

INTRODUCTION

FAA is the Federal agency responsible for providing the nation with a safe, efficient, civil aviation system. FAA's Office of Airports (ARP) is the FAA organization responsible for FAA decisions on major Federal actions at public-use airports.

ARP's mission. The mission of FAA's Airports organization is to provide leadership in planning and developing a safe, efficient national airport system to satisfy the needs of the aviation interests of the United States. In carrying out this mission, ARP will consider economics, environmental compatibility, and local proprietary rights, and safeguard the public investment.¹

Purpose of this Order. This Order provides information to ARP personnel and others interested in fulfilling National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) requirements for airport actions under FAA's authority. This Order is part of FAA's effort to ensure its personnel have clear instructions to address potential environmental effects resulting from major airport actions. In preparing Order 5050.4B, ARP has made it consistent with Order 1050.1E.²

Information on Federal environmental laws other than NEPA appears in another document entitled, *An Environmental Desk Reference for Airport Actions*. ARP will publish notices in the *Federal Register* announcing the *Desk Reference's* availability.

Updating this Order. As needed, ARP will publish in the *Federal Register* a notice of proposed changes to this Order for public review and comment. ARP will do so after coordinating those changes with the Office of the Secretary of Transportation, FAA's Office of the Chief Counsel, and FAA's Office of Environment and Energy to ensure Departmental and agency concurrence.

The proposed changes will appear on the ARP web page. The *Federal Register* notice mentioned previously will provide the internet address where interested parties may find those changes. Interested parties without internet access may request a free CD-ROM version or a paper copy of the proposed text. ARP will issue updates to the *Desk Reference* mentioned above on a special ARP web page.

Updating the *Desk Reference*. ARP will also issue notices when it updates the *Desk Reference* to reflect changes in environmental laws, regulations, or executive orders other

¹ http://www.faa.gov/about/office_org/headquarters_offices/arp/.

² *Environmental Policies and Procedures* at www.faa.gov/regulations_policies/orders_notices/media/ALL1050-1E.pdf.

than NEPA. ARP will also notify airport associations of updates and request their cooperation in distributing new information.

The need to consider an action's environmental impacts. In passing NEPA, Congress recognized the importance of restoring and preserving environmental quality and declared:

“the continuing policy of the Federal Government, in cooperation with State and local governments, and other concerned public and private organizations, is to use all practicable means and measures, including financial and technical assistance, in a manner calculated to foster and promote the general welfare, to create and maintain conditions under which man and nature can exist in productive harmony, and fulfill the social, economic, and other requirements of present and future generations of Americans.” (42 U.S.C. Section 4331).

Through NEPA, Congress requires Federal agencies to consider the environmental effects of proposed actions and their reasonable alternatives.

Considering environmental impacts is the agency's responsibility. FAA begins its consideration of environmental issues early in its decision making process. Eventually, when selecting a preferred alternative, the approving FAA official often finds that FAA's mission has unavoidable environmental impacts.

The NEPA document. To select a preferred alternative under NEPA, the approving FAA official considers the environmental effects a proposed action and its reasonable alternatives would cause in meeting a defined purpose and need. During that process, the official also considers the safety, economic, technical, and engineering factors of those alternatives.

To consider the environmental effects of the no action alternative, the proposed action and its reasonable alternatives, ARP prepares or reviews environmental documents describing environmental effects proposed airport actions would cause. The Environmental Assessments (EA) ARP personnel review or the Environmental Impact Statements (EIS) they prepare provide interdisciplinary analyses showing that FAA officials have taken “ a hard look” at the environmental impacts a proposed action and its reasonable alternatives would cause.

The documents also allow FAA to provide interested agencies and the public the opportunity to review the scientific and technical information ARP personnel consider. This information focuses on environmental impacts and the conceptual measures that would mitigate those effects. Finally, EAs and EISs provide agencies and the public with information so they can comment on those impacts and FAA's analyses of them.

When an EA is prepared, FAA may issue a Finding of No Significant Impact to present its determination that an action would not significantly affect environmental resources. Conversely, its review of an EA may show that an EIS is needed because the actions

would significantly affect those resources. After completing an EIS, FAA prepares a Record of Decision to explain the decisionmaker's rationale for selecting FAA's preferred alternative. Regardless of the document prepared, the NEPA process leads to a final FAA decision to approve or not approve a proposed airport action.