proposed Airport Layout Plan (ALP) and approval of federal funds from the Airport Improvement Program (AIP) to partially finance the proposed airport, are necessary to support the following proposed project components.

The project sponsor's proposed action, which is FAA's Preferred Alternative, includes the following elements:

- Constructing a 4,500 ft long by 75 ft wide paved runway.[1]
- Constructing 5,100 ft long by 150 ft wide runway safety area (RSA) and 300 feet of overrun/under run at the end of each runway end. Construction of a runway safety area (RSA) comprised of 300 feet of overrun at each end of the runway.
- Constructing a 300 ft long by 35 ft wide taxiway.
- Constructing a 90,000 square (sq.) ft apron which includes an aircraft turnaround area, an aviation support area, and a heated, three-bay, 3,000 sq. ft., building, (60 ft wide by 50 ft long).[2]
- Equipping the airport with radio-controlled medium intensity runway lighting (MIRL) and medium intensity taxiway lighting (MITL), a rotating beacon, a lighted wind cone, segmented circle, supplemental unlighted wind cone, reflective cones, threshold panels, and approach lights.
- Constructing the airport to be Instrument Flight Rules (IFR) capable with non-precision lateral precision (LP) initial approaches with visibility minimums greater than 3/4 mile. Future approaches will have less than 3/4 mile localizer precision vertical (LPV), and no terrestrial navigational aids. (The apron is setback for a future 1,000 foot primary surface for LPV.)
- Equipping the airport with a Precision Approach Path Indicator (PAPI) system for approaches on both runway ends.
- Equipping the SREB building with a generator for heat and water holding capacity and septic to provide a passenger waiting area and restroom facility.
- Purchasing a hovercraft and bus.
- Construct a 150 ft long by 150 ft wide stabilized hovercraft landing pad at Surf Beach.
- Constructing a 3,000 ft long, 24 ft wide, two-lane, all-weather gravel road for travel between the hovercraft landing site at Surf Beach and the proposed airport facilities on a beach above the .beach.
- Constructing one culvert under the runway.
- Fencing the airport area.
- At the head of Akutan Harbor and adjacent to the planned small boat harbor, constructing a 100 ft by 120 ft hovercraft storage and maintenance facility with a 150 ft by 150 ft hovercraft maneuvering pad and a 100 ft by 375 ft ramp to the water.

Access to the Akun Airport would be by hovercraft from the City of Akutan to Surf Beach. When not in use, the hovercraft would be stored in a building at the head of Akutan Harbor (Figure 2.2 of EA). Airport staff would access the hovercraft storage area at the head of the harbor by traveling in a skiff. A 3,000 ft-long road would connect the hovercraft landing pad on

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[1] The terrain at the proposed airport site on Akun is much flatter than the terrain at the alternative Fish Banks site. Because of this gentle topography, it is possible to build a 4,500 ft-long runway on Akun. Even with extensive ground-work, a 4,500 ft runway is not possible at Fish Banks. A 4,500 ft runway is preferred because it will allow the Saab 340, the project design aircraft, to operate without weight restriction. As a result, it will, accommodate approximately 30 passengers and their baggage per flight.

[2] The size of the apron is based on the forecasted needs of the design aircraft that will operate at the airport and the sizes of other community class airports' aprons in the region.

Surf Beach to the runway located on the bench above the beach. A diesel bus would transport passengers between the hovercraft pad and the SREB, which will also be used as a passenger holding area. The bus would be fueled at the airport site and stored in the hovercraft maintenance and storage building at the head of the harbor when not in use.

PROJECT PURPOSE AND NEED

The Sponsor notes that a land-based airport is needed to provide safe and reliable access to the City of Akutan, Alaska, before aircraft currently providing service to this location are no longer operational. Safe, reliable access to and from the City of Akutan to the proposed airport located 7 miles from the City within a range weather and sea state conditions is likewise needed. The Sponsor wishes to begin building the proposed airport in 2009 and plans to complete construction in 2010.

BACKGROUND CONCERNING THE PROJECT PURPOSE AND NEED

This section discusses why a B-II category airport is needed to serve the project's design aircraft, the Saab 340. Constructing a land-based, category B-II airport[3] would make it possible for a modern aircraft to reliably serve the City of Akutan. It would ensure that Akutan would remain accessible by air after the Grumman Goose is no longer operational.

The Grumman Goose is presently the only aircraft that is able to access Akutan. Other aircraft, such as a Cessna with floats, are not durable enough to land in the harbor, and there are no other belly landing sea planes that are certified for passenger use in the United States. However, the Grumman Goose is no longer being made (production ceased in 1945) and is becoming increasingly difficult to maintain in airworthy status. According to FAA's Anchorage Flight Standards District Office, FAA-certified replacement parts for the Grumman Goose are no longer available.

Peninsula Air (PenAir) is the sole provider of commercial air service to Akutan. The PenAir fleet serving Akutan was comprised of two Grumman Goose, but in September 2007, one of these planes was rendered inoperable in due to significant maintenance concerns. In addition, PenAir has only one set of spare landing gear for its remaining Goose fleet. As a result, there is a substantial risk that air service to the City of Akutan may be curtailed in the near future (Juettner 2007; EA Appendix A, pg 5).

Due to the fleet's condition, PenAir, has stated that it plans to serve Akutan with a SAAB 340, an aircraft PenAir currently uses to service nearby Unalaska. PenAir chose the SAAB 340 because it is capable of IFR performance, and has the rate of climb performance needed to be safely operated in the Aleutian's mountainous areas. As a result, a land-based airport is needed to accommodate the safe, reliable operation of the SAAB 340 aircraft.

The SAAB 340 would be used to serve Akutan in the future to meet the Community's access and emergency response needs. The Community and Trident Seafood need an airport capable of serving the SAAB 340 to accommodate travel by residents of the community and the Trident's fish processing plant workers (which can number 1,000 during the fishing season change out).

[3] The Airport's FAA reference code is B-II. Airport facilities were designed to accommodate B-II compatible aircraft. That designated category of aircraft had approach speeds of less than 121 knots and wingspans of less than 79 feet.

An airport served by the SAAB 340 is also needed to accommodate emergency evacuations for health emergencies, as well as delivery of emergency supplies in the event of natural disasters. While no other airline has stated it will serve Akutan, construction of a land-based airport would allow other air carriers to access the Community. As a result, there is some potential for potential future expansion of air service to Akutan.

SUMMARY OF ALTERNATIVES CONSIDERED

In accordance with the federal guidelines implementing NEPA, a range of reasonable alternatives was identified. These reasonable alternatives are those the Sponsor and FAA determined are capable of accomplishing the project's Purpose and Need. The alternatives that did not meet the Purpose and Need, as well as those that were not technically, operationally, or economically prudent or feasible, were eliminated from detailed consideration in the EA. The range of alternatives considered is described in detail in Section 3 of the EA.

LOCATIONS CONSIDERED

As discussed in Section ES.1.3.2 of the EA, safe and reliable access to the proposed airport location is required to achieve the proposed action's Purpose and Need. Six potential build alternative sites were identified for evaluation. FAA and the Sponsor analyzed the sites using design criteria for a category B-II airport, site accessibility, and community input. FAA and the Sponsor found that the Hot Springs Bay, Head of the Bay, Sarana Bay, and Broad Bight sites unsuitable for development. They based their decision on significant FAR Part 77 airspace obstructions due to the surrounding topography that allowed aircraft to approach from only one direction.

Due to Akutan's remote location, few scientific investigations have been conducted in areas considered. The dismissed alternatives found unfeasible were rejected before any environmental fieldwork occurred. As a result, little environmental information exists on those alternatives.

SPONSOR'S PROPOSED ACTION/ CONSTRUCT A LAND-BASED AIRPORT ON AKUN ISLAND

Under the proposed action, a new airport to serve the Community of Akutan would be constructed on the southwestern portion of Akun Island, approximately 7 miles east of the community. A detailed description of this alternative is provided in Section 2.1.1 of and Figure 3.1 of the EA.

Investigation of the alternative sites, (minus the Akun Island site) began in 2000 (HDR 2000; HDR 2003a; HDR 2003d). Recently completed planning efforts showed that safe and unreliable access from the City of Akutan to Hot Springs Bay, Head of the Bay, Sarana Bay, and Broad Bight sites and Part 77 concerns at each location led to rejection of those sites.

Based on the completed planning analyses, the Sponsor began studying the Akun Island site in March 2005. The site's safe and reliable access for the Community of Akutan, its close proximity and visibility to the community, dual runway approach, and minimal Part 77 surface penetrations make this the best site to develop an airport. Therefore, the proposed action, in combination with the avoidance, minimization, and mitigation measures identified below, is the alternative the Sponsor determined best meets the Purpose and Need.

The terrain at the proposed airport site on Akun is much flatter than the terrain at the alternative Fish Banks site. Given its gentle topography, a 4,500 ft-long runway can be constructed on Akun. Even with extensive groundwork, a 4,500 ft-long runway is not possible under the Fish Banks alternative. A 4,500 ft-long runway is preferred to allow the SAAB 340 to fly without weight restriction, accommodating a maximum of 30 passengers per flight. As described in Section 5 of the EA, volcanic hazard is also less in this area compared to other sites. This alternative would also allow direct emergency evacuations to Anchorage and nearby locations.

Avoidance, minimization, and mitigation measures developed in consultation with state and federal resource agencies reduce the potential environmental impacts associated with this alternative. Specifically, such measures will address impacts to cultural resources and help ensure that sensitive species and their habitats will be avoided to the extent feasible, and such measures will help mitigate the effects of project construction on the environment while allowing the airport to be constructed in a manner that is consistent with the Purpose and Need for action.

CONSTRUCT A LAND-BASED AIRPORT AT FISH BANKS

Under the Fish Banks Alternative, an airport would be built approximately 4 miles east of the Community across Akutan Harbor (Figure 3.1 of EA).

The Fish Banks Alternative was evaluated in detail because it would achieve many of the same needs as the proposed action. Specifically, under this alternative, FAR Part 77 surface penetrations would be minimal at this site and approaches from both ends of the runway would be possible. The SAAB 340 could fly to Fish Banks; however, this aircraft would only accommodate about 17 passengers per flight due to weight restrictions required to operate on a 4,000 foot-long runway. Site conditions at this location do not permit the construction of a longer runway that would accommodate heavier loads on this aircraft-type. Electronic navigation facilities would be available, allowing planes to operate in adverse weather. Planes landing at this location would also be visible to the community. Airport improvements would allow direct emergency evacuations to Anchorage.

Avoidance, minimization, and mitigation measures developed in consultation with state and federal resource agencies could help reduce the potential environmental impacts associated with this alternative. Specifically, such measures will help ensure that sensitive species and their habitats will be avoided to the extent feasible, and such measures will help mitigate the effects of project construction on the environment.

TRANSPORTATION TO ALTERNATIVE AIRPORT SITES

To access either alternative site, water-borne transportation to and from the City of Akutan is needed. As a result, various marine vessels and landing sites were evaluated. Community input indicated that the best marine landing sites would be found at Surf Bay and Trident Bay for the Akun and Fish Bank sites, respectively.

After considering local weather, wind, topography, and sea state conditions and potential airport locations, it became evident early during the planning process that a fixed-hull vessel (e.g., boat or traditional ferry) could not provide safe and reliable service between the City of Akutan and potential airport locations at Fish Bank or Akun Island. A standard-hull vessel would

experience considerable rocking during high winds and wave action, creating undesirable conditions for passengers on the vessel. Conversely, a hovercraft could be operated over a broader range of environmental conditions while providing safe, efficient, and comfortable passenger ferry service to and from the airport. Use of a hovercraft would also avoid the need to construct major infrastructure facilities, such as a boat dock, because a hovercraft can maneuver onto land without such facilities. Based on these considerations, use of a standard-hull vessel was eliminated from detailed consideration because operation of such a craft would not meet the Purpose and Need for action.

FISH BANKS SITE ACCESS

Access to the Fish Banks Airport would be provided by hovercraft from the City of Akutan to West Cove. When not in use, the hovercraft would be stored in a building at the head of Akutan Harbor. Staff would access the hovercraft storage area at the head of the harbor by traveling in a skiff. A 4.9 mile road would connect the hovercraft landing pad in West Cove to the runway at Fish Banks located on the easternmost tip of the island. A diesel bus would be used to transport passengers between the hovercraft and aircraft. The bus would be fueled onsite and stored in the SREB located at the airport when not in use.

Marine service by hovercraft between the community of Akutan and West Cove would similarly satisfy passenger comfort and weather operability goals. A protected hovercraft landing area in West Cove would be developed to serve this airport location. However, a longer access road would need to be constructed and maintained to provide access to the hovercraft facility.

AKUN SITE ACCESS

For the Akun Island Bank Alternative, hovercraft landing sites at Trident Bay were determined not feasible because they would require daily travel through Akun Strait, an area of turbulent water created by the meeting of the Bering Sea and Pacific Ocean that would jeopardize passenger comfort and safety. Also, landing at Trident Bay would require building and maintaining a long access road to the airport site. Finally, beach conditions at potential hovercraft landing sites around Trident Bay are relatively less conducive to hovercraft operations compared to those at Surf Bay.

The preferred landing site for the Akun site at Surf Bay is accessible without transiting the narrow Akun Strait (Figure 3.1 of EA).

A number of landing sites along Surf Bay were determined not feasible. Landing at the western point of Surf Bay was dismissed due to the likelihood of impacting the former village site of Chulka (a potentially significant cultural site). Landing sites along Surf Bay's eastern and northern shore were eliminated because the area is covered with active sand dunes.

Under this alternative, access to the Akun airport location would be provided by hovercraft from the City of Akutan to Surf Beach. Surf Beach offers a protected hovercraft landing area. Marine service by hovercraft between the community of Akutan and Surf Bay on Akun Island would satisfy passenger comfort and weather operability goals. When not in use, the hovercraft would

be stored in a building at the head of Akutan Harbor. Staff would access the hovercraft storage area at the head of the harbor by traveling in a skiff.

Under this alternative, a 3,000 foot-long road would connect the hovercraft landing pad on Surf Beach to the runway located on the bench above the beach. A diesel bus would be used to transport passengers between the hovercraft and aircraft. The bus would be would be fueled onsite and stored at the in the hovercraft maintenance and storage building at the head of the bay when not in use. The proposed action allows for a short gradual access road that would be easier to maintain than the long mountainous road required for the Fish Banks alternative.

NO ACTION

Regulations at 40 CFR 1502.14(d) require analysis of this alternative. Under the No Action alternative, no improvements would be made to the existing aviation system and the Grumman Goose would continue to serve the Community of Akutan. Since the Goose is an antiquated plane, FAA-certificated replacement parts are no longer being made for the aircraft, and no other belly-landing or float plane aircraft can serve the Community, the no action alternative would likely result in no air service to Akutan some time in the near future.

While this alternative does not represent a solution to residents' and pilots' concerns, it is, nonetheless, an option available to the Community and must be evaluated along with the reasonable alternatives to construct a new airport. The No Action alternative would not address the deficiencies and problems that have been identified with the current Akutan air service would not be corrected or resolved. As a result, it would not meet the project's Purpose and Need.

PREFERRED ALTNERNATIVE

In determining this Alternative, FAA considered the transportation, economic, and environmental impacts of each reasonable alternative and the No Action alternative. FAA evaluated the environmental impacts in the draft and final EA. Based on all of these considerations, FAA determined that the Sponsor's Proposed Action (identified in ES.2.1 of the EA) and as modified to incorporate the avoidance, minimization, and mitigation measures described below and in section ES.4.0 of the EA constitute the FAA's Preferred Alternative. Adoption of this alternative will result in the construction of an airport that is consistent with the Purpose and Need for action, while at the same time avoiding, minimizing, and mitigating the effects of airport construction on the environment.

ENVIRONMENTALLY PREFERRED ALTERNATIVE

The FAA has considered public and agency comments received in response to the draft EA. After reviewing the administrative record in this proceeding, FAA concludes that the Environmentally Preferred Alternative is the Preferred Alternative. FAA believes the Environmentally Preferred Alternative will promote national environmental policies, cause the least damage to the environment, and will best protect, preserve, and improve cultural and historic resources. This alternative will result in the construction of a land-based airport in an environmentally-sensitive manner.

SUMMARY OF THE ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACTS OF ALTERNATIVES CONSIDERED

The FAA has required an EA for the proposed airport and associated facilities: such an assessment was accomplished. Based on the analysis and necessary mitigation, any impacts associated with this development are not expected to have any significant adverse environmental impacts on or in the vicinity of the airport.

Section 5 of the EA provides a complete description of the environmental impacts projected to occur for each reasonable alternative and the No Action alternative. The attached EA also addresses the effects of the Preferred Alternative on the human and natural environment, and is made a part of this Finding/Decision. The results of the analyses are summarized as follows:

AIRPORT CONSTRUCTION ALTERNATIVES

As described below in Table 1, both build alternatives would encompass approximately 300 acres of land. However, the final project footprint of the Preferred Alternative (airport and support facilities) is less than half the size of the Fish Banks alternative (80 acres versus 170 acres).

The Fish Banks alternative would have the greatest impact on the wetlands (27 acres), and require more than 2 million cubic yards of fill for construction. Conversely, the Preferred Alternative would impact about half as many acres of wetlands (12.1 acres), and would require considerably less fill material (831,000 cubic yards). Other environmental impacts resulting from the alternatives would be relatively proportional to disturbance areas.

The Preferred Alternative would result in the disturbance of 11 acres of essential fish habitat (EFH) whereas the Fish Banks alternative would result in the disturbance of 1 acre of EFH. As described below, the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA Fisheries) concurs that the Preferred Alternative incorporates all necessary EFH conservation measures. Disturbance area, fill volumes, and other ground-disturbance consequences of the alternatives are listed in Table ES-3 of the EA.

Both alternatives would require operation of a hovercraft to access airport locations. As described above, accessing areas around Surf Bay would avoid the need to transit through Akun Strait, thus providing a safer and more comfortable transit route. Avoiding areas around Surf Bay may result in relatively fewer impacts on northern sea otters because otter densities appear relatively high in the area. However, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) concurs that hovercraft operations and project construction are unlikely to result in significant adverse impacts on listed species, including sea otters, and that sea otters may habituate to hovercraft operations over time.

The overall cost of the preferred alternative is considerably less than the Fish Banks alternative. This is due in large part to the differences in required fill volume. The Preferred Alternative would cost about $45 million to implement, whereas the Fish Banks alternative would cost about $81 million in present-day dollars to implement.

The No Action alternative would not cause construction or operational-induced environmental consequences. However, it could have negative long-term direct and indirect effects on socioeconomic conditions in Akutan. The only aircraft that can currently land in Akutan Harbor

is the Grumman Goose, and the manufacturing of this aircraft ceased in 1945. When this aircraft is no longer operable, the Community of Akutan would lack safe and reliable access to other regions, thus limiting mail services, emergency evacuations, and basic transport of goods and passengers.

THREATENED, ENDANGERED, AND PROTECTED SPECIES

Hovercraft operations to provide access to the airport locations from the City of Akutan differ somewhat between the alternatives. As described in Figure 3.1 of the EA, construction of an airport on Akun Island (Preferred Alternative) would require a hovercraft to transit through Surf Bay, an area possessing relatively high northern sea otter density. Construction of an airport on Fish Banks would require hovercraft operation through areas possessing lower sea otter density relative to Surf Bay. As discussed below, USFWS has determined that absolute numbers of sea otters within the action area are low.

FWS identified potential disturbance of Steller's eiders and northern sea otters as a result of airport construction and hovercraft operation in the action area, including locations near Akun Island and near the City of Akutan, as an issue requiring consideration. FAA and USFWS engaged in formal and informal Endangered Species Act (ESA) Section 7 consultation regarding the effects of the action on these listed species. USFWS concurred through formal consultation that hovercraft transits through Surf Bay would not result in significant adverse impacts on Steller's eiders or northern sea otters in view of the avoidance, minimization, and mitigation measures proposed by the project Sponsor, and incorporated into the Preferred Alternative.

Available information suggests that northern sea otters may habituate to hovercraft operations, and that over time sea otters may not be adversely affected by the presence or operation of the hovercraft. Consequently, it is likely that under either alternative, the effects to sea otters would diminish over time. USFWS estimates that the Preferred Alternative may result in the non-lethal take or "harassment" of about 12 northern sea otters on average, on a daily basis, and that 1 otter would be harassed during construction of the project. Levels of take would be evaluated on a quarterly basis to discuss the results of ongoing incidental take monitoring programs. USFWS has also indicated that the effects of potential take would not be significant because a relatively small number of northern sea otters inhabiting the action area may be affected by the Preferred Alternative, and that over time, sea otters may habituate to disturbance resulting from project construction and hovercraft operation. The applicant has committed carry out a range of mitigation and minimization measures that will avoid significant impacts to sea otters, and improve knowledge of sea otter behavior in the area. The Preferred Alternative incorporates a range of measures that will improve knowledge of the species, resulting in benefits for species conservation and recovery. Collaborative working relationships developed through the Preferred Alternative will likewise benefit the species.

NOAA Fisheries, the federal agency with jurisdiction over ESA and Marine Mammal Protection Act (MMPA)-listed whale species and Steller sea lions, concurs that hovercraft operations will have no effect on species under its jurisdiction.

ESSENTIAL FISH HABITAT

As described in Figure 5 of the EA, DOTPF engaged in abbreviated Essential Fish Habitat (EFH) consultation under the Magnuson-Stevens Act to determine if the Preferred Alternative was likely to adversely affect designated EFH. NOAA Fisheries concluded that the Preferred Alternative was not likely to result in adverse affects on EFH in view of mitigation actions incorporated into this alternative. Consequently, the Akun Island and Fish Banks alternatives would not result in substantially different impacts on EFH in view of measures incorporated into the proposed action.

WILDLIFE HAZARDS

The potential exists under both alternatives for wildlife strikes to aircraft approaching or departing Akutan. In general, Alaska possesses a large number of birds and large waterfowl that can constitute hazards to aviation. The area near the City of Akutan (the No Action alternative) and both build alternatives are no exceptions; wetland habitats and marine habitats in those areas contain a number of migratory bird species.

FAA environmental specialists commented during the development of the EA that wildlife hazards near both Akun Island and Fish Banks should be evaluated to assess the risks posed under each alternative. In response to this comment, the project Sponsor retained a qualified wildlife expert to assess wildlife hazards under both the Preferred Alternative and the Fish Banks alternative. The wildlife expert conducted onsite inspections of the airport alternatives, and a wildlife hazard assessment completed by this expert indicates that the Preferred Alternative possesses relatively lower wildlife hazard risks compared to the Fish Banks alternative.

SECONDARY AND CUMULATIVE IMPACTS

Under either build alternative, providing more reliable access to the City of Akutan could result in expansion of commerce and industrial activities in this region, along with a corresponding increase in population and associated environmental impacts. However, the City of Akutan is a relatively remote location with relatively harsh environmental conditions as compared to Anchorage or Juneau. Such conditions may serve to limit future expansion.

It is not anticipated that more reliable air service would result in additional cannery workers at the Trident processing plant because the cannery work force is determined by fish market forces, not the availability of air service. However, reliable air service from Akun might contribute to seafood industry decision to establish facilities on Akun Island and send vessels to Akun for direct shipment of their products to market. Presently, no plans exist to establish such facilities and it is otherwise not reasonably foreseeable at this time such development will in fact occur.

Under the Preferred Alternative, providing regular hovercraft service to private lands on Akun Island could result in access to this area; however, it is unlikely the public would travel to this area for purposes other than accessing the airport due to the limited daily hovercraft service. Further, Akun Island is already impacted by cattle grazing that has occurred in this area over the past several years. While no near-term development of these lands is currently proposed or reasonably foreseeable, it is possible that providing access to this area could result in additional development activities. In view of the environmental baseline in this area, no significant adverse cumulative impacts are anticipated as result of airport construction or operation in this area

because the incremental addition of airport construction and associated access would be relatively minor.

Relative to the Preferred Alternative, land areas associated with the Fish Banks alternative are not as affected due to past and current land uses. Providing access to Fish Banks by constructing an airport in this location would provide new and easier access to subsistence areas for hunting, fishing and berry picking. Providing such access could result in greater pressure on these resources in the near and long-terms.

Potential cumulative impacts on archaeological resources would likely be more significant under the Fish Banks alternative relative to the Preferred Alternative. Archaeological resources at Fish Banks, including the potentially-significant pre-historic village, are largely intact. Providing access to this area could increase disturbance and removal of artifacts. Recreational activities on Akun Island or on Fish Banks may increase as a result of increased access provided by the construction of an airport at these locations. It is possible that people would choose to relocate to Akun Island as a result of airport construction, and that there would potentially be community development in the area. If future development occurs along the access road, or elsewhere on the island, it could lead to habitat alteration including land clearing and wetlands fill, further displacement of sensitive animals, taking artifacts from cultural sites, and loss or depletion of traditional subsistence hunting and gathering areas. Future development on Akun may lead to more boat activity for access to the area.

Future actions that may occur in the City of Akutan itself include the construction of a new boat harbor at the head of Akutan Harbor, the construction of a road from the Community to that boat harbor, and water and wastewater system improvements associated with these new developments.

According to the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE), the lead Federal agency for these reasonably foreseeable actions, constructing a harbor and road would likely stimulate the development of harbor-related businesses, such as fueling stations, vessel repair shops, vessel storage, grocery/supply stores, and equipment storage areas. It is possible that additional seafood processing facilities might become established in the harbor. This could potentially lead to water quality issues due to increased pollution from additional seafood processing facilities, and a higher risk of fuel spills due to increased boat traffic. The Community of Akutan would likely expand utility and other services (e.g. power generation, water, and waste disposal) to the harbor. Most development would likely occur on upland areas constructed from the mooring basin's dredged disposal material; however, some business may choose to apply for the USACE Section 404/10 permits to fill wetlands or intertidal areas and construct their business at this location. The impacts associated with the construction and operation of a new harbor may be amplified by the development of the new airport.

The proposed airport would improve the reliability of transportation to and from Akutan. When this Grumman Goose is no longer operable, the Community of Akutan would lack safe and reliable access to other regions, thus limiting mail services, emergency evacuations and basic transport of goods and passengers. With more reliable access, the market may become more stable in this region and accommodate the development of new businesses. The location of new

businesses could occur in the head of Akutan Harbor, as described above, in the City of Akutan, and may occur near the airport on Akun.

Table 1. Summary of Environmental Impacts under the Akun Island and Fish Banks Alternatives		
Resource	**Akun Island Alternative**	**Fish Banks Alternative**
Construction		
Estimated Cost	$45,000,000	$81,700,000
Project Footprint	80 acres	170 acres
Total Land Area Required	310 acres	290 acres
Fill Volume	831,000 yd^3	2,466,000 yd^3
Water Resources and Floodplains		
Floodplain volume impacted	No floodplain impacts	No floodplain impacts
Wetlands impacted	12 acres	27 acres
Surface water quantity	Moderate, less pervious surface than current conditions	Moderate, less pervious surface than current conditions
Surface water quality	Moderate, short-term degradation	Moderate, short-term degradation
Vegetation		
Direct impacts from construction	80 acres	170 acres
Wetlands		
Modification of wetlands	12.11 acres of wetlands filled	27 acres of wetlands filled
Impact significant and basis for conclusion?	No. Hydrologic alterations would not affect functions and values of the wetlands and EFH.	No. Hydrologic alterations would affect functions and values of the wetlands and EFH.
Fisheries		
EFH impacted	13 acres impacted	1 acre impacted
Fish access	Minimal impact. Installation of a culvert that could affect fish passage.	Minimal impact. Installation of a culvert that could affect fish passage.
Overall construction impacts (e.g., disruption of fish movement and activity)	Short-term construction impacts	Short-term construction impacts
Wildlife		
Overall effect	No significant adverse impacts on	No significant adverse impacts on

	steller's eiders and northern sea otters. No effect on whales, sea lions, or sensitive fish species.	steller's eiders and northern sea otters. No effect on whales, sea lions, or sensitive fish species.
Federally-listed Threatened, Endangered, and Sensitive Species	No significant adverse impacts on steller's eiders and northern sea otters. No effect on whales, sea lions, or sensitive fish species.	No significant adverse impacts on steller's eiders and northern sea otters. No effect on whales, sea lions, or sensitive fish species.
Visual Resources	Minimal impacts due to distance from community.	Minimal impacts due to distance from community.
Section 4(f) Properties	No impacts.	No impacts.
Noise	Airport noise would not increase over any noise sensitive area. Noise would be over 7 miles from the Community. Hovercraft noise would have minimal impacts on the Community and fish and wildlife. The hovercraft would operate for a total of about 30 minutes per day.	Airport noise would not be over any noise sensitive area. Noise would be over 4 miles from the Community. Hovercraft noise would have minimal impacts on the Community and fish and wildlife. The hovercraft would operate for a total of about 30 minutes per day.
Historic and Cultural Resources	Adverse impacts would occur on one site.	No impacts.
Air Quality	Some temporary impacts during construction.	Some temporary impacts during construction.

SUMMARY OF MITIGATION MEASURES CONTAINED IN THE EA

This section summarizes possible design elements that would reduce or minimize the environmental impacts attributed to some of the alternatives. Section 2.11 of the EA describes in detail a number of possible design features that would minimize or help to reduce environmental impacts.

A range of Federal and state laws provide authority for federal and state agencies to require implementation of the mitigation measures below. The authorities of these various agencies are described below under Summary of Necessary Federal and State Actions, and in Table ES-1, Section 5, and Section 6 of the EA.

In accordance with 40 CFR § 1505.3, the FAA would take appropriate steps through federal funding grant assurances and conditions, unconditional airport layout plan approvals, and contract plans and specifications to ensure that the following authorizations and mitigation monitoring and enforcement actions are implemented during project development. The Sponsor will monitor the implementation of mitigation actions. These mitigation actions would be made the subject of a special condition included in future federal airport grants to the project Sponsors.

CONSTRUCTION-RELATED IMPACTS

Both build alternatives would result in minor, direct, short-term impacts on air quality during construction. The impacts to wildlife from heavy machinery noise and blasting could include noise-related disturbance and potential harassment of migratory birds and marine wildlife occurring near construction areas, including landing and staging areas on Akun Island. The probability that machinery, blasting, or related construction activities could result in the direct mortality of fish or wildlife species appears discountable based upon extensive consultations with USFWS and NOAA Fisheries.

Operation of construction equipment would result in localized, temporary increases in air quality emissions due to equipment exhaust. Ground disturbing activities and stockpiling of fill material may result in increased emissions of fugitive dust from the construction area. To mitigate for impacts to air quality, the construction sites would be watered and material stockpiles would be covered or otherwise stabilized prior to excavation to minimize windblown dust from the project site.

Freshwater and marine water quality may be temporarily impacted during construction due to potential erosion from construction sites and in-water construction. To mitigate for impacts to water quality, the following measures would be implemented:

- Natural vegetation would be retained wherever possible.
- Clean fill would be used for airport improvements.
- The DOT&PF would design the project to minimize sedimentation migration and include an Erosion and Sediment Control Plan (ESCP) in the construction plans and specifications.
- All construction activity would be performed in accordance with the National Pollution Discharge Elimination System (NPDES) general permit.
- A Storm Water Pollution Prevention Plan (SWPPP) would be developed and implemented by the construction contractor. The SWPPP would comply with the Storm Water NPDES General Permit for Construction Activities.
- Material stockpiles would be located on uplands.
- Erosion prevention and best management practices (BMPs) to control erosion and minimize the potential for sediment to reach surface waters during construction are proposed, including:
    - All bank cuts, slopes, fills, or other exposed earthwork attributable to this project (including the new access road, apron, and safety area) would be immediately stabilized, and revegetated with vegetation native to the local area to prevent erosion and sedimentation which may occur both during and after the project.
        - For areas that are protected from the wind, a seed application of half Arctared red fescue (*Festuca rubra* 'Arctared') and half 'Norcoast' Bering hairgrass (*Deschampsia beringensis* 'Norcoast') spread at 40 lbs per acre with 20-20-10 (N-P-K) fertilizer at 450 lbs per acre would be used. Seeding would take place between May 15 and August 15. Vegetation will be managed to reduce wildlife hazard attraction.
        - In exposed areas, especially near the coast, live planting (sprigs) of beach wildrye (Leymus mollis, previously Elymus mollis, Leymus arenarius and Elymus arenarius) would be used.

- Non structural organic soils (sod) derived from cuts associated with the project will be placed on side slopes and seeded to the extent possible and where appropriate.
- Temporary erosion control measures, including soil tackifiers, erosion control matting or blankets, straw wattles and/or silt fencing, would be installed until the newly planted plants can bind the soil.
- Sediment prevention measures (silt fences) would be placed and maintained along the toe of fill areas adjacent to waters of the United States, including wetlands, to prevent the introduction of sediments. These devices would remain in place until fill and other exposed earthwork attributable to the project are stabilized and revegetated.

ARCHAEOLOGICAL AND CULTURAL IMPACTS

Under the Preferred Alternative, construction of the hovercraft landing pad and access to the runway would affect the western portion the Surf Bay Archaeological District (UNI-0103), which is eligible for listing on the National Register of Historic Places under Criterion D for its potential to yield important information on the prehistory and history of the area. As described above, a FAA and the State Historic Preservation Officer (SHPO) Memorandum of Agreement (MOA) was executed to resolve adverse affects to the Surf Bay Archaeological District. Mitigation measures contained within the MOA to resolve adverse affects to the Surf Bay Archaeological District include the following:

- Prior to construction and in order to draft a data recovery plan, the boundaries of the Surf Bay Archaeological District would be determined by completion of intensive testing conducted by a qualified archaeologist or archaeologists.
- A data recovery plan, consistent with pertinent laws and guidelines, would be developed by DOT&PF, FAA, and the SHPO and would identify methodology to answer questions to better understand local culture. It would include methods to be used in conservation, data management, and dissemination of data, and include a schedule.
- The approved data recovery plan would be implemented prior to and in coordination with those actions that could disturb the Surf Bay Archaeological District. Only qualified archeologists would conduct archaeological fieldwork.
- Following the inadvertent discovery of human remains, the Alaska State Troopers Criminal Investigation Bureau, the SHPO, FAA and DOT&PF would be notified and work would be stopped and the area would be secured. If human remains are determined to be Native Alaskan, the Akutan Tribal Counsel will be notified immediately. The remains would be treated with dignity and respect. Other measures, fully explained in the MOA, would be followed.
- A draft archaeological report, meeting current professional standards, would be prepared and submitted to FAA and SHPO for review. Comments would be addressed and the final report would be completed within one year after completion of data recovery.
- All artifacts would be preserved to the Alaska State Museum (University of Alaska Fairbanks).
- The MOA would be reviewed annually by the signatories. If disputes arise and cannot be resolved, the Advisory Council on Historic Preservation (ACHP) would be consulted.
- The MOA remains in effect until January 31, 2010; however, it can be extended or terminated in consultation with FAA, DOT&PF, and the SHPO.

- The data recovery plan will be completed prior to construction activities.

In addition, if cultural remains (other than those that are known) are encountered during construction, work must cease in the immediate area of the discovery and Federal regulations pertaining to emergency discovery situations must be followed. The FAA Airports Division and the SHPO would be notified immediately.

WATER QUALITY IMPACTS

Under both build alternatives, drainage and runoff from airport locations, including the paved runway, access road, and the hovercraft facilities, could add pollutants to storm water discharges. Maintenance vehicles and aircraft could release minor amounts of fuel and lubricants to the ground surface, which could then enter storm water runoff. Under the Preferred Alternative, the current design does not maintain a 100-foot-wide buffer between the Akun airport access road and Stream #1, which could result in impacts to the stream from erosion, storm water runoff, and accidental discharges.

Construction of a paved runway will create new impervious surface that could reduce groundwater infiltration, and increase storm water runoff. Such runoff could result in increasing peak flows in nearby creeks if not properly directed away from such areas. Deicing agents used on runway surfaces and aircraft could also enter creeks and nearby marine areas during rain on snow events, or during spring thaws and rain events. The project Sponsor estimates that up to 65 tons of urea and 10,000 gallons of dilute potassium acetate may be used on an annual basis (using on a dilatation rate of 50%).

To mitigate for impacts to water quality the following measures are proposed:

- Marine spill response equipment would be stored onsite at both the hovercraft storage area and the airport.
- The hovercraft would be fueled at the existing fueling facilities located at the dock in the community of Akutan. Standard spill response equipment is located on the dock, and the U.S. Coast Guard (USCG) has inspected and licensed the facility. The USCG has also reviewed Akutan's spill response plan.
- During hovercraft fueling, fuel collars will be used.
- The design aircraft, the SAAB 340, would be fueled at existing aircraft fueling facilities such as those in Unalaska or Anchorage and not at the Akun Airport.
- The bus transporting passengers to and from the hovercraft landing pad and airport would be fueled from the 2,000-gallon diesel fuel tank at the snow removal equipment building on the airport apron on Akun Island. The building, apron, and fuel tank are more than 100 feet from all fish streams.
- To prevent marine waters contamination, hovercraft maintenance activities will occur in the hovercraft storage building or on the hovercraft landing.
- Where possible, a 100-ft-wide buffer will be maintained between project components and fish streams.
- Measures will be taken to insure storm water runoff is directed away from areas contained EFH and other sensitive aquatic habitat.
- The apron would be sloped and aircraft deicing would take place so that runoff will be routed away from anadromous streams.

- Natural vegetation will be retained on the sides of the runway, apron and access road to support natural filtration of pollutants contained in stormwater runoff.
- A Hazardous Waste Management Plan to address hazardous wastes generated by the operations and maintenance activities associated with the proposed airport and hovercraft will be developed.

Additional construction-related mitigation measures are described above under Section ES.4.1.1 of the EA.

Essential Fish Habitat Impacts

FAA consulted with NOAA Fisheries concerning the potential effects of the proposed action on designated EFH. The EFH assessment concluded the proposed action may adversely affect EFH. NOAA Fisheries concurred that Preferred Alternative, as modified to incorporate NMFS' conservation recommendations, will not adversely affect designated EFH (NMFS 2007b).

Marine Mammal Avoidance and Minimization Measures

Through extensive informal and formal consultations with USFWS and NOAA Fisheries, the project Sponsor and FAA developed a plan to avoid and minimize the effects of project construction and hovercraft operation on marine mammals under the ESA and MMPA. The Services have concurred with the inclusion of these measures into the proposed action. NOAA Fisheries has indicated the Preferred Alternative will have no effect on listed species or marine mammals under its jurisdiction (NOAA Fisheries 2007).

FWS retains jurisdiction over northern sea otters, a species listed as threatened under the ESA, and protected under the MMPA. FAA, the project sponsors, and USFWS have agreed to pursue development of an incidental harassment authorization (IHA) under the MMPA. An IHA will authorize any potential harassment of northern sea otters that may occur as a result of implementing the preferred alternative. The USFWS anticipates that measures incorporated into the preferred alternative will adequately avoid, minimize and mitigate the effects of any take or harassment on northern sea otters (USFWS 2007). Further, USFWS has concurred that any take or harassment of northern sea otters that may occur as a result of implementing the preferred alternative will not result in significant adverse affects on the species.

Summary of Compensatory Mitigation Plan

Resource agencies were queried to determine whether specific on-site mitigation projects existed in Akutan during an agency meeting to discuss project mitigation on January 24, 2007. No agency was able to identify potential onsite mitigation during the course of this meeting; however, the agencies recommend that the project sponsors discuss these issues with local governmental entities and the community. These discussions similarly did not result in the identification of any mitigation projects at the project location.

In September, 2007, FAA and the project Sponsor met with the USACE to discuss further the potential for on-site mitigation projects. Through these discussions, the project sponsors identified a nongovernmental organization that could calculate potential in lieu compensatory mitigation values as opposed to conducting onsite mitigation projects. The USACE also suggested evaluating compensatory mitigation values used at similar locations around Alaska to benchmark potential compensatory mitigation values.

A survey of similar construction projects in Alaska indicated that the highest amount per acre paid for an airport project impacts to undisturbed estuarine emergent wetlands was $29,500 for a project at Wrangell Airport. The lowest amount paid per acre for unavoidable impacts to wetlands by airport projects is the $500 in accordance with the Wetlands MOA between FAA, USFWS, ADF&G, the USACE, and DOT&PF.

Unavoidable impacts to wetlands by airport projects are usually compensated at $500 per acre, in accordance with the MOA between FAA, USFWS, Alaska Department of Fish & Game (ADF&G), the USACE, and DOT&PF regarding wetlands. After discussions with the USACE, the project Sponsor and FAA determined that wetlands impacted under the proposed action are more valuable aquatic resources and would not fall under the MOA compensation value.

The head of Akutan Harbor is characterized as an intertidal area while the hovercraft landing area at Surf Bay on Akun Island is characterized as a sandy beach. Wave action on these beaches is sufficient to form noticeable sand waves. This feature is indicative of considerable beach instability and results in a relatively impoverished infauna (i.e., aquatic animals that live within the bottom substratum, such as clams or burrowing worms); however, both areas are valuable to intertidal and subtidal organisms. On the basis of visible shells, the Head of the Harbor beach likely supports bivalves such as butter clams and cockles. Based on underwater video, this area also supports dense colonies of sand tube building polychaetes. In the summer of 2004, the surface of the beach was scattered with patches of various algae and gammarid amphipods were abundant. Several eagles were present on pilings and had been digging in the beach surface, perhaps for amphipods or small bivalves.

The dunes at Surf Bay possess scattered vegetation including seabeach sandwort and beach groundsel, and lesser amounts of dune grass among drift logs and fishing gear. Cattle trails lead from the adjacent uplands to the beach and there is evidence of heavy grazing on the sandwort. The Surf Bay beach has shallow surface seepage water and wet sand between ripple marks which support extremely high densities of the mysid shrimp, as well as three species of amphipods known for their affinities for exposed sandy beaches. A small stream enters the west edge of the beach near rocky outcrop. Based on this information above, the compensatory mitigation agreed to for other airport projects, and input from The Conservation Fund unavoidable impacts to intertidal and subtidal wetlands at the Head of the Harbor and at Surf Beach are proposed to be compensated at a rate of $10,000/acre.

Freshwater wetlands on Akun Island are saturated, seasonally-flooded, and semi-permanently flooded emergent. Most of the wetlands have outlets or are adjacent to intermittent or perennial streams which drain into Surf Bay. Three of these streams provide spawning and rearing habitat for coho, pink, and sockeye salmon and Dolly Varden. Based on the information above and compensatory mitigation agreed to for other airport projects with similar wetlands, unavoidable impacts to emergent wetlands on Akun Island will be compensated at a rate of $3,000/acre. Under the Preferred Alternative, a total of $43,960 will be paid into the Alaska Wetlands Conservation Fund prior to construction. The Fund is a nongovernmental organization the USACE has determined qualified to conduct appropriate wetlands mitigation projects. Payment

of this in lieu compensatory mitigation amount will satisfy the project sponsors' obligations under the Clean Water Act.

SUMMARY OF NECESSARY FEDERAL AND STATE APPROVALS

The FAA has statutory authority to ensure that the safe operation of the proposed airport and the nation's airport and airway system is the highest aviation priority (49 U.S.C. 47101(a)(1)). In carrying out its responsibilities, the FAA is responsible for ensuring that its actions are in compliance with NEPA. The FAA's Airports Program is responsible for analyzing the environmental impacts and consequences of a proposed federal action involving airports. FAA is also responsible for ensuring that airport development projects provide for the protection and enhancement of natural resources and the quality of the environment (49 U.S.C. 47101(a)(6)).

FEDERAL APPROVALS

There are other decisions FAA must make in conjunction with these actions. The Airport Layout Plan must reflect the proposed development, and the applicant must receive FAA approval of the updated Airport Layout Plan. FAA will also ensure that proposed development will not adversely affect safe and efficient use of airspace. There are also a number of other federal, and state approvals, and regulatory determinations and consultations that must be approved and/or completed for the Sponsor's proposed actions or alternatives to those actions to be implemented. These decisions, approvals, and authorizations are discussed below.

1. Endangered Species Act (ESA) (16 U.S.C. § 1531 et seq.)

FAA engaged in ESA Section 7 consultation with NOAA Fisheries to determine if any federally-listed species were present in the action area. NOAA Fisheries indicated that Steller sea lion and humpback whales may occur in the action area. NOAA Fisheries concurred in a letter exchange that the proposed action, as modified to include mitigation measures identified in ES.4.0 would have no effect on listed species under its jurisdiction.

FAA also engaged in ESA Section 7 with USFWS to determine if any federally-listed species were present in the action area. USFWS indicated that Steller's eiders and northern sea otters may occur in the action area. While USFWS determined the proposed action may result in take of this species, USFWS concurred in a letter exchange that the proposed action, as modified to include mitigation measures identified in ES.4.0 of the EA would not result in significant adverse impacts on listed species under its jurisdiction.

2. Marine Mammal Protection Act (MMPA) (16 U.S.C. §§ 1361-1421)

FAA consulted with NOAA Fisheries to determine if any MMPA species under its jurisdiction were present in the action area. NOAA Fisheries indicated that Steller sea lion and humpback whales may occur in the action area. NOAA Fisheries concurred in a letter exchange that the proposed action, as modified to include mitigation measures identified in ES.4.0 of the EA, would have no effect on these species.

FAA consulted with USFWS to determine if any MMPA species under its jurisdiction were present in the action area. USFWS indicated that northern sea otters occur in the action area. While USFWS determined the proposed action may result in harassment of this species, USFWS concurred in a letter exchange that the proposed action, as modified to include mitigation

measures identified in ES.4.0, would not result in significant adverse impacts on listed species under its jurisdiction.

USFWS and the project sponsors are presently pursuing an MMPA permit to authorize any potential harassment of northern sea otters that may occur. USFWS estimated in its Biological Opinion that up to 36 sea otters may be non-lethally taken during the course of hovercraft operations and project construction. USFWS is presently assessing the amount and extent of take and harassment that may occur under the ESA and MMPA, but believes up to 12 northern sea otters may be taken or harassed on average, on a daily basis and that 1 otter would be harassed during construction of the project. USFWS concurs that the proposed action will not result in significant adverse impacts on northern sea otters.

3. Magnuson Stevens Act – Essential Fish Habitat (EFH) (16 U.S.C. § 1855(B)(2))

DOT&PF consulted with NOAA Fisheries on FAA's behalf to determine if designated EFH may occur in the action area. NOAA Fisheries indicated EFH does occur in the action area. NOAA Fisheries has concurred that the proposed action contains all appropriate EFH conservation recommendations.

4. Bald and Golden Eagle Protection Act (50 CFR Part 22.23)

There would be no significant adverse effects to Golden or Bald Eagles.

5. Fish and Wildlife Coordination Act (16 U.S.C. §§ 661-667e)

The USFWS has been consulted during the preparation of the EA in accordance with this act.

6. National Historic Preservation Act (16 U.S.C. § 470)

DOT&PF and FAA consulted with the SHPO and others to determine the effects of the proposed action on historic properties and culture resources. The SHPO concurred that the proposed action could result in adverse affects on cultural resources located on Akun Island. SHPO, DOT&PF, and FAA entered into a MOA to address impacts to historic and cultural resources. The MOA addresses adverse affects to the Surf Bay Archaeological District. Consulting parties on the MOA include FAA, SHPO, and DOT&PF. DOT&PF is an invited signatory; FAA and SHPO are signatories on the MOA. The Advisory Council on Historic Preservation was invited to participate in the MOA; however, the Council chose not to participate in the MOA. The Akutan Traditional Council, Akutan Corporation, and Aleut Corporation declined participation in the MOA. Stipulations within the MOA are discussed in Appendix C to the FEA and in Section 5 of the FEA.

7. Section 10 of the Rivers and Harbors Act (33 U.S.C. § 403)

Approval required for any structures to be placed in navigable waters of the U.S., or for work in or affecting navigable waters of the U.S. DOT&PF has submitted permit applications to USACE for authorization under the Rivers and Harbors Act. Compliance with forthcoming permit conditions will be required to implement the proposed action.

8. Sections 401, 402, and 404 of the Clean Water Act (CWA) (33 U.S.C. §§ 1341, 1342, 1344)

DOT&PF has submitted permit applications which it has submitted to USACE for authorization to fill wetlands under Section 404 of the CWA. DOT&PF will submit applications to EPA as

appropriate for required authorizations under Section 402 of the CWA for discharges into waters of the U.S. DOT&PF is seeking certification from Alaska Department of Environmental Conservation that the projects would meet discharge requirements of Section 401. Compliance with forthcoming permit conditions and certifications will be required to implement the proposed action.

9. FAA Authorizing Legislation (49 U.S.C. § 47107(a)(16); 40 U.S.C. § 47104)

DOT&PF submitted an Airport Layout Plan and applications for Airport Improvement Program funding to FAA for review and consideration. This FONSI/ROD contains conditions for these approvals.

10. Federal Highway Administration Authorizing Legislation

The Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) would fund a portion of the proposed action. FHWA authorizing legislation includes the following: (1) The Emergency Supplemental Appropriations Act for Defense, the Global War on Terror, and Tsunami Relief, 2005 (Public Law No. 109-13); (2) The Safe, Accountable, Flexible, Efficient Transportation Equity Act: A Legacy for Users (Public Law No. 109-59); and (3) The Consolidated Appropriations Act of 2004 (Public Law No. 108-199). FHWA is a cooperating agency for purposes of this EA.

STATE-RELATED APPROVALS

1. Leasing and Permitting of State-owned Lands (11 AAC §§ 58, 62.690-730, 96)

DOT&PF submitted a land use application to the Alaska Department of Natural Resources (ADNR) Division of Mining, Land, and Water (DMLW) for use of State-owned lands, such as the intertidal land needed to construct the hovercraft landing pad on Akun and the hovercraft ramp at the head of Akutan Harbor. Issuance of a permit or other land use authorization by the ADNR-DMLW and adherence by DOT&PF and airport operators to any conditions of approval would demonstrate compliance with this program. Consultations between DOT&PF and ADNR have occurred indicating required approvals will be obtained.

2. Public Safety Permit (5 AAC §92.033).

Permit for Scientific, Educational, Propagative, or Public Safety Purposes (5 AAC §92.033). A public safety permit for the taking of game species is necessary for all direct wildlife control operations. Issuance of a permit or other land use authorization by the ADFG and adherence by DOT&PF and airport operators to any conditions of approval would demonstrate compliance with this program. Consultations between DOT&PF and ADFG have occurred indicating required approvals will be obtained.

3. Anadromous Fish Act (AS § 41.14.870).

Requires that an individual or governmental agency notify and obtain approval from ADNR for all activities within or across a specified anadromous water body and all instream activities affecting a specified anadromous water body. Issuance of a permit or other land use authorization by the ADNR and adherence by DOT&PF and airport operators to any conditions

of approval would demonstrate compliance with this program. Consultations between DOT&PF and ADNR have occurred indicating required approvals will be obtained.

4. Fishway Act (AS §41.14.840).

Requires that an individual or governmental agency notify and obtain authorization from the ADNR for activities within or across a stream used by fish if the ADNR determines that such uses or activities could represent an impediment to the efficient passage of fish. Issuance of a permit or other land use authorization by the ADNR and adherence by DOT&PF and airport operators to any conditions of approval would demonstrate compliance with this program. Consultations between DOT&PF and ADNR have occurred indicating required approvals will be obtained.

5. Alaska Coastal Management Program (6 AAC 80).

The ACMP establishes standards against which the Airport actions may be evaluated, including requirements for management of coastal habitat and protection and preservation of land, air, and water quality. The Coastal Management Program manages the Consistency Review that ensures consideration of and compliance with all applicable requirements. DOT&PF has submitted a letter indicating its intent to comply with the ACMP.

SUMMARY OF PUBLIC AND AGENCY INVOLVEMENT

Chapter 6 of the EA contains a description of public and agency involvement. In compliance with 49 U.S.C. § 47016(c)(A)(i), the DOT&PF issued an opportunity for a public hearing. It held that hearing on the draft Environmental Assessment (DEA) in Anchorage, Alaska, in November of 2007. At his hearing the public had opportunities to discuss the draft EA with DOT&PF, FAA and the EA's preparation team. The FAA and DOT&PF also held a meeting at during November 2007 with public officials and consulting and interested agencies to discuss their comments on the draft EA.

Prior to preparing and publishing the draft EA, DOT&PF conducted a pre-NEPA public scoping meeting in September 1999. The meeting included a project overview and opportunity for public comment. At the end of July 2004, community members were sent a newsletter that updated them about the airport project. The newsletter included contact information, a project summary, and a description and map of the airport and access alternatives. Newsletters and flyers were also sent to prominent community locations, like the city office, post office, and Trident Seafoods' Akutan office to make project information and contacts available to interested parties. In August of 2004, comments were collected by an HDR representative in Akutan. Phone correspondence with the public occurred between July and September of 2004. In June of 2005, HDR representatives met with community members to discuss locating an airport on Akun Island.

Resource agencies were also involved in the NEPA process. A pre-NEPA scoping meeting was held on May 29, 2003 in Anchorage. A month long comment period followed the meeting. Individual interviews, either in person or by telephone, were conducted with agencies to gather

formal NEPA scoping comments between July and September 2004. Coordination occurred with sixteen agencies. A scoping meeting to discuss the Akun Alternative was held on August 4, 2005 in Anchorage. Twelve agency and government representatives attended the meeting. Another agency meeting was held on September 8, 2005 in Anchorage. Four agency and government representatives attended this meeting to discuss the Akun Alternative. On March 20, 2006, a project update meeting was held. Fourteen agency and government representatives attended the meeting, and two representatives participated through teleconference. On January 24, 2007, a meeting was held to discuss project mitigation measures, and on May 17, 2007, another agencies meeting was held to discuss the project.

SUMMARY OF REQUIRED ENVIRONMENTAL DETERMINATIONS

In accordance with applicable law, the FAA makes the following determinations for this project based upon the appropriate information and data contained in the EA and the administrative record.

1. The Preferred Alternative is reasonably consistent with existing plans of public agencies responsible for development in the area (49 U.S.C. § 47106(a)(1)). The determination prescribed by this statutory provision is necessary for FAA approval of airport project funding applications. To make this determination FAA considered the following local land use and development plans:

A number of local, area, and statewide documents support an airport on Akun Island:

- The City of Akutan Community Plan, completed in June 2005, identifies five key planning goals for the community (Aurora Consulting 2005). Akutan's primary goal (Goal 1) is to "plan for, develop, and seek funding for adequate and safe community-wide infrastructure to support community needs and economic development opportunities." The first objective listed to achieve this goal is to "choose an airport location and support its development."
- On August 31, 2006, the Aleutians East Borough stated in a letter to the Office of the Governor that the Akutan Airport Project is the Borough's highest ranked airport project.
- A land-based airport in Akutan is also listed as a priority project in the Southwest Alaska Municipal Conference's Southwest Alaska Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (SWAMC 2004).
- The airport dimensions recommended in the draft Akutan Airport Master Plan are recognized in the 2004 Southwest Alaska Transportation Plan (DOT&PF 2004).
- Ordinance 06-01 adopted by the City of Akutan on February 24, 2006 authorized the acquisition of property from the Akutan Corporation at the proposed Akun Airport site for the purpose of construction of an airport and associated facilities and access road.
- The Akutan Corporation, in Resolution 05-05 signed on November 23, 2005, conveyed land on Akun Island to the City of Akutan for a land-based airport.
- The City of Akutan adopted Resolution No 06-04 on February 24, 2006 which approved a co-sponsorship agreement with the Aleutians East Borough and the DOT&PF for a land based airport. The Aleutians East Borough adopted a similar resolution (Resolution No. 06-

18) on February 21, 2006. The co-sponsorship agreement formally establishes responsibilities associated with a new airport and public access facilities.

- On April 28, 2006 in Resolution 06-07, the City of Akutan approved a local contribution of funds to help support an Akutan Airport grant application.
- In Resolution 06-06, signed on September 10, 2005, the Aleutians East Borough Assembly supported a joint funding approach of the Akutan Airport Project.
- The proposed action is consistent with other state and local plans including the ACMP and the *Draft Aleutians East Borough Coastal Management Plan.*
- The USACE has proposed to build a boat harbor at the head of Akutan Harbor. The hovercraft storage area, located adjacent to the new boat harbor, would be consistent with the uses of the new boat harbor.
- The City and Borough Assembly have approved an Airport Master Plan. The Airport Master Plan identifies the needs for and the objectives of the action evaluated in the EA. The selected alternative is consistent with the Airport Master Plan.
- The selected alternative has been developed to avoid the creation of waterfowl attractants, and in the case of the wildlife hazard management plan, to reduce existing attractants.

In light of the above, FAA finds that the project is consistent with the existing land use and development plans of public agencies in the area of the proposed airport.

2. The Secretary of Transportation is satisfied that the interests of communities in or near the project location have been given fair consideration (49 U.S.C. § 47106(b)(2)). The determination prescribed by this statutory provision is necessary for FAA approval of airport development project funding applications. The local planning process over the past 8 years, beginning with the development of the Airport Master Plan and preparation of a draft environmental assessment, provided numerous opportunities for communities and residents to voice concerns and specific interests.

DOT&PF conducted a pre-NEPA public scoping meeting in Akutan in September 1999. The meeting included a project overview and opportunity for public comment. Twelve people signed in, and others attended and did not sign in. At the end of July 2004, community members were sent a newsletter that updated them about the airport project. The newsletter included contact information, a project summary, and a description and map of the airport and access alternatives. Newsletters and flyers were also sent to prominent community locations, like the city office, post office, and Trident Seafoods' Akutan office to make project information and contacts available to interested parties. In August of 2004 comments were collected by an HDR representative in Akutan. Phone correspondence with the public occurred between July and September of 2004.

DOPTF continued to solicit local input, beginning with public and agency scoping. The residents of Akutan have had the opportunity to express their views during the DEA comment period, at public meetings and public hearings for the DEA, and during the 45-day review period following public issuance of the DEA, including a public meeting to discuss the final EA on November 13, 2007. FAA solicitation of public and community input, from oral comment at informal meetings and public hearings to written comment during scoping and document review periods,

provided opportunities for communities and residents to influence the scope of the EA, alternatives considered, and impact analysis methods. The FAA's consideration of community interests, including those of federal, state, and local officials, public organizations, and individuals are set forth in Chapter 6 of the EA. In light of the above, the FAA has determined that throughout the environmental process leading up to publication of the EA, beginning at its earliest planning stages, fair consideration was given to the interest of communities in or near the project location.

3. To the extent reasonable, the Airport Sponsor has taken or will take actions to restrict land uses in the airport vicinity to ensure the uses are compatible with airport operations (49 U.S.C. 47107.(a)(10)).

- Akun Island is an uninhabited island located just east of Akutan. Akun Island is home to approximately 1,200 cattle that are owned by the Aleut Corporation. Fencing will be installed to keep cattle away from the runway, the airport facilities, and the access road.
- On March 6, 2007 the Airport provided written assurance to the FAA that appropriate actions have been or will be taken to ensure that land uses in the vicinity of the airport are currently compatible and will be compatible with airport operations.
- The Airport Sponsor is working with the City of Akutan to ensure that zoning ordinances limit land uses in the vicinity of the Airport to those that are compatible with airport operations. Most of Akun Island is undeveloped; however, there are two cabins and the partially buried remains of an older structure at Surf Bay. The FAA is satisfied that the airport sponsor has taken and will continue to take actions necessary to restrict land uses in the Airport vicinity to ensure the allowed uses are compatible with Airport operations.

4. In accordance with EO 11990 (Wetlands), FAA has determined that there is no practicable alternative that would enable FAA's Preferred Alternative to avoid wetlands. As a result, the Preferred Alternative includes all practicable measures to minimize unavoidable harm to wetlands. These findings are based upon the analysis contained in the EA, as well as correspondence and consultation with the USACE.

5. In accordance with EO 11988 (Floodplains), FAA has determined that there is no practicable alternative that would enable FAA's Preferred Alternative to avoid floodplains. As a result, the Preferred Alternative conforms to applicable floodplain protection standards. These findings are based upon the analysis contained in the EA, as well as correspondence and consultation with the USACE.

6. The sponsor has certified that it will implement the proposed activities in accordance with the enforceable policies of the state's Coastal Zone Management Plan. FAA has received a letter from the project sponsor documenting this certification.

7. While the Preferred Alternative may result in slightly greater impacts to subsistence resources used by local native community (minority and low income populations) relative to other alternatives, such impacts on low income populations or minority populations will not be significantly adverse or disproportional because airport construction on Akun Island will provide offsetting benefits to these communities. As described under Purpose and Need, loss of aircraft

access to this region would result in adverse economic and other impacts on the community. Loss of aircraft service would also impact the ability of the community to grow economically due to the loss of jobs and potential increased costs of goods and services. Available information and community input indicate that the benefits associated with airport construction outweigh the potential impacts on subsistence resources. Additionally, the Preferred Alternative best meets the Purpose and Need and for other reasons constitutes the Environmentally Preferred Alternative.

AGENCY FINDINGS

Based on the EA prepared for this project, a FONSI/ROD was issued. Both the EA and the FONSI/ROD are hereby incorporated into this decision. After careful and thorough consideration of the facts contained in the FONSI/ROD and in the attached EA, the undersigned concurs that the proposed Federal action with the required mitigation discussed in this FONSI/ROD is consistent with existing national environmental policies and objectives as set forth in section 101 (a) of the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) 42 U.S.C §4331(a) and that it will not significantly affect the quality of the human environment or otherwise include any condition requiring consultation pursuant to section 102(2)(C) of NEPA, 42 U.S.C §4332(2)(c). As a result, FAA will not prepare an EIS for this action.

DECISIONS AND ORDERS

The undersigned has carefully considered the FAA's goals and objectives in relation to various aeronautical aspects of the proposed development actions discussed in the Final EA. The review included the Purpose and Need that the projects would serve, the alternative means of achieving the Purpose and Need for the project, the environmental impacts of a range of alternatives, and the mitigation necessary to preserve and enhance the human, cultural, and natural environment.

The undersigned finds that the proposed Federal action is consistent with existing national environmental policies and objectives as set forth in Section 101 (a) of the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) and that it will not significantly affect the quality of the human environment or otherwise include any condition requiring consultation pursuant to Section 102 (2) (C) of NEPA. Based on the above analysis, the FAA has determined that construction of a land-based airport on Akun Island, Alaska, is both the Preferred Alternative and the environmentally preferred alternative.

Under the authority delegated to me by the Administrator of the FAA, the undersigned finds that the project in this FONSI/ROD is reasonably supported. The undersigned, therefore, directs that actions be taken to carry out the following agency actions, including:

1. Determinations under 40 U.S.C. §§ 47106 and 47107 pertaining to FAA funding of airport development, including approval of the revised Airport Layout Plan (ALP) in accordance with 49 U.S.C. § 47107(a)(16) for the selected alternative, summarized in Section 2 of the EA and this FONSI/ROD and including the following elements:

- Project designs
- Site Preparation

- Runway, Taxiway, and Runway Safety Area Construction
- Aviation Facilities Development
- Hovercraft Storage Facilities Construction
- Other Landside Development including the SREB and airport access road
- Environmental Mitigation

2. Approval under 49 U.S.C. § 47107 *et seq.* of project eligibility for Federal grant-in-aid funds under 49 U.S.C. § 47104 as well as approval.

3. Determination and actions, through the aeronautical study process of any off-airport obstacles that might be obstructions to the navigable airspace under the standards and criteria of 14 CFR Part 77. In addition, evaluation of the appropriateness of proposals for on-airport development from an airspace utilization and safety perspective based on aeronautical studies conducted pursuant to the processes under the standards and criteria of 14 CFR Part 157.

4. Approval of protocols for maintaining coordination among sponsor offices, construction personnel, and appropriate FAA program offices, ensuring safety during construction.

5. Finally, based upon the administrative record of this project, the undersigned certifies, as prescribed by 49 U.S.C. § 4502 (b), that implementation of the proposed project is reasonably necessary for use in air commerce.

APPROVED AND ORDERED

12/26/07

Byron K. Huffman
Airports Division Manager, Alaskan Region

Date

RIGHT OF APPEAL

This FONSI/ROD presents the FAA's final decision and approvals for the actions identified, including those taken under the provisions of 49 U.S.C. Subtitle VII, Parts A and B. This decision constitutes a final order of the FAA Administrator subject to review by the Court of Appeals of the United States in accordance with the provisions of 40 U.S.C. §46110. Any party seeking to stay the implementation of the ROD must file an application with the FAA prior to seeking judicial relief, as provided in Rule 18(a), Federal Rules of Appellate Procedure.