



**DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION  
FEDERAL AVIATION ADMINISTRATION  
SOUTHERN REGION  
ATLANTA, GEORGIA**

**RECORD OF DECISION  
FOR  
PROPOSED AIRPORT RELOCATION PROJECT**

**AT  
PANAMA CITY-BAY COUNTY  
INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT  
PANAMA CITY, FLORIDA**

**September 15, 2006**

## Final EIS Errata Sheet

The following list contains minor changes and corrections to the Final EIS that were identified during the Final Environmental Impact Statement comment period:

1. The final paragraph on page 2-5 should be placed under the heading of *Ultimate Development Components Beyond 2018* but preceding the accompanying bullets. In addition, the *Ultimate Development Components Beyond 2018* section, once revised as indicated above, should be labeled as Section 2.2.3, and the text under the heading *Composite Redevelopment Scenario for the Existing Site* should be labeled as Section 2.2.4.
2. Section 4.23 includes an incorrect reference to the Panama City Metropolitan Planning Organization. The correct name of the organization is the Bay County Transportation Planning Organization.
3. Section 5.8.4.2 reads “The potential mitigation options would be similar for this alternative as those discussed in Section 5.8.3.1.” The correct reference is to Section 5.8.4.1.
4. The stepped retention system description in Section 5.8.4.3 was included in error and should be deleted.
5. In the second sentence of the first paragraph in Section 5.11.2.3, “Pine Log State Park” should be revised to “Pine Log State Forest.”
6. In Table 5-92, Biotic Communities/Listed Species and Surface Transportation Impacts for the West Bay Site should have read “potential” for cumulative impacts.
7. Appendix R, Mitigation Commitments, Endangered and Threatened Species: In the first bullet, “...acres of...” should be deleted to be consistent with the other sections of the FEIS that use the same sentence.

Panama City-Bay County International Airport  
Record of Decision

<b>Table of Contents</b>		<b>Page</b>
1.0	Introduction.....	4
2.0	Background.....	6
3.0	Requested Federal Actions and Approvals.....	10
3.1	Federal Actions and Approvals.....	10
3.2	List of Federal and State Permits and Approvals.....	10
4.0	Aviation Forecasts.....	12
5.0	Purpose and Need.....	16
5.1	Purpose.....	16
5.2	Need.....	17
6.0	Alternatives Analysis.....	19
6.1	Level 1 Screening.....	19
6.1.1	Meet FAA Safety and Design Standards.....	19
6.1.2	Provide for Demand within the Market Area.....	20
6.1.3	Compatibility with Airspace Configuration and Utilization .....	20
6.1.4	Level 1 Findings.....	21
6.2	Level 2 Screening.....	21
6.2.1	Impacts to the Natural Environment.....	21
6.2.2	Community Impacts.....	23
6.2.3	Level 2 Findings.....	23
6.3	Description of Alternatives Retained for Detailed Consideration.....	24
6.4	Comparison of Impacts.....	27
7.0	Environmentally Preferred Alternative, Agency Preferred Alternative, and Selected Alternative .....	33
7.1	Environmentally Preferred Alternative .....	33
7.2	FAA’s Preferred Alternative.....	33
7.3	Selected Alternative .....	37
8.0	Public Outreach, Agency, and Tribal Coordination.....	38
8.1	Public Involvement and Agency Coordination.....	38
8.2	Additional Agency Coordination.....	40
8.3	Tribal Coordination.....	42
8.4	Permits.....	42
9.0	Environmental Impacts and Mitigation Measures.....	43
9.1	Noise and Compatible Land Use.....	46
9.2	Social/Induced Impacts.....	46
9.3	Environmental Justice.....	47
9.4	Air Quality.....	47
9.5	Water Quality.....	48
9.6	Historical, Architectural, Archaeological and Cultural Resources, DOT Section 4(f), and Section 6(f) Properties.....	52
9.7	Biotic Communities.....	53
9.8	Endangered and Threatened Species.....	55
9.9	Wetlands.....	56
9.10	Floodplains.....	57
9.11	Coastal Zone Management Program and Coastal Barriers.....	58
9.12	Wild and Scenic Rivers.....	58
9.13	Farmlands.....	58
9.14	Energy Supply and Natural Resources.....	59
9.15	Light Emissions.....	59
9.16	Solid Waste Impact.....	59
9.17	Hazardous Materials.....	59
9.18	Construction Impacts.....	60
9.19	Surface Transportation.....	60
9.20	Surface Transportation Noise.....	62
9.21	Design, Art, and Architecture.....	62

Panama City-Bay County International Airport  
Record of Decision

9.22	Secondary and Cumulative Impacts.....	62
10.0	Comments on the Final EIS.....	66
11.0	Agency Findings.....	67
12.0	Conditions of Approval.....	75
13.0	Decision and Order.....	76

**Tables**

Table 1	– Comparison of Airport Sponsor’s Forecasts and FAA 2003 TAF for Passenger Enplanements And Total Operations for PFN.....	13
Table 2	– Comparison of 2003 and 2005 FAA TAF for Passenger Enplanements And Total Operations for PFN.....	14
Table 3	– Comparison of Airport Sponsor’s Forecasts and 2005 FAA TAF Forecasts for Passenger Enplanements And Total Operations for PFN.....	15
Table 4	– Environmental Consequences Summary Matrix – 2008.....	28
Table 5	– Environmental Consequences Summary Matrix – 2018.....	30
Table 6	– Secondary and Cumulative Impact Categories.....	32
Table 7	– Required Mitigation Measures.....	44
Table 8	– Biotic Communities Impacts (acres).....	53

**Figures**

Figure 1	– Airport Land Use Map.....	Following Page 5
Figure 2	– Airport Location Map.....	Following Page 9
Figure 3	– Jurisdictional Wetlands with Overlay of Airport Sponsor’s Proposed Project.....	Following Page 65
Figure 4	– Mitigation Parcels.....	Following Figure 3

**Appendix**

Appendix A	– August 29, 2006 Correspondence from the USACE
Appendix B	– Responses to Comments on the FEIS
Appendix C	– NAVAIDS Table
Appendix D	– Runway Length Analysis Memo
Appendix E	– Biological Opinion
Appendix F	– Coastal Zone Consistency
Appendix G	– Post Final EIS Correspondence from the USFWS and NMFS
Appendix H	– Memorandum of Agreement
Appendix I	– Airport Sponsor Mitigation Commitment Table
Appendix J	– Land Donation Agreement
Appendix K	– Mitigation Plan
Appendix L	– Airport Sponsor Assurance Letters
Appendix M	– September 8, 2006 Correspondence from the Airport Sponsor

## 1.0 INTRODUCTION

This Record of Decision (ROD) provides final agency determination and approvals for those federal actions by the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) necessary for the proposed relocation of the Panama City-Bay County International Airport (PFN).

The FAA identified its preferred alternative in a Final Environmental Impact Statement (Final EIS) and designates the selected alternative in this ROD. The FAA identified the West Bay Site 8,400 foot Alternative, the Airport Sponsor's Proposed Project (Proposed Project), as its preferred alternative in the Final EIS. As summarized here and more fully described in Section 2.2.2 of the Final EIS, the Proposed Project consists of relocation of the existing PFN airport to a new location in Bay County, Florida, called the West Bay Site. The relocation of the airport includes, but is not limited to, construction of a primary air carrier runway 8,400 feet in length, a crosswind runway 5,000 feet in length, airside and landside facilities to support the runway operations (such as taxiways, aprons, a commercial passenger terminal, access roads and parking, fuel storage facilities, an Air Traffic Control Tower, etc.), general aviation and fixed base operator facilities, and navigation aids. See Section 2.2.2 of the Final EIS for a full description of the proposed project.

The proposed project is identified as Phase 1 (initial development area) on **Figure 1** of this ROD. The federal actions requested of the FAA are described in detail in Section 3 of this ROD. The FAA's reasons for selecting the West Bay Site 8,400 foot Alternative for Airport Layout Plan (ALP) approval, required by 40 CFR 1505.2, are described in Section 7 of this ROD. Finally, the FAA's specific decision and order approving FAA's federal actions for the project is located in Section 13 of this ROD.

The FAA is selecting and granting approval of a layout plan for the FAA's preferred alternative, the West Bay Site 8,400 foot Alternative, with the conditions noted in Section 12 of this ROD. The FAA is also approving related agency actions necessary to support the FAA's preferred alternative except for decisions concerning federal funding, transfer of the Airport Sponsor's grant obligations to the relocated airport, decommissioning (closing) of aviation facilities at the Existing Site, and release for disposal of the Existing Site for non-aeronautical use.

This ROD completes the FAA's thorough and objective environmental decision-making process, including FAA's public disclosure and review by the FAA decisionmaker of the analysis of impacts described in the May 2006 *Proposed Relocation of the Panama City-Bay County International Airport Final EIS*. This ROD has been prepared and issued by the FAA in compliance with the National Environmental Policy Act of 1969 (NEPA) [42 U.S.C. Section 4321, et seq.], the implementing regulations of the Council on Environmental Quality (CEQ) [40 CFR Parts 1500-1508] and FAA directives [Order 1050.1E and Order 5050.4A<sup>1</sup>]. The ROD is also used to demonstrate and document the FAA's compliance with the procedural and substantive requirements and environmental, programmatic, and related statutes and regulations that apply to FAA decisions and actions on proposed airport projects.

The United States Army Corps of Engineers (USACE) was a cooperating agency in preparing this EIS because the proposed relocation project requires a permit to fill wetlands from the USACE under Section 404 of the Clean Water Act. During the preparation of the Draft and Final EIS, the FAA worked closely with the USACE, the cooperating agency. The USACE has informed the FAA that the FAA's selected alternative is considered the USACE least environmentally damaging practicable alternative. See **Appendix A** of this ROD.

---

<sup>1</sup> The Final EIS was substantially complete prior to the final issuance of FAA Order 5050.4B in April 2006. Therefore, preparation of the Final EIS was undertaken in accordance with FAA Order 5050.4A.

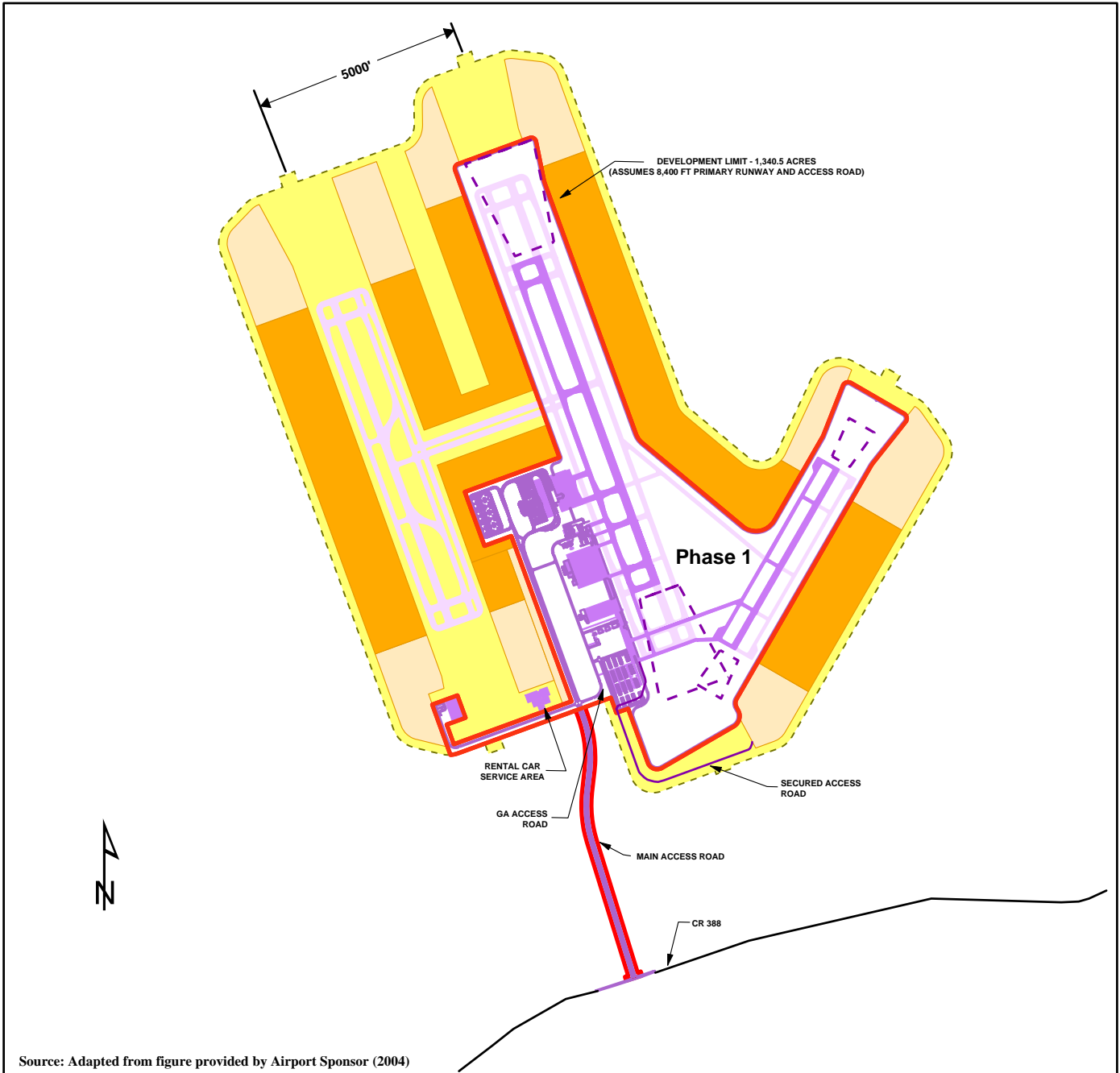
Panama City-Bay County International Airport  
Record of Decision

In addition, the FAA coordinated extensively with other federal, state, local, and tribal entities throughout the EIS process, including the United States Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), United States Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS), the National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS), the Advisory Council on Historic Preservation (ACHP), the Florida Department of Environmental Protection (FDEP), the Florida Division of Historic Resources, the Florida Department of Transportation (FDOT), Bay County, and local municipalities. The FAA also coordinated with other interest groups and the general public to facilitate consideration of key issues and an understanding of the proposed actions. Section 8 of this ROD describes in detail the FAA's tribal, public, and agency coordination activities for this project. Through the FAA's coordination with federal, state, and local agencies, public individuals, and public organizations, comments were solicited on the Draft EIS and responses to those comments were provided in the Final EIS. Comments were solicited on the Final EIS because new and additional information regarding redevelopment of the Existing Site became available after FAA's publication of the Draft EIS. Responses to these comments are included in **Appendix B** of this ROD.

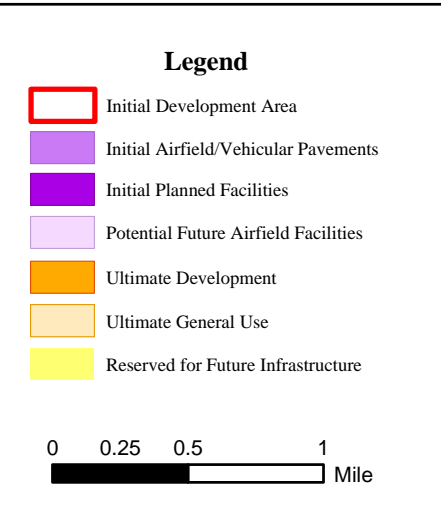
The FAA is responsible for the preparation and content of the Final EIS and this ROD. The FAA is also responsible for reviewing and independently verifying the accuracy of any environmental information provided by outside entities. In developing the Final EIS, the FAA relied on certain information prepared by outside sources as permitted by 40 CFR 1506.5. In keeping with its oversight responsibility, the FAA consistently exercised control over the scope, content, and development of the Final EIS. The FAA selected a Third Party Contractor (TPC) to assist in the preparation of the Final EIS. The FAA also utilized its own resources, as well as the resources of the TPC, to independently evaluate any environmental information and other submissions provided by the Panama City-Bay County International Airport and Industrial District (Airport Sponsor) or other entities.

The FAA is responsible for the accuracy of all information within the EIS and ROD. The FAA/TPC independently and extensively reviewed the Airport Sponsor-provided information utilized in the EIS. The FAA believes that the degree of supervision that it exercised over the TPC, and its participation in the preparation of the EIS, fully maintained the integrity and objectivity of the EIS and ROD.

**This Page Intentionally Left Blank**



Source: Adapted from figure provided by Airport Sponsor (2004)



**Figure 1**  
**Airport**  
**Land Use Map**

Panama City-Bay County  
International Airport EIS



## 2.0 BACKGROUND

### *Airport History and Development*

Aviation facilities in Panama City began as a private field with grass landing strips. The property was donated to the local Chamber of Commerce in 1932 for the purpose of developing a public airport. With the completion of facility improvements in 1938, the airport was renamed Fannin Field or Panama City-Bay County Airport as it was more commonly called. The airport was used as a Civil Air Patrol facility throughout World War II. In 1943, the Florida legislature approved formation of an airport authority, named the Panama City-Bay County Airport and Industrial District. Commercial operations began in 1948 and have continued without interruption.

During the 1970s and 1980s, the airport had a number of airlines serving the facility with jet aircraft. The service was mainly point-to-point and only a few destinations were served, resulting in relatively low overall passenger enplanements (60,000 to 80,000 annually). Passage of the Airline Deregulation Act of 1978 significantly enhanced competition in the airline industry and changed the pattern of service provided to markets such as Panama City. Deregulation enabled airlines to gain more effective control of their operations and led to the establishment of several new airlines, emergence of regional/commuter airlines, creation of the hub-and-spoke system, and increased competition between airlines. This resulted in significant increases in passenger activity for both local and national markets. As a result, PFN's total annual passenger enplanements exceeded 100,000 by 1988.

In 1992, the airport was designated an international airport and renamed the Panama City-Bay County International Airport (PFN). The international designation indicates that the airport can support international arrivals through customs and immigration. Associated with the designation of the airport as an international facility, on-call U.S. Customs and immigration services were made available through the use of the local port facilities.

The airport experienced steady growth during the 1990s as major carriers and their affiliated regional airline partners expanded commercial air service at the airport including use of mainline jet aircraft. Passenger enplanements grew to more than 150,000 annually. The airport completed a major development program in 1996 that included the replacement of the existing commercial terminal building.

In recent years, airlines and their affiliate carriers have modified services offered at PFN in response to changing markets for air service, changes to the fleet mix, including the emergence of the regional jet, and other aviation industry related conditions. While experiencing continued growth in passenger volumes, the level of operational activity at the airport has decreased since 1998, although the recent data indicates fluctuations in operations. Part of the decrease in operations can be explained by the strength of the passenger market resulting in the introduction of larger capacity aircraft. The regional affiliate airlines have begun to replace their fleet of smaller turbo-prop aircraft (like the 30-seat Embraer EMB-120) with aircraft that have greater seating capacity. Examples include the 50-seat Bombardier CRJ-200 and the 64-seat ATR 72. This has allowed airlines to meet growth in passenger demand without adding flights.

With the completion of the *Airport Master Plan Update* in 1996, the Airport Sponsor began considering how to address the future needs at PFN. The *Master Plan Update Narrative* identified extending both runway length and runway safety areas (RSAs) among the future needs.<sup>2</sup> Accordingly, the Airport Sponsor initiated an Environmental Assessment (EA) to consider alternatives for a runway extension at the Existing Site. The EA was intended to address the FAA design standards for the RSAs as well as additional runway length to take advantage of existing and future aviation opportunities. Based on the analyses conducted, the Airport Sponsor's

---

<sup>2</sup> Panama City-Bay County Airport and Industrial District. *Airport Master Plan Update; Volume II: Master Plan Update Narrative*, November 1996.

previous proposal to extend the runway at the existing airport (Runway 14-32) would have resulted in significant adverse environmental impacts to Goose Bayou. Due to the magnitude of the impacts and the concerns expressed by state agencies over whether the impacts could be mitigated, the Airport Sponsor terminated the EA process in 1998.

### **The Proposed Project**

During the analyses conducted for the EA, a concept was discussed regarding the possible relocation of the airport to a new site. As a part of building a support base of community leaders for the concept of a relocated airport, the possibility of land donation further advanced the relocation concept. The timing and potential cost savings enabled the Airport Sponsor and Bay County to begin seriously considering the benefits of providing for the airport's future growth on a new site where compatible land uses could be planned.

Based on the results of the EA, the Airport Sponsor initiated the *Feasibility Study for Panama City–Bay County International Airport*<sup>3</sup> to consider other alternatives to address future needs. In addition to the consideration of onsite improvements at the Existing Site, the *Feasibility Study* evaluated the potential for relocating the airport to avoid the geographical constraints at the Existing Site. Among the issues identified were:

- Lack of land for airfield expansion or ancillary development
- Incompatible land uses surrounding the Existing Site
- Conflicts with Tyndall Air Force Base due to airspace constraints
- Constraints of Goose Bayou to the northwest and SR 390 to the southeast
- Recent damage to airfield facilities from storm surges that had flooded the airport during hurricanes and other severe storms
- Anticipated growth in the region both in terms of population and potential air service

The recommendation of the *Feasibility Study* was to relocate the existing and future operations of PFN to a new site. The Executive Summary of the *Feasibility Study* is included in Appendix C of the Final EIS.

Following the recommendations of the *Feasibility Study*, the Airport Sponsor conducted the *Site Selection Study*<sup>4</sup> to identify preliminary locations for a new airport. The study area was limited to Bay County by the Airport Sponsor. The majority of the Airport's passengers in the primary market area come from, or are destined to, Bay County. See Section 1.6 of the Final EIS. The Airport Sponsor's site selection process identified sites in Bay County that would avoid the constraints identified in the *Feasibility Study*.

The Airport Sponsor is the project sponsor, owner, and operator of the Existing Site. The Airport Sponsor is proposing to relocate the existing airport to a new site in Bay County. The St. Joe Company currently owns the Airport Sponsor's proposed new airport site and proposes to donate the site to the Airport Sponsor. In addition, the St. Joe Company proposes to make additional acreage available for preservation and restoration under a conservation easement for any wetland and habitat mitigation that may be required for the proposed development of a new airport. Under the Airport Sponsor's Proposed Project, the Existing Site facilities are to be decommissioned, and all facilities and operations at the Existing Site will be replaced at and/or relocated to the proposed site. To effectuate relocation of the airport, FAA would need to take separate federal actions, including transfer of the Airport Sponsor's federal grant obligations to the relocated airport, decommissioning of the Existing Site facilities and release for disposal of the Existing Site for

---

<sup>3</sup> *Feasibility Study for Panama City–Bay County International Airport*, Bechtel Infrastructure Corporation, July 2000.

<sup>4</sup> *Panama City-Bay County International Airport Site Selection Study*, Bechtel Infrastructure Corporation, December 2000.

non-aeronautical use. These actions are referred to throughout this ROD as “release and decommissioning.” None of these release and decommissioning actions can occur until a new airport is constructed and ready to begin operation. **Figure 2** of this ROD depicts the Airport Sponsor’s proposed airport relocation site relative to the existing airport site in Bay County.

The Airport Sponsor’s proposed new site would accommodate a proposed airfield layout that has been planned for both short- and long-term aviation needs without being constrained by natural or man-made features. Components of the relocated airport subject to FAA review and approval at this time consist of airfield and terminal facilities, including a primary air carrier runway of 8,400 feet and a general aviation crosswind runway of 5,000 feet, configured in an open V layout. This system would be supported by the necessary ancillary features including parallel and connecting taxiways, terminal area facilities, general aviation facilities, air traffic control and emergency service facilities, lighting, and necessary navigational facilities. These initial development components, identified as Phase 1 on **Figure 1** of this ROD, would be commissioned in 2009.<sup>5</sup>

**Potential for Future Development Beyond the 2018 Timeframe**

Depending upon aviation growth in the Panama City vicinity and the Airport Sponsor’s long-term needs, the airport’s facilities could be expanded beyond the 2018 timeframe to include an extension of the primary air carrier runway, a second parallel air carrier runway, and additional terminal area and ancillary facilities. The Airport Sponsor’s ultimate development scenario would be accomplished through the phased development of requisite facilities as demand for those facilities emerges. Although the Airport Sponsor’s ultimate development scenario is speculative at this time, potential impacts of the ultimate development of the Airport Sponsor’s proposed site are disclosed in the Final EIS, as possible cumulative impacts, for information purposes only. Should future airport development be proposed to be implemented beyond the 2018 timeframe, further evaluation under NEPA will be required. Inclusion of such information in the Final EIS could be a basis for future NEPA documents. In this manner, the FAA could tier subsequent environmental documents evaluating future airport proposals from the Final EIS in compliance with NEPA. See 40 C.F.R. §§1502.20, 1508.28. Therefore, the Final EIS documented and this ROD renders a decision regarding only the identified airport development that is reasonably foreseeable through 2018.

**Redevelopment of the Existing Site**

In October 2005, while the Final EIS was being prepared, the Airport Sponsor distributed a Request for Proposal to Purchase (RFP) the Existing Site in the event that the FAA should approve a West Bay Site alternative. The RFP solicited proposals for redevelopment of the Existing Site and referenced three conceptual mixed use redevelopment options that were prepared in response to public input received through locally-sponsored public hearings. Issuance of the RFP corresponded with publication of the *Background Analysis and Master Planning Report for Redevelopment* (Redevelopment Report<sup>6</sup>). Both the RFP and the Redevelopment Report are available on the Airport Sponsor’s web site ([www.pcairport.com](http://www.pcairport.com)) and are included in Appendix V of the Final EIS. Although the Draft EIS described environmental impacts of redevelopment of the existing airport property based on information then available, the Airport Sponsor’s RFP and Redevelopment Report presented several redevelopment scenarios not previously available for FAA review and consideration.

---

<sup>5</sup> The year 2008 was initially analyzed in the EIS because the FAA anticipated 2008 to be the first year of operation for the Proposed Project based on information from the Airport Sponsor. At this time, it appears that a relocated airport would not be operational in 2008 based upon the time needed for design and construction. Despite the anticipated shift in dates by one year for initial service at the new airport, the environmental conditions (both the affected environment and impacts associated with the project) are not expected to change in any material way. Therefore, the FEIS presents an accurate analysis of environmental impacts associated with the Airport Sponsor’s Proposed Project. The year 2018 remains the future date for purposes of impacts analysis, and would identify impacts approximately ten years after initial operation of the alternatives.

<sup>6</sup> The Redevelopment Report is available for review at the FAA’s Orlando Airports District Office and at the Airport Sponsor’s Airport Administration office.

As referenced in Section 2.2 of the Final EIS, the Airport Sponsor has prepared three redevelopment options, included in the Redevelopment Report, for the Existing Site in the event that the existing airport is relocated. The RFP for reuse of the Existing Airport indicated that the redevelopment options were conceptual and that parties responding to the RFP need not adopt any of the reuse scenarios contained in the accompanying Redevelopment Report. Thus, it is likely that the scenarios presented in the Redevelopment Report could differ from proposals offered in response to the RFP. Therefore, the Redevelopment Report's scenarios cannot be relied upon to accurately represent the ultimate redevelopment plan that would be proposed by the purchaser and approved by state and local agencies.

**Release and Decommissioning**

Sale of the existing airport property and redevelopment of the Existing Site are not part of the Airport Sponsor's Proposed Project evaluated in the Draft and Final EIS. However, redevelopment of the Existing Site is relevant to the environmental analysis contained in the EIS. This is because redevelopment of the Existing Site is an indirect impact of future FAA action to release and decommission the existing airport, and those future FAA actions would not occur but for a decision to relocate PFN. For this reason, the indirect impacts of release and decommissioning, namely, redevelopment of the Existing Site, were evaluated in the EIS.

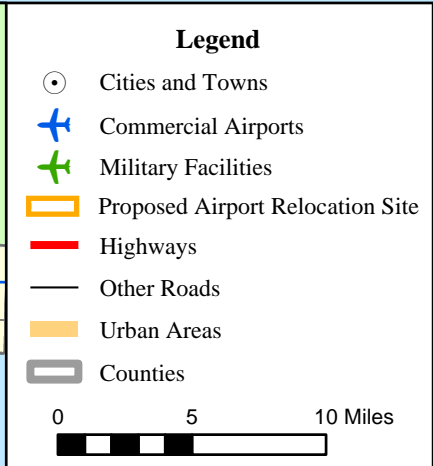
As noted earlier, prior to initiation of air service at the relocated airport, the FAA must transfer the Airport Sponsor's grant obligations to the relocated airport and release and decommission the existing airport. These actions free the Airport Sponsor to sell the property for redevelopment. As a result, FAA has evaluated the impacts of redevelopment in the Draft and Final EIS based on the best information available at the time of each document's release. These impacts are properly considered in the current EIS as indirect impacts of release and decommissioning. *See* Sections 2.2.2 and Chapter 5 of the Draft EIS and Sections 2.2.2, 2.2.3, and Chapter 5 of the Final EIS for discussion of redevelopment impacts.

FAA will undertake further NEPA review of impacts associated with the redevelopment of the Existing Site at the time action on release and decommissioning become ripe for decision by FAA.<sup>7</sup> At that time, it is anticipated that more reliable information will be available regarding the redevelopment plan that will be presented to local and state agencies for permitting and approval. Even if a more definitive plan for redevelopment has not been presented to state and local agencies with approval authority by the time FAA's release and decommissioning actions become ripe for decision, FAA will make reasonable assumptions about the site's reuse to consider the potential impacts of the release and decommissioning decision. In addition to further NEPA evaluation, the FAA will take actions to further coordinate with appropriate federal agencies prior to a decision on release and decommissioning.<sup>8</sup> At the present time, FAA has complied with NEPA regarding disclosure of impacts of redevelopment of the Existing Site to the fullest extent practicable by disclosing such impacts based on the best currently available information. The adequacy of environmental review to support the release and decommissioning of the existing airport property will not be ripe for judicial review until there is final agency action approving these actions.

---

<sup>7</sup> While FAA recognizes that release and decommissioning associated with the Existing Site are related to FAA's decision regarding airport relocation, decisions regarding release and decommissioning are not ripe at this time because the existing airport must continue to operate while the relocated airport is being constructed. The existing airport cannot be released or decommissioned, nor the Airport Sponsor's Federal grant obligations transferred to the relocated airport until such time as a new airport is constructed and prepared to accept aircraft operations.

<sup>8</sup> FAA undertook preliminary outreach to appropriate federal agencies after the RFP and Redevelopment Report were issued. *See* Appendices D, M, and X of the Final EIS and **Appendices B, G, and H** of this ROD for further documentation of FAA's outreach to appropriate federal agencies following the Airport Sponsor's release of the Redevelopment Report and RFP.



**Figure 2**  
**Airport Location Map**  
 Panama City-Bay County  
 International Airport EIS

### **3.0 REQUESTED FEDERAL ACTIONS AND APPROVALS**

The Airport Sponsor has proposed a specific project to meet what it has identified as the existing and future needs of the Panama City–Bay County International Airport. The specific actions associated with the Airport Sponsor’s Proposed Project, which are required for the FAA to respond to the Airport Sponsor’s requests, are included in Section 2.6 of the Final EIS and identified below.

#### **3.1 Federal Actions and Approvals**

- FAA approval of an ALP for the initial development components listed in Section 2.2.2 of the Final EIS.
- FAA consideration and processing of an application for federal funding for those development items qualifying under the Airport and Airway Improvement Act, 49 U.S.C. § 47107, and/or approval to use Passenger Facility Charges (PFCs) pursuant to the Aviation Safety and Capacity Expansion Act of 1990, 49 U.S.C. § 40117, and its implementing regulations under 14 CFR Part 158.<sup>9</sup>
- FAA design, development, approval, and implementation of new flight procedures, including airspace determinations, visual and instrument procedures, missed approach procedures, obstructions, and arrival and departure procedures.
- FAA site selection, purchase, installation, and flight-checking of all necessary navigation aids and lighting systems to support the Airport Sponsor’s Proposed Project.
- Decommissioning of aviation facilities and release for disposal of the Existing Site for non-aeronautical use.
- Transfer of federal grant obligations from existing airport site to relocated airport.

A summary of the purposes, footprint descriptions, and siting criteria of specific equipment and structures to be installed by the FAA is included in **Appendix C** of this ROD. Assessment of the impacts of construction, maintenance, and operation of this equipment and these structures is included as part of the Airport Sponsor’s Proposed Project that is the subject of the Final EIS.

Although decommissioning of aviation facilities and release for disposal of the Existing Site for non-aeronautical use, as well as transfer of federal grant obligations to the relocated airport, are actions requested of FAA in conjunction with the proposed project, a decision on this request is not ripe at this time. Thus, future federal action would be necessary to effectuate these requested actions. At that time, as explained in Section 2 of this ROD, FAA will undertake further NEPA review of the indirect impacts of release and decommissioning the Existing Site, namely, redevelopment and reuse of the site.

#### **3.2 List of Federal and State Permits and Approvals**

The following actions are required by federal agencies (other than the FAA) and state and local agencies for implementation of the Airport Sponsor’s Proposed Project:

- Issuance of a Clean Water Act (CWA) Section 404 permit, including approval of the mitigation plan by the USACE.

---

<sup>9</sup> Environmental requirements for Airport Improvement Act (AIP) funding are similar to other applicable environmental review requirements and so, in accordance with FAA Order 5050.4A, paragraph 94, are addressed as part of the Final EIS and ROD for the ALP. These determinations are a prerequisite to funding and are relied upon in the future for purposes of funding decisions but do not complete the determinations that are necessary for funding. The decision to approve AIP funding relies in part upon the determinations contained in this ROD. Any PFC decision will rely upon the Final EIS and this ROD approving the ALP.

Panama City-Bay County International Airport  
Record of Decision

- Completion of Ecosystem Team Permitting (ETP) process. In October 2005, FDEP issued a Notice of Intent to issue an Ecosystem Management Agreement and related permits for the Airport Sponsor's Proposed Project. (*See* Appendix U of the Final EIS)
- CWA Section 401 Water Quality Certification from FDEP through the ETP process.
- National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System (NPDES) permit (Section 402 of the CWA) from FDEP prior to construction.
- Public Drinking Water Facility Construction Permit, Wastewater Collection/Transmission System Construction Permit, Domestic Wastewater Facility Permit, Industrial Waste Permit, and Air Pollution Permit from FDEP.
- Consumptive Use permit from the Northwest Florida Water Management District.
- Applicable permits from Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission (FWC) to address impacts to state-listed species.
- Formal site approval from Florida Department of Transportation (FDOT) Aviation Office.
- FDOT Aviation Office issuance of license upon completion of construction.
- Approval of non-federal funds for construction of Airport Sponsor's Proposed Project.

The future developer selected by the Airport Sponsor for redevelopment of the Existing Site would be responsible for preparing applications for all required federal, state, and local permits and approvals, including the Development of Regional Impact/Application for Development Approval (Section 380.06, F.S.).

#### 4.0 AVIATION FORECASTS

In the preparation of an EIS, the FAA determines the most appropriate set of forecasts to use that reflect current data and trends and provide the best basis for the assessment of potential environmental effects. The Airport Sponsor prepared forecasts that were included in the 2000 *Feasibility Study*, which provided a review of the existing airport facilities; an overview of historical service; and forecasts of enplanements, fleet mix, and operations. The forecast section presented in the *Feasibility Study* summarized activity over the preceding decade as a basis for the forecasts. Because of the events of September 11, 2001<sup>10</sup> and time that elapsed since the forecasts were prepared for the *Feasibility Study*, and as a part of the ongoing planning process, the Airport Sponsor prepared the *Updated Forecasts* and provided them to the FAA in January 2004. According to the Airport Sponsor, the *Updated Forecasts* reflect an evaluation of the potential for an airport located at the Airport Sponsor's proposed site to serve (1) a larger percentage of travelers in the overall air service area and (2) potential transatlantic charter service.

During the same period, the FAA prepared the 2003 Terminal Area Forecast (TAF), released in February 2004, for PFN. The FAA prepares a TAF each year for each towered airport in the United States. The TAF is prepared by FAA staff using industry-standard methodology including statistical analysis of historical trends, review of recent trends in airline service, and assumptions regarding future developments in the airline industry. The FAA TAF represents the official FAA outlook for each towered airport, and is the standard by which any independently-developed airport forecast is measured.

The FAA reviewed the forecasts prepared for the *Feasibility Study* and the *Updated Forecasts*, and compared those forecasts with the FAA's 2003 TAF. The FAA determined that the 2003 TAF would be used as the basis for the EIS analysis. The 2003 TAF was the FAA's best projection of potential future activity levels at the time the analysis was conducted for the Draft EIS. In addition the Airport Sponsor's *Updated Forecasts* were used in the EIS to disclose the full range of potential environmental impacts.

**Table 1** of this ROD and Table 1-3 of the Final EIS provides a comparison of the forecasts of passenger enplanements and aircraft operations presented in the 2003 FAA TAF and the Airport Sponsor's *Updated Forecasts*. As noted previously, the timeframe for the analyses in the Final EIS is 2008-2018. As shown in **Table 1** of this ROD and Table 1-3 of the Final EIS, the 2003 FAA TAF projects 206,301 enplaned passengers in 2008, and 263,406 enplaned passengers in 2018. In the Airport Sponsor's *Updated Forecasts*, enplanements for the Proposed Project are projected to increase to 276,327 in 2008 and 455,392 in 2018.

---

<sup>10</sup> The events of September 11, 2001, along with a general downturn in the nation's economy, resulted in reductions in air travel nationwide. Generally, the number of air carrier operations on a national level is now at or near the number of operations just prior to September 2001.



Year	Passenger Enplanements			Total Operations		
	2003 TAF <sup>(a)</sup>	Updated Forecasts <sup>(b)</sup>	Percent Difference <sup>(c)</sup>	2003 TAF <sup>(a)</sup>	Updated Forecasts <sup>(b)</sup>	Percent Difference <sup>(c)</sup>
2008	206,301	276,327	33.9%	88,467	96,316	8.9%
2013	234,853	330,040	40.5%	94,872	104,282	9.9%
2018	263,406	455,392	72.9%	101,275	115,073	13.6%

(a) The FAA TAF numbers are for Fiscal Years (FY) ending on September 30 of the stated year (e.g., FY 2003 covers the period from October 1, 2002, to September 30, 2003). The 2003 FAA TAF enplanement numbers do not include non-revenue passengers, which typically account for about 5 percent of the total annual enplanements at PFN, according to the Panama City-Bay County Airport and Industrial District. Non-revenue passengers are included in the *Updated Forecasts*. Non-revenue passengers include airline employees, officers and directors, travel agents, and tour conductors traveling at no or reduced fare remuneration. Infants flying at reduced fare remuneration and not using a seat are also non-revenue passengers.

(b) The Airport Sponsor's *Updated Forecasts* are presented on a calendar year basis and document projected enplanements and operations for the years 2008, 2013, and 2018 within the EIS planning horizon.

(c) Some portion of the percent difference in enplanements is attributable to the fact that the Airport Sponsor's *Updated Forecasts* include non-revenue passengers and the FAA's 2003 TAF does not, and that both enplanements and operations for the TAF are presented in fiscal years and the *Updated Forecasts* are presented in calendar years. Most of the percent difference is attributable to the Airport Sponsor's consideration that an airport located at the proposed site would serve a higher percentage of the overall passengers in the primary and secondary commercial service areas due to its proximity to identified regional leisure destinations, improved overall airport access, and the potential for international charter flights by 2018.

Sources: Ricondo and Associates, Inc., 2004; FAA 2003 Terminal Area Forecast for PFN; *Panama City-Bay County International Airport – Activity Forecasts*, HNTB Corporation, January 2004.

The FAA considers locally developed forecasts to be consistent with the TAF if the forecast differs by less than 10 percent in the five year forecast period and 15 percent in the ten year period, and the forecasts do not affect the timing or scale of an airport project.<sup>11</sup> Based on the comparisons presented in **Table 1** of this ROD and in Table 1-3 of the Final EIS, the differences in forecast operations are less than 10 percent between the *Updated Forecasts* and the 2003 FAA TAF in the five year forecast period and less than 15 percent in the 10 year forecast period, with a difference of 13.6 percent in 2018.

Projections of air carrier and air taxi operations in the forecasts vary over the period, with variations attributed to the forecast numbers of enplaned passengers along with different assumptions in the average number of seats per departure and/or average passenger load factors. The percentage difference between the numbers of commercial operations in the *Updated Forecasts* is 10.9 percent higher in 2008 and 8.3 percent higher in 2013 than those in the FAA TAF. The difference then increases to 19.1 percent in 2018. See Table 1-4 in the Final EIS.

The FAA issued the 2005 TAF for PFN in February 2006, following publication of the Draft EIS. The 2005 FAA TAF shows higher activity levels (for 2008, 2013, and 2018) than presented in the 2003 FAA TAF that was used for the Final EIS, but lower levels than shown in the Airport Sponsor's *Updated Forecasts*. See **Table 2** of this ROD and Table 1-5 of the Final EIS for a comparison of the 2003 and 2005 FAA TAF data. **Table 3** of this ROD and Table 1-6 of the Final EIS provide a comparison of the 2005

<sup>11</sup> Memorandum, "INFORMATION: Revision to Guidance on Review and Approval of Aviation Forecasts", Federal Aviation Administration, Director of Airport Planning and Programming, APP-1, December 23, 2004.

FAA TAF with the Airport Sponsor’s forecasts. The higher level of activity in the 2005 FAA TAF indicates that there is potential for higher aviation demand levels at PFN in future years.<sup>12</sup> The *Updated Forecasts* prepared by the Airport Sponsor consider that an airport at the proposed site would attract more traffic because of its proximity to regional leisure destinations and improved overall airport access. They also reflect the potential for transatlantic charter service by 2018 that a longer runway of 8,400 feet would be able to serve.

As shown in **Table 3** of this ROD and Table 1-6 of the Final EIS, the *Updated Forecasts* and the 2005 FAA TAF are reasonably consistent in terms of operations. The *Updated Forecasts* is considered to reflect the high range of potential activity at PFN. To ensure that the analyses presented in the Final EIS fully disclose the range of potential environmental consequences, both the 2003 FAA TAF and the *Updated Forecasts* were used to evaluate the potential effects of the Airport Sponsor’s Proposed Project and the alternatives.

<b>Table 2 Comparison of 2003 and 2005 FAA TAF for Passenger Enplanements And Total Operations for PFN</b>						
<b>Year</b>	<b>Passenger Enplanements</b>			<b>Total Operations</b>		
	<b>2003 TAF</b>	<b>2005 TAF</b>	<b>Percent Difference</b>	<b>2003 TAF</b>	<b>2005 TAF</b>	<b>Percent Difference</b>
2008	206,301	209,920	1.8%	88,467	94,327	6.6%
2013	234,853	246,605	5.0%	94,872	101,196	6.7%
2018	263,406	289,703	9.9%	101,275	107,787	6.4%

Source: FAA 2003 and 2005 Terminal Area Forecasts for PFN, Kimley-Horn and Associates, Inc., 2006.

<sup>12</sup> Although the 2003 TAF is the FAA’s best projection of aviation activity for purposes of this EIS, all forecasts are subject to a degree of uncertainty. The FAA conducts an annual review of the accuracy of prior TAFs based on actual activity. A recent annual review indicated that the average forecast error in the TAF for a 10-year period was 9 percent for passenger activity and 3 percent for aircraft activity. *FAA Aerospace Forecasts 2005-2016*, USDOT, Office of Aviation Policy and Plans, p. VIII-4, March 2005.

Panama City-Bay County International Airport  
Record of Decision

<b>Table 3 Comparison of Airport Sponsor's Forecasts and 2005 FAA TAF Forecasts for Passenger Enplanements And Total Operations for PFN</b>						
Year	Passenger Enplanements			Total Operations		
	2005 TAF <sup>(a)</sup>	Updated Forecasts <sup>(b)</sup>	Percent Difference <sup>(c)</sup>	2005 TAF <sup>(a)</sup>	Updated Forecasts <sup>(b)</sup>	Percent Difference <sup>(c)</sup>
2008	209,920	276,327	31.6%	94,327	96,316	2.1%
2013	246,605	330,040	33.8%	101,196	104,282	3.0%
2018	289,703	455,392	57.2%	107,787	115,073	6.8%

(a) The FAA TAF numbers are for fiscal years ending on September 30 of the stated year (e.g., FY 2005 covers the period from October 1, 2004, to September 30, 2005).

(b) The Airport Sponsor's *Updated Forecasts* are presented on a calendar year basis and document projected numbers of operations for the years 2008, 2013, and 2018 within the EIS planning horizon.

(c) Percent difference between the FAA's 2005 TAF and the Airport Sponsor's *Updated Forecasts* in future years. Some portion of the percent difference is attributable to the fact that the FAA TAF is presented in fiscal years and the *Updated Forecasts* are presented in calendar years. The most significant portion of the percent difference is attributable to the Airport Sponsor's consideration that an airport located at the proposed site would attract more traffic due to its proximity to identified regional leisure destinations, improved overall airport access, and the potential for international charter flights by 2018.

Sources: Ricondo and Associates, Inc., 2006; FAA 2005 Terminal Area Forecast for PFN; *Panama City-Bay County International Airport – Activity Forecasts*, HNTB Corporation, January 2004.

## 5.0 PURPOSE AND NEED

### 5.1 Purpose

CEQ Regulations implementing NEPA require that the federal agency preparing an EIS include in that document a statement identifying the underlying purpose and need to which the agency is responding in proposing alternatives, including the proposed action (40 CFR 1502.13). The FAA does not initiate airport development projects. Rather, airport improvements are initiated by, and remain the ultimate responsibility of, individual airport sponsors. Nevertheless, in the fulfillment of its NEPA obligations for airport improvement proposals, the FAA makes its own determination of the purpose and need for the proposed action while also being particularly mindful of an airport sponsor's overall goals.

The FAA is charged with implementation of federal policies under its statutory authorities. It is within the framework of the Airport and Airway Improvement Act of 1982, 49 U.S.C. §§ 47101-47131 (as amended), that the FAA is responding to the Airport Sponsor's proposal to relocate the existing airport to West Bay. The FAA, through its own planning process, has refined and expanded the role of airports as components of the national aviation system. The FAA has clearly recognized the need to plan for a system of airports to meet demand for aviation facilities as well as to address a number of national needs and priorities. Development of aviation facilities for Panama City, whether at the current site or elsewhere in the Panama City region, is evaluated using the criteria set forth in the National Plan of Integrated Airport Systems (NPIAS) and FAA's own statutory authorities.<sup>13</sup>

Thus, the FAA's purpose for evaluating this proposal includes fulfilling the following statutory considerations and NPIAS goals:

- (1) The policy of the United States relative to airport improvement includes making certain that the safe operation of airports and the airway system remains the highest priority and that aviation facilities be constructed and operated to minimize current and projected noise impacts on nearby communities. *See* 49 U.S.C. § 47101 (a)(1), (2).
- (2) 49 U.S.C. § 47101 (c) directs the FAA that "It is in the public interest to recognize the effects of airport capacity expansion projects on aircraft noise. Efforts to increase capacity through any means can have an impact on surrounding communities. Non-compatible land uses around airports must be reduced and efforts to mitigate noise must be given a high priority."
- (3) According to 49 U.S.C. § 40101(d)(1), federal policy includes "assigning, maintaining, and enhancing safety and security as the highest priorities in air commerce."
- (4) Another important matter "in the public interest" is "preventing deterioration in established safety procedures." 49 U.S.C. § 40101(a)(3).
- (5) The NPIAS goals of greatest relevance here include:
  - Airports should be safe and efficient, located at optimum sites, and developed and maintained to appropriate standards.
  - Airports should be flexible and expandable, able to meet increased demand and to accommodate new aircraft types.

---

<sup>13</sup> At the federal level, the FAA identifies airports as part of the NPIAS pursuant to FAA Order 5090.3C, *Field Formulation of the National Plan of Integrated Airport Systems (NPIAS)*. The NPIAS identifies existing and proposed airports that are significant to national air transportation and estimates the infrastructure development necessary to meet the needs of all segments of civil aviation. The NPIAS provides standardized criteria and procedures by which to evaluate airport roles as well as their effectiveness and eligibility for federal airport grants on a national level.

- Airports should be permanent, with assurances that they will remain open for aeronautical use over the long-term.
- Airports should be compatible with surrounding communities, maintaining a balance between the needs of aviation and the requirements of residents of neighboring areas.
- The airport system should support national objectives for defense, emergency readiness, and postal delivery.

## 5.2 Need

### FAA Needs

As indicated above, the FAA has a statutory responsibility to address issues of safety and efficiency. The following needs would be addressed by expanding or relocating the existing airport:

- Ensure that the airport meets FAA design standards and is operated in a safe and efficient manner.

Considerations under this specific need include federal policy outlined at 49 U.S.C. § 40101(d)(1) to assign, maintain, and enhance safety as one of the highest priorities in air commerce. The existing Runway Safety Areas (RSA) at PFN for Runway 14-32 do not meet FAA standards. Providing standard RSAs would require further restriction of the existing runway length or extension of the RSAs. Another consideration under this specific need is the potential for conflicts with Tyndall AFB. The proximity of the military airfield to PFN presents potential airspace conflicts that are expected to increase with additional growth and development at the airport, including increases in operations and the potential introduction of larger aircraft. As stated in 49 U.S.C. § 40101(d)(4), federal responsibility includes “controlling the use of the navigable airspace and regulating civil and military operations in that airspace in the interest of the safety and efficiency of both of these operations.”

- Address aviation demand for the Panama City-Bay County air service area.

Under this specific need, the FAA has considered its duty to take measures to ensure the “availability of a variety of adequate, economic, efficient, and low-priced services....” (*See* 49 U.S.C. § 40101(a)(4)). Existing geographic constraints at the Existing Site, including Goose Bayou to the north and residential communities to the east, south and west limit the Airport Sponsor’s ability to expand the existing facilities and services.

- Address the effects of PFN airport expansion related to noise and land use compatibility.

According to 49 U.S.C. § 47101(c), the FAA recognizes that it is in the public interest to recognize the effects of airport capacity expansion projects on aircraft noise. Incompatible land uses around airports must be reduced and efforts to mitigate noise in areas considered by the FAA to be exposed to significant aircraft noise must be given a high priority. The Existing Site is surrounded on three sides by residential uses, which may be affected by airport noise under certain development scenarios.

- Address the need identified by the FAA for adequate runway length to accommodate existing and projected aviation demand

The FAA’s review of existing facilities at PFN discloses a need for additional runway length at PFN to accommodate projected demand. According to the FAA’s independent review of runway length requirements, an initial runway length of 6,800 feet would accommodate the regional jet and narrow-body jet aircraft operating in those markets that may receive non-stop service from Panama City during the Final EIS planning period through 2018. *See Appendix D* of the ROD for the runway length analysis memo.

Airport Sponsor Purpose and Need

The Airport Sponsor's purpose and need for the Proposed Project is to develop aviation facilities that meet FAA safety and design standards, operate and grow the airport without geographic constraints, prepare for future opportunities to expand air carrier service, and plan future aviation development that is compatible with local and regional planning objectives. The purposes and needs of the FAA and Airport Sponsor coincide except in the area of economic goals and forecast aviation demand.

As discussed above, the FAA's review of existing facilities at PFN discloses a need for a primary air carrier runway 6,800 feet in length. Based upon the 2003 FAA TAF and independent runway analysis, the FAA determined that a runway of this length would be sufficient through the planning period (2018). In the FAA's view, such a runway would accommodate the regional jet and narrow body jet aircraft operating in those markets that may receive non-stop service from Panama City during the planning period. Yet based upon its more optimistic *Updated Forecasts*, the Airport Sponsor has proposed an initial length of 8,400 feet for the primary runway. The Airport Sponsor considers this longer runway necessary to accommodate potential wide-body aircraft (Boeing 767-200ER) and non-stop charter service operations between London, Manchester and Panama City by 2018. The Airport Sponsor has indicated that a longer runway is needed to remain competitive by attracting new air carrier service to Bay County from other airports, increasing the potential for international charter operations, and allowing large military transports to use the airport.

## 6.0 ALTERNATIVES ANALYSIS

CEQ regulations (40 CFR 1502.14(a)) require the FAA to “rigorously explore and objectively evaluate all reasonable alternatives,” while 49 U.S.C. 47106(c)(1)(B) requires, as a condition to receiving federal funds, an analysis of “possible and prudent” alternatives for a proposed action when significant impacts would occur. With those standards in mind, the FAA did not evaluate alternatives in detail if they did not substantially meet the purpose and need objectives described in Section 2.5 of the Final EIS.

The alternatives analysis used in the Final EIS employed a two-tier evaluation and screening process formulated to concentrate on the purpose and need for the West Bay Site 8,400 foot Alternative (Airport Sponsor’s Proposed Project) and the reasonableness of the various identified alternatives. Alternatives that did not substantially meet the purpose and need for the Airport Sponsor’s Proposed Project were eliminated from further consideration under the first level screening. The remaining alternatives were then assessed under the second level screening, which focused on quantifying impacts to the natural and human environments to define reasonableness, prudence, viability, and practicability of the alternatives. At the conclusion of the second level of evaluation and screening, those alternatives that remained were subject to detailed analysis in subsequent chapters of the Final EIS.

The alternatives considered in the Final EIS included the following:

- No-Action Alternative
- Other Modes of Transportation and Telecommunication
- Use of Other Airports (including commercial and general aviation airports)
- Joint Use of Tyndall Air Force Base
- Separate Commercial and General Aviation Facilities
- Airport Relocation Sites (West Bay Site, Callaway Site, and East Bay/West Gulf Site)
- Existing Site Alternatives (Extend Runway 14-32 to 6,800 Feet; Extend Runway 14-32 to 8,400 Feet; Extend Runway 14-32 with Declared Distances; Extend Runway 14-32 with Engineered Materials Arresting System (EMAS Scenario 1); Extend Runway 14-32 to 6,800 Feet (EMAS Scenario 2); Extend Runway 14-32 to 6,800 Feet (EMAS Scenario 3); Extend Runway 5-23 to 6,800 Feet; and Extend Runway 5-23 to 8,400 Feet)

### 6.1 Level 1 Screening

The FAA screening criteria for the first level of alternatives analysis relate directly to the federal purpose and need for the proposed action as identified in Section 2.5 of the Final EIS. To satisfy these criteria, an alternative was required to meet FAA safety and design standards, provide for compatibility with regional airspace and utilization, and provide for aviation demand for the defined market area.

#### 6.1.1 Meet FAA Safety and Design Standards

Each alternative was analyzed to determine whether it met federal airport design standards, including those standards relative to runway safety area (RSA) and runway object free area dimensions, wind coverage, airfield geometry, and location relative to wildlife attractants. Each alternative was compared to the following federal standards:

*FAA Airport Design Standards, Airfield Configuration, and Orientation* — The FAA has identified specific design standards for safe and efficient airport operations.<sup>14</sup> The alternatives were reviewed for dimensions of runways and safety areas, runway separation, and wind

---

<sup>14</sup> Listed in Advisory Circular 150/5300-13, *Airport Design*, Change 7, October 1, 2002.

orientation. The alternative configuration must allow for 95 percent or greater wind coverage, standard separations between runways and adjacent taxiways, provide for Airport Sponsor control of Runway Protection Zones (RPZ) conforming to required dimensional standards, and conform to design criteria for RSAs based on aircraft design group, object free areas (OFAs), and other related airfield components.

*Wildlife Attractants* — FAA Advisory Circular (AC) 150/5200-33A<sup>15</sup> provides guidance regarding the placement of new airport development projects pertaining to aircraft movement in the vicinity of hazardous wildlife attractants. Land uses known to threaten aviation safety include putrescible waste disposal operations and wastewater treatment facilities. The AC recommends minimum distances from these land uses to a proposed runway (a distance of 10,000 feet from an airport's aircraft movement areas and a distance of five statute miles from approach or departure airspace).

The AC also addresses wetlands and notes that, where practicable, new airports should be sited using the separations identified in the siting criteria of this AC. The FAA considered design modification that would avoid or minimize wetland impacts. However, the project area and surrounding areas are characterized by wetlands and complete avoidance and minimization was not feasible. For the Level 1 analysis, alternatives were evaluated in relation to nearby landfills or similar facilities, such as incinerators, that could attract birds.

#### **6.1.2 Provide for Demand within the Market Area**

The existing Panama City-Bay County International Airport is located in Bay County, which comprises the majority of the air service area, as discussed in Section 1.6 of the Final EIS. To serve the air service area, an alternative should be located within a reasonable commute distance and commute time from the primary concentration of demand within the market. The FAA recommends that aviation services be provided within a 20-mile travel distance of the primary concentration of traveler demand. On average, this is a 30-minute ground travel time. As noted in Chapter 1 of the Final EIS, 87 percent of the passengers surveyed at PFN in December 1999 came from Bay County. This provides strong support for the location of a potential airport facility within a 30-minute drive of Bay County, Panama City, Lynn Haven, and Panama City Beach. These areas comprise the highest concentration of population in the County. The highest concentrations of population growth in the air service area are occurring in west Bay County and south Walton County.

To meet this evaluation criterion, an alternative would have to be located within a 30-minute drive time of the primary concentration of demand (identified as Bay County, Panama City, Lynn Haven, and Panama City Beach) and include a primary runway of at least 6,800 feet and the required airside and landside facilities to support the 2003 FAA TAF and the Airport Sponsor's forecasted activity levels for 2008 and 2018. *See* Section 4 of this ROD and Section 1.7 of the Final EIS.

#### **6.1.3 Compatibility with Airspace Configuration and Utilization**

In order to further separate civilian and military operations and to reduce the potential for conflicts between arrival and departure routes to the commercial service airport and the military bases, the airspace criterion was developed. Three separate factors were considered: the proximity of the airfield of each alternative to other airfields, primarily Tyndall AFB; the potential effects of the controlled airspace associated with each alternative on Special Use Airspace (SUA); and the potential for conflicts between the routes for each alternative and routes to and from Tyndall AFB and other military facilities. *See* Figure 1-4 of the Final EIS. An alternative was not carried forward to Level 2 analysis if it did not satisfy all three of the airspace factors.

The first airspace factor was based on whether the distance between Tyndall AFB and the site of the alternative would be greater than, less than, or equal to the distance between Tyndall AFB and PFN. The second airspace factor was based on the effects of the required controlled airspace for

---

<sup>15</sup> *Hazardous Wildlife Attractants On or Near Airports*, July 27, 2004.



the alternative on SUA in the area. PFN is located in an area surrounded by SUA. The third airspace factor was based on potential conflicts between arrival and departure routes for the alternative and the arrival and departure routes from Tyndall AFB.

#### **6.1.4 Level 1 Findings**

Based on the Level 1 evaluation discussed in the FEIS and described above, the following alternatives did not meet the Level 1 criteria or the purpose and need, and were not, therefore, carried forward to the Level 2 evaluation:

- *Other Modes of Transportation and Telecommunication* – does not provide for demand within the market area
- *Use of Other Airports* – is not compatible with airspace configuration/utilization and does not provide for demand within the market area
- *Joint Use of Tyndall Air Force Base* – does not meet the FAA’s safety and design criteria, is not compatible with airspace configuration/utilization, and does not provide for demand within the market area
- *Separate Commercial and General Aviation Facilities* – is not compatible with airspace configuration/utilization
- *Callaway Relocation Site* – is not compatible with airspace configuration/utilization
- *East Bay/West Gulf Relocation Site* – is not compatible with airspace configuration/utilization and does not provide for demand within the market area

The No-Action Alternative also did not meet the Level 1 evaluation, but was nevertheless carried forward for detailed analysis to serve as a baseline against which all other alternatives could be compared. See 40 CFR 1502.14(d).

Table 3-2 of the Final EIS provides a summary for those alternatives reviewed in the Level 1 analysis, and indicates which alternatives met the Level 1 criteria. Alternatives meeting the Level 1 criteria were carried forward for further analysis under the Level 2 screening process.

## **6.2 Level 2 Screening**

The FAA Level 2 screening process further refined the evaluation of alternatives through the application of criteria specific to both natural and community environments affected by each alternative. The FAA Level 2 screening criteria were developed in response to federal and state agency input, preliminary review of environmental impacts, and the FAA purpose and need as described in Section 2.5.1 of the Final EIS.

The consideration of impacts to the natural environment included impacts to marine resources; specifically Class II Waters of the State of Florida, seagrass habitat, and State sovereign submerged lands. The consideration of community impacts included residential and business relocations, the availability of comparable relocation housing, the loss of property tax revenue for Bay County, and effects on public schools and emergency services. Alternatives that did not meet the criteria for impacts to the natural and community environments were not carried forward for detailed analysis in Chapter 5 of the Final EIS.

### **6.2.1 Impacts to the Natural Environment**

Each alternative carried forward to the Level 2 analysis was reviewed to determine its direct impact to marine resources, including seagrass and marine habitat. Mapping and data from the Florida Atlas of Marine Resources<sup>16</sup> was used to estimate seagrass habitat.

---

<sup>16</sup> Florida Department of Environmental Protection, *Version 1.2*, July 1998.

In correspondence to the FAA dated October 24, 2003,<sup>17</sup> and February 19, 2004,<sup>18</sup> the FDEP noted that it had significant concerns about proposed alternatives at the Existing Site and their potential impacts to Class II Waters, seagrass habitat, and State sovereign submerged lands. The FAA also has had extensive discussions with the USACE, NMFS, and the USFWS regarding the FDEP's concerns.

***Class II Waters of the State/Seagrass***

Specific natural environment criteria in the Level 2 analysis focused on an alternative's impacts to Class II Waters of the State of Florida, seagrass habitat, and State sovereign submerged lands. The acreage of impacts to Class II Waters for each alternative includes the acreage of submerged seagrass habitat within Goose Bayou/North Bay. Each alternative carried forward to the Level 2 analysis was reviewed to determine impacts on Class II Waters of the State of Florida, as defined by 62-302.400 F.A.C. Impacts to Class II Waters Conditionally Approved for shellfish harvesting, sovereign submerged land, and seagrass habitat in Goose Bayou have been determined to be significant, with limited success for mitigation. Therefore, alternatives having impacts to Class II Waters/seagrass habitat did not meet this criterion.

***Sovereign Submerged Lands***

Chapter 253 of the Florida Statutes, *State Lands*, and the implementing rule 18-21 F.A.C., *Sovereignty Submerged Lands Management*, are the relevant governing statutes and regulations for sovereign submerged lands. Based on information provided by the FDEP, alternatives that propose an extension of the runway into or over State sovereign submerged lands do not meet the criteria as described in the referenced regulations. The proposed activity is not water-dependent and is not necessary for shoreline stabilization, access to navigable water, or for a public water management project. Additionally, the State of Florida has noted that there appear to be other reasonable alternatives to filling in or over State sovereign submerged lands, which the FDEP would evaluate in determining if a variance could be issued to fill in or over State sovereign submerged lands.

***Section 404 Permit of the Clean Water Act and Section 10 of the Rivers and Harbors Act of 1899***

A permit under Section 404 of the Clean Water Act and Section 10 of the Rivers and Harbors Act, 33 U.S.C. 401 *et seq.*, would be required by USACE for any dredge and fill impacts to Goose Bayou/North Bay. Coordination with NMFS, the USFWS, and the EPA would be required as part of the permitting process. NMFS, in commenting on a previous Environmental Assessment (EA) prepared by the Airport Sponsor for a proposed runway extension into Goose Bayou, noted that the loss of bay bottoms and seagrass would have a significant adverse impact on living marine resources, and it was suggested that other alternatives to filling within Goose Bayou and North Bay be considered. The USFWS also has expressed concern that replacement of seagrass communities is unrealistic and that seagrass habitat is an irreplaceable resource. The USFWS indicated that a proposed extension of the existing primary runway would not only result in the loss of seagrass, but also would result in the loss of other estuarine subtidal habitat. The FAA's discussions in 2004 with NMFS, the FDEP, and the USACE indicated that permits historically have not been issued for significant fill impacts to seagrass habitat. This is due in part to the difficulty in replacing these types of resources. Any alternative that impacts seagrass habitat would not meet this criterion.

---

<sup>17</sup> Letter from David B. Struhs, Secretary, Florida Department of Environmental Protection, to Virginia Lane, Federal Aviation Administration, October 24, 2003.

<sup>18</sup> Letter from David B. Struhs, Secretary, Florida Department of Environmental Protection, to Virginia Lane, Federal Aviation Administration, February 19, 2004.

### **6.2.2 Community Impacts**

Each alternative that was carried forward to the Level 2 analysis was reviewed to determine its direct impact on the local community. While residential and business relocation totals provide some indication of the level of community disruption each alternative would create, they also provide a basis to estimate other significant community impacts. These impacts include the availability of comparable replacement housing, loss of property tax revenue base, loss of school enrollment, and loss or reduction in public services.

#### ***Business and Residential Relocations and Comparable Replacement Housing***

Each alternative was analyzed to determine the number of off-site business and residential units that would need to be relocated. A business or residential unit would be relocated if it is within the estimated construction limits and/or within the runway protection zone of a specific alternative. Any alternative with more than 225 single-family relocations or with more than 46 mobile home relocations would fail this criterion. These thresholds were based on an analysis of suitable replacement housing that was expected to be available in the area.

#### ***Tax Revenue Base***

A review was completed in March 2004 of the property tax revenue generated in Bay County and the effect of the loss of tax revenue that would be associated with residential and business relocations. The loss of property tax revenue for each alternative was compared to the total property tax revenue for Bay County.

#### ***Reduction in Public School Enrollment***

This evaluation criterion addresses the extent to which an alternative disrupts public school enrollment, a component of the disruption of established communities. A review of available school data from the Bay District Schools indicates that at least one elementary, middle, and high school would be affected by the alternatives under consideration at the Existing Site.

#### ***Safety and Emergency Access to Residential Communities***

Some alternatives would require the closing or dead-ending of roads in the runway safety area or runway protection zone. This could impact safety and emergency response times in the local area street network. As a result of the partial or complete street closings, less direct access would be provided to the remaining areas, and the longer routes would likely result in increased travel times. The increased access time would result in increased response time for safety and emergency services (police, fire, and emergency medical).

### **6.2.3 Level 2 Findings**

Based on the Level 2 evaluation discussed in Sections 3.8 and 3.9 of the Final EIS and summarized in Table 3-3 of the Final EIS, the following alternatives were identified as not meeting the Level 2 criteria. The reasons these alternatives do not meet the Level 2 criteria are summarized as follows:

*Existing Site - Extend Runway 14-32, 6,800 Feet Northwest* — impacts to Florida Class II Waters, sovereign submerged lands, and seagrasses.

*Existing Site - Extend Runway 14-32, 6,800 Feet Both Directions* — impacts to Florida Class II Waters, sovereign submerged lands, and seagrasses.

*Existing Site - Extend Runway 14-32 with Declared Distances* — impacts to Florida Class II Waters, sovereign submerged lands, and seagrasses.

*Existing Site - Extend Runway 14-32 with EMAS Scenario 1* — impacts to Florida Class II Waters, sovereign submerged lands, and seagrasses.

*Existing Site - Extend Runway 14-32 with EMAS Scenario 3*— impacts to Florida Class II Waters and sovereign submerged lands.

*Existing Site - Extend Runway 14-32, 8,400 Feet Northwest* — impacts to Florida Class II Waters, sovereign submerged lands, and seagrasses.

*Existing Site - Extend Runway 14-32, 8,400 Feet Both Directions* — impacts to Florida Class II Waters, sovereign submerged lands, and seagrasses.

*Existing Site - Extend Runway 5-23, 6,800 Feet Southwest* — shortage of comparable replacement housing; loss of 7.22 percent of Bay County property tax revenue.

*Existing Site - Extend Runway 5-23, 6,800 Feet Northeast* — shortage of comparable replacement housing; loss of 7.09 percent of Bay County property tax revenue; displacement of students from six public schools.

*Existing Site - Extend Runway 5-23, 6,800 Feet in Both Directions* — shortage of comparable replacement housing; loss of 8.03 percent of Bay County property tax revenue; displacement of students from six public schools.

*Existing Site - Extend Runway 5-23, 8,400 Feet Southwest* — shortage of comparable replacement housing; loss of 8.90 percent of Bay County property tax revenue; change in access for emergency service personnel.

*Existing Site - Extend Runway 5-23, 8,400 Feet Northeast* — shortage of comparable replacement housing; loss of 8.25 percent of Bay County property tax revenue; displacement of students from six public schools; change in access for emergency service personnel.

*Existing Site - Extend Runway 5-23, 8,400 Feet Both Directions* — shortage of comparable replacement housing; loss of 10.6 percent of Bay County property tax revenue; displacement of students from six public schools; change in access for emergency service personnel.

### **6.3 Description of Alternatives Retained for Detailed Consideration**

The Draft EIS analyzed five alternatives in terms of their potential environmental effects:

- No-Action Alternative
- Existing Site – Extend Runway 14-32, 6,800 Feet Southeast
- Existing Site – Extend Runway 14-32, 8,400 Feet Southeast
- West Bay Site – Runway 16-34, 6,800 Feet (referred to in the Final EIS as Scenario 1)
- West Bay Site – Runway 16-34, 8,400 Feet (Airport Sponsor’s Proposed Project)

The FAA did not identify a preferred alternative in the Draft EIS. Agencies and the public were afforded an opportunity to review and comment on the Draft EIS, and the FAA considered all written and oral comments received on the Draft EIS before identifying its preferred alternative in the Final EIS. In response to several comments submitted to the FAA, two variations of existing alternatives analyzed in the Draft EIS were subsequently added to the Final EIS for consideration:

- Existing Site – Extend Runway 14-32, 6,800 Feet Southeast EMAS Scenario 2
- West Bay Site – Runway 16-34, 6,800 Feet Scenario 2

The FAA has had an opportunity to complete full disclosure and analysis of potential impacts associated with the alternatives analyzed in the Final EIS. Comparisons of direct impacts of the seven alternatives are included in **Tables 4** and **5** of this ROD and Tables 3-5 and 3-6 of the Final

EIS. The FAA also analyzed secondary and cumulative impacts, which are described in Sections 5.5 and 5.26 of the Final EIS. The seven alternatives are summarized below.

**No-Action Alternative** - NEPA and CEQ regulations (40 CFR 1502.14(d)) require that a No-Action Alternative be considered and evaluated in assessment of environmental impacts. The No-Action Alternative means the Airport Sponsor's Proposed Project would not be implemented, and the resulting environmental effects from taking no action would serve as a baseline from which to compare the effects of permitting the Airport Sponsor's Proposed Project or an alternative to proceed. The No-Action Alternative provides a benchmark for comparison, enabling decision makers to compare the magnitude of the environmental effects of the various alternatives with the conditions of the site with no immediate improvements. The No-Action Alternative for the Final EIS means there would be no extensions to the existing airfield runways (including no construction related improvements to existing deficient runway safety areas).

**Existing Site – Extend Runway 14-32, 6,800 Feet Southeast** - This alternative consists of a 1,437-foot runway extension to the southeast end of the runway to provide the required runway length and meet RSA requirements off both runway ends. This alternative (depicted on Figure 3-8 and Figure G-1 in Appendix G of the Final EIS) would result in a primary runway having 6,800 feet of full-strength and fully useable pavement with an associated RSA centered on the runway centerline 500 feet in width for a total of 8,800 feet in length (6,800 feet of runway plus 1,000 feet of RSA beyond each runway end). This alternative would require the construction of SR 390 in a tunnel beneath the extended runway/runway safety area alignment. If a runway is constructed 6,800 feet to the southeast, a transmission line would be impacted. If the transmission line is considered an obstruction under 14 CFR Part 77, *Objects Affecting Navigable Airspace*, relocation of the transmission line would be required either above or below ground.

The power poles and transmission line penetrate the existing approach surface for Runway 14-32. The penetration of the approach surface by the transmission line for the Extend Runway 14-32, 6,800 Feet alternative occurs at 1,937 feet from the beginning of the Runway Protection Zone (RPZ). See Figure 5-70 of the Final EIS. The maximum elevation of the transmission line is approximately 90.4 feet (MSL), while the RPZ elevation at the intersection is 77 feet MSL; therefore, the transmission line penetrates the runway protection surface by 13.4 feet.

**Existing Site – Extend Runway 14-32, 8,400 Feet Southeast** – This alternative consists of shifting the runway to the southeast using a portion of the current runway alignment to meet RSA requirements on the northwest runway end, and extending runway pavement 3,037 feet to the southeast to provide the required 8,400 feet of fully useable runway length. This alternative also would provide a 1,000-foot-long by 500-foot-wide RSA conforming to design standards beyond the end of the extended pavement on the southeast end of the runway. This alternative (depicted on Figure 3-11 and Figure G-4 in Appendix G of the Final EIS) would result in a primary runway having 8,400 feet of full-strength and fully useable pavement and a RSA centered on the runway centerline 500 feet in width and 1,000 feet beyond both runway ends for a total of 10,400 feet in length (8,400 feet of runway plus 1,000 feet of RSA beyond each runway end). This alternative would require the construction of a tunnel for SR 390. If a runway is constructed 8,400 feet to the southeast, a transmission line would be impacted. This transmission line falls within both the proposed RPZ and RSA. Relocation would be required for the transmission line either above or below ground.

**West Bay Site – Runway 16-34, 6,800 Feet (referred to in the Final EIS as Scenario 1)** - The Airport Sponsor has proposed to relocate the existing and future aviation facilities of PFN and its operations to a new site in northwestern Bay County, Florida. Vehicular access to the airport would be provided from CR 388. The existing airport facilities would be decommissioned and no longer used for aeronautical purposes. This alternative would include a 6,800-foot primary air carrier runway, a 5,000-foot crosswind runway, ancillary airfield facilities and all needed infrastructure to be constructed within the initial development phase area. Precision approach zones would be provided off both runway ends for the primary air carrier runway.

As summarized in Section 2.2.1 of the Final EIS, the Airport Sponsor has defined the site boundaries and airport layout, and has addressed avoidance/minimization of wetlands for the initial development components (Section 2.2.2) on the West Bay Site. The Airport Sponsor has indicated that a 6,800-foot primary runway for Scenario 1 would have the same northern end as the 8,400-foot primary runway (Section 3.10.5) because, if and when needed, the 6,800-foot runway could be extended without having to relocate navigational aids (specifically the MALSR or the glideslope antenna) on the primary approach (the north) end. Relocation of the navigational aids would require closing the primary runway for a period of time for construction. The wetland impacts for the 6,800-foot runway in this location would be 596.2 acres.

***West Bay Site – Runway 16-34, 8,400 Feet (Airport Sponsor’s Proposed Project)*** - This alternative is the Airport Sponsor's Proposed Project. The Airport Sponsor has proposed to relocate the existing and future aviation facilities of PFN and its operations to a new site in northwestern Bay County, Florida. Vehicular access to the airport would be provided from CR 388. The existing airport facilities would be decommissioned and no longer used for aeronautical purposes. This alternative would include an 8,400-foot primary air carrier runway, a 5,000-foot crosswind runway, ancillary airfield facilities and all needed infrastructure to be constructed within the initial development phase area. Precision approach zones would be provided off both runway ends for the primary air carrier runway. The wetland impacts for the 8,400-foot runway in this location would be 596.2 acres.

***Existing Site – Extend Runway 14-32, 6,800 Feet Southeast EMAS Scenario 2*** - This alternative was developed in response to comments made on the Draft EIS. Applying current FAA guidance to the development of an EMAS-based alternative resulted in the development of the alternative presented in Figures 3-16A and 3-17A, and Figure G-8A in Appendix G of the Final EIS. The physical attributes and improvements to the layout of runway facilities under this alternative would involve the construction of EMAS off both runway ends. On the southeast end of Runway 14-32 the localizer antennae would be relocated to a position 75 feet northwest of the airport boundary fence. Given the available distance from the current runway to the boundary fence and the FAA requirement for 600 feet between the localizer and the end of active runway pavement, plus the 600 feet required for aircraft undershoots, a 912-foot extension of the Runway 14-32 pavement would be constructed to the southeast. A 400-foot-long section of EMAS would be installed beginning 75 feet beyond the extended end of Runway 14-32.

Runway 14-32 also would be extended to the northwest of its current terminus to provide both additional runway length for operations and to provide the requisite area for the installation of EMAS beyond the extended runway end. To allow for 6,800 feet of Accelerated Stop Distance Available (ASDA) for takeoff operations in both directions (considering the 912-foot-long southeast extension noted above), an additional 334-foot-long extension would be added to the northwest end of the Runway 14-32. In addition, a further extension measuring 500 feet in width and 475 feet in length would need to be constructed to provide for an EMAS meeting the criteria as set forth in FAA Order 5200.9, *Financial Feasibility and Equivalency of Runway Safety Area Improvements and Engineered Material Arresting Systems* (March 15, 2004). As defined, this alternative would provide for 6,800 feet of ASDA in both operational directions on Runway 14-32, while providing 6,400 feet of Landing Distance Available (LDA) on Runway 14 and 6,265 feet of LDA on Runway 32.

***West Bay Site – Runway 16-34, 6,800 Feet Scenario 2*** - This alternative (Section 3.10.5 of the Final EIS) is a variation of the West Bay Site 6,800-foot runway (Scenario 1) alternative (Section 3.10.4 of the Final EIS) and was developed as a means to minimize impacts to wetlands. The proposed Initial Development Area (See **Figure 1** of this ROD) would be smaller than that proposed by the Airport Sponsor. This variation of the 6,800-foot primary air carrier runway would begin at the southern end of the Initial Development Area. The other components of the alternative - 5,000-foot crosswind runway, ancillary airfield facilities and all needed infrastructure – would also be included with this variation. Precision approach zones would be provided off both runway ends for the primary air carrier runway. The Airport Sponsor has indicated that a

6,800-foot primary runway for Scenario 2 would result in the need to relocate navigational aids (specifically the MALSR or the glideslope antenna) if and when the runway is extended. This would require closing the primary runway for a period of time for construction.

The wetland impacts of the Scenario 2 variation would be 475.3 acres. The difference in wetland impacts from Scenario 1, approximately 121 acres, is related to the smaller, different boundary for the Initial Development Area for Scenario 2. The majority of the difference is in impacts to Pine Plantation wetlands of relatively low value.

#### **6.4 Comparison of Impacts**

The Airport Sponsor presented the FAA with a proposal to relocate the existing Panama City-Bay County International Airport to a new site in Bay County, Florida. The West Bay Site 8,400-foot Alternative is the Airport Sponsor's Proposed Project. The Airport Sponsor's Proposed Project meets the Airport Sponsor's goals and objectives of providing airport facilities that meet the FAA's safety and design standards, offering an airport site that can operate and grow without physical constraints to prepare for future opportunities to accommodate projected demand and expansion, and planning future aviation development that is consistent with local, state, and regional planning objectives.

The FAA has fully analyzed and disclosed potential impacts associated with the alternatives studied in detail in the Final EIS. Comparisons of direct impacts of the seven alternatives are included in **Tables 4** and **5** of this ROD. The FAA also analyzed secondary and cumulative impacts, which are described in Sections 5.5 and 5.26 of the Final EIS. **Table 6** includes corresponding information for indirect and cumulative impacts.

Panama City-Bay County International Airport  
Record of Decision

**Table 4  
Environmental Consequences Summary Matrix- 2008**

Environmental Consideration	Measure of Impact	No-Action Alternative	Existing Site Alternatives						West Bay Site Alternatives					
			6,800-foot Runway		6,800-foot Runway EMAS Scenario 2		8,400-foot Runway		6,800-foot Runway Scenario 1/ Redevelopment of Existing Site*		6,800-foot Runway Scenario 2/ Redevelopment of Existing Site*		8,400-foot Runway/ Redevelopment of Existing Site*	
			FAA TAF	Airport Sponsor Forecast	FAA TAF	Airport Sponsor Forecast	FAA TAF	Airport Sponsor Forecast	FAA TAF	Airport Sponsor Forecast	FAA TAF	Airport Sponsor Forecast	FAA TAF	Airport Sponsor Forecast
Noise	Residences within 65+ DNL	0	0	0	0	0	4	7	0/0	0/0	0/0	0/0	0/0	0/0
Compatible Land Use	Incompatible land uses within 65+ DNL	No	No	No	No	No	Yes	Yes	No/No	No/No	No/No	No/No	No/No	No/No
Social Impacts	Number of Residential Relocations	0	106	106	49	49	221	221	0/0	0/0	0/0	0/0	0/0	0/0
	Number of off-site Business Relocations	0	15	15	17	17	15	15	0/0	0/0	0/0	0/0	0/0	0/0
	Number of Cemetery/Church Relocations	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0/0	0/0	0/0	0/0	0/0	0/0
Induced Socioeconomic Impacts	Potential for Socioeconomic Opportunities	Limited	Some	Some	Some	Some	Some	Some	Significant/Significant	Significant/Significant	Significant/Significant	Significant/Significant	Significant/Significant	Significant/Significant
Environmental Justice	Disproportionate Impacts to Minority/Low Income Communities	No	No	No	No	No	No	No	No/No	No/No	No/No	No/No	No/No	No/No
Air Quality	Meets National Ambient Air Quality Standards	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes/Yes	Yes/Yes	Yes/Yes	Yes/Yes	Yes/Yes	Yes/Yes
Water Quality	Potential Direct and Indirect Impacts to Water Quality	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes/Yes	Yes/Yes	Yes/Yes	Yes/Yes	Yes/Yes	Yes/Yes
Historic and Archaeological Resources	Number of Historic Properties Affected	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0/0	0/0	0/0	0/0	0/0	0/0
	Number of Archeological Sites Affected	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0/1	0/1	0/1	0/1	0/1	0/1
Biotic Communities	Acres of Impact to Terrestrial and Aquatic Habitats	0	30.7	30.7	28.4	28.4	36.1	36.1	1,377.8/89.1	1,377.8/89.1	1,238.3/89.1	1,238.3/89.1	1,377.8/89.1	1,377.8/89.1
Essential Fish Habitat (EFH)/ Living Marine Resource (LMR)	Direct or Secondary Impacts to EFH and LMR	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes/Yes	Yes/Yes	Yes/Yes	Yes/Yes	Yes/Yes	Yes/Yes
Section 4(f)/Section 6(f) Properties	Number of Properties Directly Impacted	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0/0	0/0	0/0	0/0	0/0	0/0
Endangered and Threatened Species	Potential Impacts to Federal and State-Listed Species	No	No	No	No	No	No	No	Yes/Yes	Yes/Yes	Yes/Yes	Yes/Yes	Yes/Yes	Yes/Yes
Wetlands	Wetland Impacts (acres)	0	12.2	12.2	13.1	13.1	12.4	12.4	596.2/34.3	596.2/34.3	475.3/34.3	475.3/34.3	596.2/34.3	596.2/34.3



Panama City-Bay County International Airport  
Record of Decision

**Table 4  
Environmental Consequences Summary Matrix- 2008**

Environmental Consideration	Measure of Impact	No-Action Alternative	Existing Site Alternatives						West Bay Site Alternatives						
			6,800-foot Runway		6,800-foot Runway EMAS Scenario 2		8,400-foot Runway		6,800-foot Runway Scenario 1/ Redevelopment of Existing Site*		6,800-foot Runway Scenario 2/ Redevelopment of Existing Site*		8,400-foot Runway/ Redevelopment of Existing Site*		
			FAA TAF	Airport Sponsor Forecast	FAA TAF	Airport Sponsor Forecast	FAA TAF	Airport Sponsor Forecast	FAA TAF	Airport Sponsor Forecast	FAA TAF	Airport Sponsor Forecast	FAA TAF	Airport Sponsor Forecast	
	Non-Wetland "Waters of the U.S." Impact (linear feet)	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	7,279/0	7,279/0	7,279/0	7,279/0	7,279/0	7,279/0
Floodplains	Potential Direct Impact (acres)	0	33.4	33.4	44.2	44.2	35.5	35.5	207.1/140	207.1/140	183.4/140	183.4/140	207.1/140	207.1/140	
Coastal Zone/Coastal Barrier	Consistent With Coastal Zone Management Act	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes/Yes	Yes/Yes	Yes/Yes	Yes/Yes	Yes/Yes	Yes/Yes
Wild and Scenic Rivers	Impact to Wild and Scenic Rivers	No	No	No	No	No	No	No	No	No/No	No/No	No/No	No/No	No/No	No/No
Farmlands	Total Affected Land (acres)	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0/0	0/0	0/0	0/0	0/0	0/0
Energy Supply/Natural Resources	Use of Energy Supplies	No Impact	Minor	Minor	Minor	Minor	Minor	Minor	Minor	Minor/ Minor	Minor/ Minor	Minor/ Minor	Minor/ Minor	Minor/ Minor	Minor/ Minor
	Impact to Overhead Power Lines	No	Yes	Yes	No	No	Yes	Yes	No/No	No/No	No/No	No/No	No/No	No/No	No/No
Light Emissions	Level of Light Emission	No Impact	No Impact	No Impact	No Impact	No Impact	No Impact	No Impact	No Impact	No Impact/No Impact	No Impact/No Impact	No Impact/No Impact	No Impact/No Impact	No Impact/No Impact	No Impact/No Impact
Solid Waste	Capacity	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes/Yes	Yes/Yes	Yes/Yes	Yes/Yes	Yes/Yes	Yes/Yes
	Bird Hazard	No	No	No	No	No	No	No	No	No/No	No/No	No/No	No/No	No/No	No/No
Hazardous Materials/Waste	Impact to Known Contamination Sites	No	No	No	No	No	No	No	No	No/Yes	No/Yes	No/Yes	No/Yes	No/Yes	No/Yes
Construction Impacts	Noise, Air Quality, and Traffic Impacts	No Impact	Short-Term Impact	Short-Term Impact	Short-Term Impact	Short-Term Impact	Short-Term Impact	Short-Term Impact	Short-Term Impact	Short-Term Impact/ Short-Term Impact	Short-Term Impact/ Short-Term Impact	Short-Term Impact/ Short-Term Impact	Short-Term Impact/ Short-Term Impact	Short-Term Impact/ Short-Term Impact	Short-Term Impact/ Short-Term Impact
Surface Transportation	Major Modifications Needed to Existing Roadways?	No	Yes	Yes	No	No	Yes	Yes	No/No	No/No	No/No	No/No	No/No	No/No	No/No

\* These impacts are disclosed for informational purposes only based on the best information currently available. Impacts resulting from future redevelopment at the Existing Site are uncertain because there is insufficient information at this time as to the ultimate uses of the Existing Site as a result of redevelopment.  
Source: Kimley-Horn and Associates, Inc. 2006.

Panama City-Bay County International Airport  
Record of Decision

**Table 5  
Environmental Consequences Summary Matrix- 2018**

Environmental Consideration	Measure of Impact	No-Action Alternative	Existing Site Alternatives						West Bay Site Alternatives					
			6,800-foot Runway		6,800-foot Runway EMAS Scenario 2		8,400-foot Runway		6,800-foot Runway Scenario 1/ Redevelopment of Existing Site*		6,800-foot Runway Scenario 2/ Redevelopment of Existing Site*		8,400-foot Runway/ Redevelopment of Existing Site*	
			FAA TAF	Airport Sponsor Forecast	FAA TAF	Airport Sponsor Forecast	FAA TAF	Airport Sponsor Forecast	FAA TAF	Airport Sponsor Forecast	FAA TAF	Airport Sponsor Forecast	FAA TAF	Airport Sponsor Forecast
Noise	Residences within 65+ DNL	0	0	0	0	0	4	14	0/0	0/0	0/0	0/0	0/0	0/0
Compatible Land Use	Incompatible land uses within 65+ DNL	No	No	No	No	No	Yes	Yes	No/No	No/No	No/No	No/No	No/No	No/No
Social Impacts	Number of Residential Relocations	0	106	106	49	49	221	221	0/0	0/0	0/0	0/0	0/0	0/0
	Number of Off-Site Business Relocations	0	15	15	17	17	15	15	0/0	0/0	0/0	0/0	0/0	0/0
	Number of Cemetery/Church Relocations	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0/0	0/0	0/0	0/0	0/0	0/0
Induced Socioeconomic Impacts	Potential for Socioeconomic Opportunities	Limited	Some	Some	Some	Some	Some	Some	Significant/Significant	Significant/Significant	Significant/Significant	Significant/Significant	Significant/Significant	Significant/Significant
Environmental Justice	Disproportionate Impacts to Minority/Low Income Communities	No	No	No	No	No	No	No	No/No	No/No	No/No	No/No	No/No	No/No
Air Quality	Meets National Ambient Air Quality Standards	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes/Yes	Yes/Yes	Yes/Yes	Yes/Yes	Yes/Yes	Yes/Yes
Water Quality	Potential Direct and Indirect Impacts to Water Quality	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes/Yes	Yes/Yes	Yes/Yes	Yes/Yes	Yes/Yes	Yes/Yes
Historic and Archaeological Resources	Number of Historic Properties Affected	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0/0	0/0	0/0	0/0	0/0	0/0
	Number of Archeological Sites Affected	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0/1	0/1	0/1	0/1	0/1	0/1
Biotic Communities	Acres of Impact to Terrestrial and Aquatic Habitats	0	30.7	30.7	28.4	28.4	36.1	36.1	1,377.8/89.1	1,377.8/89.1	1,238.3/89.1	1,238.3/89.1	1,377.8/89.1	1,377.8/89.1
Essential Fish Habitat (EFH)/Living Marine Resource (LMR)	Direct or Secondary Impacts to EFH and LMR	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes/Yes	Yes/Yes	Yes/Yes	Yes/Yes	Yes/Yes	Yes/Yes
Section 4(f)/Section 6(f) Properties	Number of Properties Directly Impacted	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0/0	0/0	0/0	0/0	0/0	0/0
Endangered and Threatened Species	Impacts to Federal and State-Listed Species	No	No	No	No	No	No	No	Yes/Yes	Yes/Yes	Yes/Yes	Yes/Yes	Yes/Yes	Yes/Yes
Wetlands	Wetland Impacts (acres)	0	12.2	12.2	13.1	13.1	12.4	12.4	596.2/34.3	596.2/34.3	475.3/34.3	475.3/34.3	596.2/34.3	596.2/34.3

Panama City-Bay County International Airport  
Record of Decision

**Table 5  
Environmental Consequences Summary Matrix- 2018**

Environmental Consideration	Measure of Impact	No-Action Alternative	Existing Site Alternatives						West Bay Site Alternatives						
			6,800-foot Runway		6,800-foot Runway EMAS Scenario 2		8,400-foot Runway		6,800-foot Runway Scenario 1/ Redevelopment of Existing Site*		6,800-foot Runway Scenario 2/ Redevelopment of Existing Site*		8,400-foot Runway/ Redevelopment of Existing Site*		
			FAA TAF	Airport Sponsor Forecast	FAA TAF	Airport Sponsor Forecast	FAA TAF	Airport Sponsor Forecast	FAA TAF	Airport Sponsor Forecast	FAA TAF	Airport Sponsor Forecast	FAA TAF	Airport Sponsor Forecast	
	Non-Wetland "Waters of the U.S." Impact (linear feet)	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	7,279/0	7,279/0	7,279/0	7,279/0	7,279/0	7,279/0
Floodplains	Potential Direct Impact (acres)	0	33.4	33.4	44.2	44.2	35.5	35.5	207.1/140	207.1/140	183.4/140	183.4/140	207.1/140	207.1/140	
Coastal Zone/Coastal Barrier	Consistent With Coastal Zone Management Act	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Wild and Scenic Rivers	Impact to Wild and Scenic Rivers	No	No	No	No	No	No	No	No	No	No	No	No	No	No
Farmlands	Total Affected Land (acres)	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Energy Supply/Natural Resources	Use of Energy Supplies	No Impact	Minor	Minor	Minor	Minor	Minor	Minor	Minor	Minor/Minor	Minor/Minor	Minor/Minor	Minor/Minor	Minor/Minor	Minor/Minor
	Impact to Overhead Power Lines	No	Yes	Yes	No	No	Yes	Yes	No/No	No/No	No/No	No/No	No/No	No/No	No/No
Light Emissions	Level of Light Emission	No Impact	No Impact	No Impact	No Impact	No Impact	No Impact	No Impact	No Impact	No Impact/No Impact	No Impact/No Impact	No Impact/No Impact	No Impact/No Impact	No Impact/No Impact	No Impact/No Impact
Solid Waste	Capacity	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes/Yes	Yes/Yes	Yes/Yes	Yes/Yes	Yes/Yes	Yes/Yes
	Bird Hazard	No	No	No	No	No	No	No	No	No/No	No/No	No/No	No/No	No/No	No/No
Hazardous Materials/Waste	Impact to Known Contamination Sites	No	No	No	No	No	No	No	No	No/Yes	No/Yes	No/Yes	No/Yes	No/Yes	No/Yes
Construction Impacts	Noise, Air Quality, and Traffic Impacts	No Impact	Short-Term Impact	Short-Term Impact	Short-Term Impact	Short-Term Impact	Short-Term Impact	Short-Term Impact	Short-Term Impact	Short-Term Impact/Short-Term Impact	Short-Term Impact/Short-Term Impact	Short-Term Impact/Short-Term Impact	Short-Term Impact/Short-Term Impact	Short-Term Impact/Short-Term Impact	Short-Term Impact/Short-Term Impact
Surface Transportation	Major Modifications Needed to Existing Roadways?	No	No	No	No	No	No	No	No	No/No	No/No	No/No	No/No	No/No	No/No

\* These impacts are disclosed for informational purposes only based on the best information currently available. Impacts resulting from future redevelopment at the Existing Site are uncertain because there is insufficient information at this time as to the ultimate uses of the Existing Site as a result of redevelopment.

Source: Kimley-Horn and Associates, Inc. 2006.

<b>Table 6 Secondary and Cumulative Impact Categories</b>		
<b>Category</b>	<b>FEIS Section for Impact Assessment</b>	<b>Potential For Cumulative Effect</b>
<b><i>Socioeconomic Environment</i></b>		
Social Impacts (residential/business relocations/neighborhood cohesion)	5.4	
Induced Socioeconomic Impacts	5.5	Yes
Environmental Justice	5.6	
Surface Transportation Impacts	5.23	Yes
<b><i>Water Resources and Biotic Communities Environment</i></b>		
Wetlands	5.13	Yes
Floodplains	5.14	Yes
Water Quality	5.8	Yes
Coastal Zones/Coastal Barriers	5.15	Yes/No
Wild and Scenic Rivers	5.16	
Biotic Communities	5.10	Yes
Endangered and Threatened Species	5.12	Yes
<b><i>Physical and Human Environments</i></b>		
Noise	5.2	Yes
Compatible Land Use	5.3	Yes
Air Quality	5.7	
Historical and Archaeological Resources	5.9	Yes
Section 4(f) of the DOT Act	5.11	
Farmlands	5.17	
Energy Supply and Natural Resources	5.18	
Light Emissions	5.19	
Solid Waste	5.20	
Hazardous Materials	5.21	Yes
Construction Impacts	5.22	
Design, Art, and Architectural Applications	5.25	

Source: Kimley-Horn and Associates, Inc., 2004.

## **7.0 ENVIRONMENTALLY PREFERRED ALTERNATIVE, AGENCY PREFERRED ALTERNATIVE, AND SELECTED ALTERNATIVE**

### **7.1 Environmentally Preferred Alternative**

In accordance with 40 CFR 1505.2(b), the environmentally preferred alternative must be identified in the ROD. The CEQ 40 Most Asked Questions, Question 6a, defines the environmentally preferred alternative as “the alternative that will promote the national environmental policy as expressed in NEPA’s Section 101. Ordinarily, this means the alternative that causes the least damage to the biological and physical environment; it also means the alternative which best protects, preserves, and enhances historic, cultural and natural resources.” Although this ROD finds that the West Bay Site 8,400 foot Alternative will include all reasonable steps to minimize harm from significant adverse environmental impacts, the FAA recognizes that the No-Action Alternative would impose the least environmental impacts.

The No-Action Alternative would not expose any persons, households, or noise-sensitive land uses to noise levels of Day-Night Average Sound Level (DNL) 65 dB and higher in either 2008 or 2018. No residential or off-site business relocations would be necessary, and there would not be any impacts to community facilities. This alternative would provide limited opportunities for induced socioeconomic development. There would be no disproportionate impacts to minority or low-income communities. This alternative would meet national ambient air quality standards. It would not result in implementation of Best Management Practices to meet water quality standards. No historic properties or archaeological sites would be affected. There would be no impacts to terrestrial or aquatic habitats. No direct impacts to essential fish habitat or living marine resources would occur as result of this alternative, although potential secondary impacts could occur due to limited stormwater management at the Existing Site. There would be no impacts to Section 4(f) or Section 6(f) resources. There would be no impacts to any federally- or state-listed flora or fauna. There would be no impacts to wetlands or non-wetland Waters of the U.S. There would be no direct impacts to floodplains, coastal zones, coastal barriers, wild and scenic rivers, or farmlands. There would be no impact to energy supply/natural resources. There would be no effects as a result of light emissions. There would be adequate capacity to handle solid waste and there would be no additional or new bird hazards. There would be no impact to areas of known hazardous waste contamination. There would be no construction impacts and no impacts to surface transportation.

From a NEPA perspective applying the guidance in Question 6a of the 40 Most Asked Questions, the environmentally preferred alternative is the No-Action Alternative.

### **7.2 FAA’s Preferred Alternative**

The FAA identified the West Bay Site 8,400 foot Alternative, the Airport Sponsor’s Proposed Project, as its preferred alternative in the Final EIS, for reasons summarized briefly below and discussed in Section 3.13.3 of the Final EIS.

In keeping with CEQ’s guidance regarding identification of a preferred alternative, and because the FAA does not initiate airport development projects, the FAA’s selection of a preferred alternative may, where appropriate, take account of, and accord substantial deference to, the Airport Sponsor’s preferences. Consideration of the Airport Sponsor’s preferences in evaluating alternatives is appropriate where all alternatives meet the needs of the national airspace system and there is no clearly superior alternative from an environmental standpoint that meets the stated purpose and need.

In identifying the FAA’s preferred alternative, each of the alternatives examined in detail are evaluated for their ability to meet relevant statutory considerations, the criteria set forth in the National Plan of Integrated Airport Systems (NPIAS), and the purpose and need for the project.

The FAA's Statutory Mission

The FAA, in its consideration of alternatives, in addition to the relevant environmental statutes, has been mindful of its statutory charter. Relevant statutory considerations include:

- encouraging the development of civil aeronautics and safety of air commerce in the United States (49 U.S.C. § 40104);
- making certain that the safe operation of airports and the airway system remains the highest priority and that aviation facilities be constructed and operated to minimize current and projected noise impacts on nearby communities (49 U.S.C. § 47101);
- considering the public interest served by preventing deterioration in established safety procedures (49 U.S.C. § 40101(a)(3));
- planning the kind of airport development necessary to provide a safe, efficient, and integrated system of public use airports adequate to anticipate and meet the needs of civil aeronautics (49 U.S.C. § 47103).

The statutory considerations the FAA has taken into account lend support to a relocation alternative as compared to any alternative offered at the Existing Site. While the alternatives at both locations can meet the statutory mission of the FAA to encourage nationwide development of civil aeronautics and safety of air commerce, to make safety the highest priority, to minimize current and projected noise impacts on communities, and to prevent deterioration of established safety procedures, the West Bay Site alternatives are considered superior in this respect. For example, these goals can be satisfied through compliance with RSAs and avoidance and minimization of noise impacts on communities with little to no disruption to established communities under the West Bay Site alternatives. The same is not true at the Existing Site. In addition, any future expansion at the Existing Site is considered unlikely due to the increasing difficulty of further encroachment on established communities. These limitations do not exist at the West Bay Site. For these reasons, and as explained in greater detail in Section 3.13 of the Final EIS, the statutory considerations identified above are better served by selection of a West Bay Site alternative as compared to any of the Existing Site alternatives.

The NPIAS Goals

Development at the West Bay Site addresses and meets the goals identified by the FAA in the NPIAS described in Section 2.5.1 in the Final EIS, particularly in terms of:

- Meeting FAA standards for safe and efficient operations,
- Providing flexibility for expansion,
- Obtaining and maintaining land use compatibility,
- Balancing the aviation needs of the community with the concerns of the local community.

The West Bay Site alternatives better satisfy the NPIAS goals identified above for a number of reasons. For example, at the West Bay Site, there are no constraints on meeting established safety standards particularly with respect to RSAs. In addition, with respect to providing flexibility for expansion, the availability of land for further expansion when such expansion is warranted at the West Bay Site is in stark contrast to the limitations on further expansion at the Existing Site. Regarding land use compatibility, the proactive approach to compliance with land use planning evidenced in the West Bay Sector Planning process is a model for airport development. Finally, development at the West Bay Site properly balances aviation needs and impacts to the local community by avoiding disruption of established communities while providing service to the primary service area for PFN. Each of these elements of the NPIAS goals provide support for FAA's decision to identify the 8,400 foot West Bay Site Alternative as the FAA's preferred alternative.

### FAA Purpose and Need

For the reasons explained in detail in the Final EIS, the FAA identified the West Bay Site 8,400 foot Alternative as its preferred alternative because of its superior ability to meet the purposes and needs of the project with fewer constraints than presented by any of the other alternatives. Specifically, in Section 2.5.2 of the Final EIS, the FAA identified the following specific needs:

- *Ensure that the airport meets FAA design standards and is operated in a safe and efficient manner*  
The selected alternative would provide airfield facilities that meet FAA design and safety standards including fully compliant RSAs. The selected alternative also best minimizes airspace conflicts by increasing distance from SUAs.
- *Address aviation demand for the Panama City-Bay County air service area*  
The selected alternative best meets the future aviation demand for the affected air service area because of its proximity to the primary commercial service area including the rapidly developing sections of western Bay County.
- *Address the effects of PFN airport expansion related to noise and land use compatibility*  
The selected alternative will have a 10,000 foot Airfield Compatibility Use Special Treatment Zone (ACUSTZ) buffer and therefore will best provide noise and land use compatibility.
- *Address the need identified by the FAA for adequate runway length to accommodate existing and projected aviation demand*  
The selected alternative will provide a runway length of 8,400 feet which meets both existing and projected aviation demand.

### Environmental Considerations

In addition to FAA's statutory charter, the NPIAS goals, and the purpose and need identified by FAA for this project, FAA has also taken account of environmental considerations. FAA has determined that neither location (Existing Site or West Bay Site) can be deemed clearly superior from an environmental perspective for the reasons stated below. At the Existing Site, the primary considerations relate to impacts to people and human communities, whereas considerations at the West Bay Site relate primarily to natural communities and values. *See* Section 6.3 of this ROD. The Final EIS discloses the type and severity of the impacts at each site, which are different in many respects. **Tables 4 and 5** of this ROD provide a side-by-side comparison of the alternatives in terms of environmental and social impacts. The dissimilar nature of the impacts associated with the Existing Site and the West Bay Site prevents a meaningful direct comparison of impacts of the alternatives. To do so would require relative value judgments between impacts to human communities and impacts to natural communities. Therefore, upon review of these impacts and the different nature of the impacts at each site, the FAA has concluded that neither site can be deemed clearly environmentally superior.

#### *Environmental Considerations and Preferring the West Bay Site*

Because FAA cannot deem either the Existing Site or the West Bay Site clearly superior from an environmental perspective, the FAA is giving weight to the ability of the West Bay Site alternatives to provide future flexibility for expansion, current and future land use compatibility, decreased complexity in the airspace environment, and satisfaction of the Airport Sponsor's goals and objectives. By comparison, the Existing Site provides limited ability for future growth due to the constraints surround the airport, including Goose Bayou to the north and residential development to the south, east and west. Similarly, the Existing Site alternatives do not benefit the airspace environment in terms of complexity. Finally, the Existing Site alternatives fail to satisfy the goals and objectives of the Airport Sponsor.

*Environmental Considerations and Preferred Alternative at the West Bay Site*

Although the FAA has determined that it is appropriate to give weight to the preference of the Airport Sponsor to relocate the airport to the West Bay Site, in light of environmental considerations and the superior ability of the West Bay Site to meet FAA purpose and need, the FAA has also taken into consideration environmental factors at the West Bay Site when identifying the preferred alternative. Focusing upon the environmental impacts at the West Bay Site only, the FAA determined that wetlands and floodplains are the primary resource categories impacted. The impacts to wetlands are quantitatively different (121 acres) for the West Bay Site 8,400 foot Alternative and the West Bay Site 6,800 foot Alternative (Scenario 2). However, according to USACE, the Airport Sponsor's proposed mitigation appears to be more than sufficient to offset the impacts associated with the West Bay Site 8,400 foot Alternative.<sup>19</sup>

With respect to floodplain impacts at the West Bay Site, there is only a slight difference in total acres of impact between alternatives. Although all of the West Bay Site alternatives are considered to have significant floodplain encroachments, these impacts are adequately mitigated by the specific floodplain measures described in Sections 3.13.3.1 and 5.14.2 of the Final EIS, as well as the benefits to natural floodplain values derived from implementation of the Airport Sponsor's Conceptual Stormwater Management Plan and the proposed wetland mitigation plan. In light of these environmental considerations, the FAA has concluded that the differences in environmental impacts among the West Bay Site alternatives are sufficiently offset by mitigation and that the Airport Sponsor's preferences may therefore be given weight by the FAA.

Although the Final EIS evaluates alternatives at the West Bay Site that include a primary runway length of 6,800 feet (Scenario 1 and Scenario 2) and 8,400 feet, the Airport Sponsor prefers the West Bay Site 8,400 foot Alternative. This is because the additional 1,600 feet in runway length included with the West Bay Site 8,400 foot Alternative would provide the Airport Sponsor with flexibility to attract new, longer range non-stop service. This factor has been identified in Section 2.3 of the Final EIS in conjunction with the Airport Sponsor's stated goal to prepare for future opportunities to accommodate projected demand and expansion opportunities. No alternative satisfies this goal of the Airport Sponsor as fully as the West Bay Site 8,400 foot Alternative.

Additionally, the FAA has also identified the West Bay Site 8,400 foot Alternative because the West Bay Site has been deemed the operationally preferable location as compared to the Existing Site. Relocation of the operations from the Existing Site to the West Bay Site would provide an opportunity to minimize to the extent practicable airspace conflicts between civilian and military operations. The conceptual airspace associated with the preferred alternative does not overlap any SUA and is generally farther from surrounding SUA areas than the Existing Site.

Summary

In light of the nature of the environmental impacts when considering the three West Bay Site alternatives, the FAA has considered the West Bay Site 8,400 foot Alternative's superior ability to satisfy the Airport Sponsor's goals and objectives in making its selection. Because development at the West Bay Site would meet the needs of the national airspace system, the FAA's purpose and need identified for this project, the FAA's environmental responsibilities, and address the Airport Sponsor's goals, the FAA concludes that development at the West Bay Site would be preferred over expansion at the Existing Site and identified the West Bay Site as its preferred site alternative. Among the scenarios presenting the alternatives at the West Bay Site, the FAA has identified the West Bay Site 8,400 foot Alternative as its preferred alternative.

---

<sup>19</sup> Furthermore, the USACE has indicated that the mitigation is sufficient to mitigate impacts associated with the Airport Sponsor's future ultimate buildout scenario, the development of which is speculative. See April 25, 2005 letter from the USACE in Appendix D of the Final EIS.



### 7.3 Selected Alternative

The FAA's selected alternative is that alternative that best satisfies the purpose and need for the project and the FAA's statutory mission, while also meeting the FAA's environmental responsibilities. As previously disclosed, the environmentally preferred alternative in this case is the No-Action Alternative. Under the No-Action Alternative, improvements to provide adequate Runway Safety Areas would not be provided at the existing airport now or in the near future. Adoption of the No-Action Alternative would not meet the safety and design standards or provide the opportunity for expansion to meet projected aviation demand. Accordingly, although it is the environmentally preferred alternative, for the reasons discussed in Section 6 of this ROD, the FAA finds that adoption of the No-Action Alternative does not meet the FAA's purpose and need or the Airport Sponsor's goals and objectives. Thus, it will not be the FAA's selected alternative.

CEQ regulations provide guidance as to the considerations an agency may appropriately rely upon in reaching a decision. *See* 40 CFR 1505.2. Such considerations include technical considerations, agency statutory mission, and issues of national policy. The FAA has reviewed not only these considerations, but has also taken account of environmental impacts associated with each of the alternatives considered in detail. In keeping with 40 CFR 1505.2(b), the FAA has balanced the totality of these considerations and has used the NEPA process to reach a decision on its selected alternative. All of the factors that led the FAA to identify the West Bay Site 8,400 foot Alternative as its preferred alternative in the Final EIS equally support a decision to select it and approve the related federal actions necessary for its implementation. *See* Section 7.2 of this ROD for the discussion of the FAA's selection of the West Bay Site 8,400 foot Alternative as the preferred alternative. In making this selection, the FAA is fully aware of the environmental consequences and the benefits as described throughout the Final EIS and this ROD. Additionally, the FAA gave full consideration to all comments received regarding the Draft and Final EIS and the findings in Section 11 of this ROD relating to possible, prudent, and practicable alternatives.

## **8.0 PUBLIC OUTREACH, AGENCY, AND TRIBAL COORDINATION**

Public involvement requirements under the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA), the Airport Improvement Act (AIP), and FAA environmental guidance identify the public involvement activities necessary during development of an EIS.

The FAA has committed to public involvement and agency input throughout this EIS process. The FAA *Community Involvement Policy Statement*, dated April 17, 1995, clearly affirms:

The Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) is committed to complete, open, and effective participation in agency action. The agency regards community involvement as an essential element in the development of programs and decisions that affect the public.

Additionally, Chapter 2, Paragraph 208b. of FAA Order 1050.1E states:

At the earliest appropriate stage of the action and early in the process of preparing NEPA documentation, the responsible FAA official, or when applicable, the project proponent, must provide pertinent information to the affected community and agencies and consider the affected communities' opinions (40 CFR 1501.2). The extent of early coordination will depend on the complexity, sensitivity, degree of Federal involvement, and anticipated environmental impacts of the proposed action.

In Chapter 7, paragraph 75, of FAA Order 5050.4A, as a part of public involvement, the lead agency is encouraged to invite federal or state agencies that have "jurisdiction by law in areas that may be affected by airport development" to serve as cooperating agencies. These agencies may have expertise in a given area, or assure that the proper permits, licenses, or other requirements are met through the development of the EIS. As referenced in Section 1 of this ROD the USACE was a cooperating agency for this EIS.

In an effort to meet and exceed these requirements, the FAA developed and implemented a public involvement and agency coordination process that included the following:

- Public and agency scoping meetings.
- Agency coordination including extensive coordination with USACE, the cooperating agency.
- Agency and public information meetings.
- A public information workshop and public hearing.

### **8.1 Public Involvement and Agency Coordination**

From the outset, the public was provided with opportunities to participate and to contribute to the development of the EIS, and their concerns have been considered by the FAA throughout the EIS process. Both the Airport Sponsor and the FAA have been forthcoming with the public about the Proposed Project through various opportunities for public involvement.

The FAA has conducted public information meetings to inform the public of the Airport Sponsor's Proposed Project and subsequent environmental study. The FAA has received numerous public comments throughout the EIS process. All of these comments have been reviewed to ensure that the needs and concerns of the public were considered and addressed. Based on these opportunities for public participation, the FAA is satisfied that it has fully considered the public's views regarding the Airport Sponsor's proposal to relocate the existing airport to the West Bay Site.

The public involvement and agency coordination efforts included the following:

- The FAA held an agency scoping meeting on December 13, 2001 at the Gulf Coast Community College in Panama City, Florida. The meeting included a brief presentation

- by the FAA on the project scope and schedule. A question and answer session followed the presentation, and forms were distributed to obtain written comments.
- A public scoping meeting was held in an open house format on the evening of December 13, 2001 at the Gulf Coast Community College. The workshop format allowed attendees to review presentation boards and ask questions of the project team. Representatives of the FAA and the Airport Sponsor were available to answer questions. Forms were available for written comments, and a court reporter was available to transcribe oral comments.
  - An FAA-sponsored agency meeting was held on May 1, 2003 at the Panama City-Bay County International Airport conference room. The meeting included an update on the status of the EIS and provided an opportunity for agency discussion and questions.
  - A public information meeting was held on May 13, 2003 at the Gulf Coast Community College. The meeting format allowed the 96 attendees to informally review the presentation boards, to ask questions of the FAA on a one-on-one basis, and to provide oral comments to the court reporter before and after a formal presentation and question and answer session. The presentation boards provided information about the EIS process, the Airport Sponsor's Proposed Project, and alternatives developed. Meeting attendees were provided with a handout summarizing the presentation and with a written comment form.
  - A Notice of Availability (NOA) of the Draft EIS was published in the *Federal Register* on November 26, 2004. An amended NOA to extend the comment period for the Draft EIS was subsequently published on December 3, 2004.
  - The Draft EIS was distributed for public review to the Panama City Library, the Panama City-Bay County International Airport, the USACE Panama City Regulatory Office, and the FAA Orlando Airports District Office.
  - Following publication of the Draft EIS, a Public Information Workshop and Public Hearing were held at the Gulf Coast Community College on January 11, 2005. The Public Information Workshop, held from 5-7 pm, included an open-house style workshop with presentation boards and project staff available to answer questions. A formal Public Hearing followed the workshop until 9:30 pm where comments were made publicly before a hearing officer. A private comment area was provided during both meetings that allowed individuals to make comments that were recorded by a court reporter. More than 180 people attended both meetings and 40 people made comments during the hearing. The Public Hearing, conducted in association with issuance of the Draft EIS, was hosted by the FAA and the USACE for purposes of meeting each agency's statutory requirements.
  - The Draft EIS was available for 64 days of public comment. The comment period for the Draft EIS began on November 26, 2004 and was originally scheduled to end on January 21, 2005. However, the FAA extended the public comment period for another seven (7) days, or until January 28, 2005, in response to a request for an extension submitted by John Hedrick of the Panhandle Citizen's Coalition.
  - Written and oral comments on the Draft EIS were received from 917 people and organizations including 564 form letters from public individuals and 164 form letters from public organizations. In addition, form letters were received from nine public officials, one local agency, and 16 chambers of commerce or county tourist development/economic development agencies. Of the 189 non-form letters received, the comments reflected concerns about various impacts to the areas for the Existing Site and West Bay Site alternatives. The comments were reviewed and considered by the FAA in preparation of the Final EIS. Responses to the comments submitted on the Draft EIS by federal, state, and local agencies are included in Volume III of the FEIS. Volume IV of the Final EIS includes responses to comments on the Draft EIS from public individuals, and Volume V of the Final EIS includes responses to comments on the Draft EIS from public organizations.

- On May 12, 2006, the FAA published a Notice of Availability of the Final EIS in the *Federal Register*, soliciting comments on the Final EIS for a period of 45 days. The comment period ended on July 5, 2006.
- The FAA received a total of 162 comment letters on the Final EIS. This total includes 140 form letters that were received during the comment period (May 19-July 5, 2006). Of the 22 non-form letters received, five were from federal and state elected officials, one from a federal agency, two from state agencies, three from public organizations, and 11 were from individuals. The comments in the form letters indicated lack of support for the proposed project. Of the non-form letters, the letters from federal and state elected officials indicated support for the proposed project. Letters from public organizations and individuals provided comments on the Final EIS. The comments on the Final EIS are further described in Section 10 of the ROD. All comments received were evaluated and considered by the FAA. Responses to comments received on the Final EIS are appended to this ROD. *See Appendix B.*

## 8.2 Additional Agency Coordination

The FAA recognizes the participation of the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE) as a cooperating agency in processing the Final EIS. The FAA coordinated with numerous other federal, state, and local agencies including the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS), National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS), Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS), U.S. Air Force (USAF), Florida Department of Environmental Protection (FDEP), Florida Department of Transportation (FDOT), Florida Department of Community Affairs (FDCA), Florida Department of Historic Resources (FDHR), Northwest Florida Water Management District (NFWFMD), West Florida Regional Planning Council (WFRPC), and Bay County.

### **Biological Assessment /Biological Opinion**

As a result of the FAA's coordination with the USFWS, it was determined that a Biological Assessment (BA) would be prepared for the Airport Sponsor's Proposed Project. Consultation with the USFWS was conducted pursuant to Section 7 of the Endangered Species Act. The FAA prepared a draft BA for the flatwoods salamander and the Eastern indigo snake. The USFWS reviewed the draft BA and determined that several species should be addressed including flatwoods salamander, American alligator, Eastern indigo snake, Gulf moccasinshell mussel, Gulf sturgeon, oval pigtoe mussel, piping plover, red-cockaded woodpecker, and bald eagle. The FAA prepared and submitted a final BA on August 30, 2005 assessing the potential impacts to these species for USFWS review. *See Appendix T* of the Final EIS for a copy of the final BA. The USFWS reviewed the final BA and concurred with the FAA determination that there was no effect to any of these species except the potential effects to the flatwoods salamander.

The FAA determined in the final BA that the West Bay Site alternatives "may affect, likely to adversely affect" the flatwoods salamander. The USFWS concurred with this determination and prepared a Biological Opinion (BO) for the flatwoods salamander. The BO determined that the Airport Sponsor's Proposed Project is not likely to jeopardize the continued existence of the flatwoods salamander. As part of the BO, the USFWS also issued non-discretionary *Terms and Conditions* to be implemented by the Airport Sponsor and/or the FAA and USACE. The determination by the USFWS and the *Terms and Conditions* required by USFWS are included in the BO. *See Appendix E* of this ROD.

### **Essential Fish Habitat/Living Marine Resources**

FAA consulted with the National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) regarding potential impact to Essential Fish Habitat (EFH). The FAA determined that the Airport Sponsor's Proposed Project would have minimal impact on EFH and that any secondary impacts that may occur would be adequately mitigated. NMFS reviewed the EFH Assessment and had no EFH conservation recommendations to offer. The direct and secondary impacts to EFH and Living Marine Resources (LMR) are discussed in Section 5.10.4 of the Final EIS. The National Marine Fisheries

Service reviewed the EFH and LMR assessment and provided concurrence in a letter dated July 13, 2005. *See* Appendix S of the Final EIS.

### **Coastal Zone**

The State of Florida has preliminarily concurred with the FAA's determination that the Airport Sponsor's Proposed Project is consistent with the enforceable policies of the Florida Coastal Management Program (FCMP) to the maximum extent practicable. The Airport Sponsor's receipt of the necessary state resource permit will serve as the final finding of consistency with the FCMP. *See* the FDEP correspondence dated February 2, 2005 in Appendix W of the Final EIS and correspondence dated June 29, 2006 in **Appendix F** of this ROD. The FDEP indicated its intent to issue this permit in its *Notice of Intent to Issue (NOI) Ecosystem Management Agreement and Other Related Permits* on October 10, 2005 (*See* Appendix D of the Final EIS).

### **Redevelopment of the Existing Site**

As referenced in Section 2.2.3 of the Final EIS, in November 2005, the Airport Sponsor published a Request for Proposals (RFP) soliciting bids for possible sale and redevelopment of the Existing Site in the event the FAA approved a West Bay Site alternative. As a result, the FAA identified the need to further coordinate with various federal and state agencies. In January 2006, the FAA discussed with the EPA the Airport Sponsor's RFP, the methodology used to identify a composite redevelopment scenario, and the proposed analyses of the composite redevelopment scenario that would be added to the Final EIS. The EPA appreciated the FAA's efforts to continue coordination on the EIS process and to provide an initial review of the redevelopment information. The FAA also coordinated with NMFS and USFWS regarding the composite redevelopment scenario and the agencies' requirements for analysis. *See* **Appendix G** in this ROD for correspondence related to coordination with USFWS and NMFS.

The FAA conducted an analysis of this composite redevelopment scenario because such redevelopment is an indirect impact of FAA's future decommissioning and release for disposal of the Existing Site for non-aeronautical use. FAA's actions to decommission and release the existing airport property will only occur because FAA is approving relocation of the airport. The potential impacts of the redevelopment scenario are described in Chapter 5 of the Final EIS.

The FAA anticipates that any future redevelopment of the Existing Site is likely to adversely affect the Robinson Bayou South site (8BY935), an archaeological site the FAA has determined is eligible for listing on the National Register of Historic Places (NRHP). The site is located in the southwest corner of the Existing Site. The FAA coordinated with the Florida State Historic Preservation Officer (SHPO) and potentially interested tribal contacts, including Tribal Historic Preservation Officers (THPOs), regarding an Memorandum of Agreement (MOA) that would require the creation of a conservation (historic preservation) easement for the Robinson Bayou South site. This easement will run with the land and be binding on all subsequent owners and will be stated in the real property deed as a restriction, easement, covenant, or condition of ownership. The FAA will ensure that the Airport Sponsor amends the real property deed to legally establish this easement (including recordation) prior to the FAA's decommissioning and release for disposal of the Existing Site for non-aeronautical use. The conservation (historic preservation) easement would result in avoidance of any adverse effects to the 8BY935 site. According to correspondence dated April 24, 2006, the Airport Sponsor has committed to preserving the site in the event that the Airport Sponsor's Proposed Project is approved. The MOA was executed in July 2006 and signed by the Florida Division of Historic Resources (SHPO) and the Federal Aviation Administration with the Panama City-Bay County International Airport and Industrial District signing the MOA as a concurring party. A copy of the executed MOA and associated documentation, including correspondence from the Advisory Council on Historic Preservation (ACHP), is in **Appendix H** of this ROD.

### **8.3 Tribal Coordination**

In June 2004, the FAA identified the potential consulting parties to the Section 106 process. These included the FAA, the Panama City-Bay County Airport and Industrial District, the Florida SHPO, the Seminole Tribe of Florida, the Miccosukee Tribe of Indians of Florida, the Seminole Nation of Oklahoma, the Poarch Band of Creek Indians, and Mr. Joe Quetone, the Executive Director of the Florida Governor's Council on Indian Affairs. Each of these parties was contacted, provided information concerning the Proposed Project, and asked to provide comments to the FAA regarding the proposed undertaking. Three tribes, the Seminole Tribe of Florida, the Miccosukee Tribe of Indians of Florida, and the Seminole Nation of Oklahoma, requested additional information about potential historic properties that could be affected by construction of the proposed project or alternatives. This information was provided to these tribes in August 2004. All of the consulting parties were provided a copy of the Draft EIS when it was published in November 2004. The Muscogee (Creek) Nation and the Mississippi Band of Choctaw Indians were later identified and provided information about potential historic properties that could be affected by construction of the proposed project or alternatives and the Draft EIS. Copies of the Final EIS were provided to tribal contacts as identified in Chapter 8 of the Final EIS. As mentioned in Section 8.2 of this ROD the FAA also coordinated with the THPOs and other tribal contacts regarding the MOA that would require the creation of a conservation (historic preservation) easement for the Robinson Bayou South site.

### **8.4 Permits**

Simultaneously with preparation, distribution, and review of the Final EIS and completion of this ROD, the USACE is reviewing and processing a Section 404 permit application and pre-discharge notification (USACE #SAJ-2001-5264) per the requirements of the Clean Water Act, as submitted by the Airport Sponsor. The Public Notice was issued by USACE on May 2, 2005 and USACE submitted a position letter requesting responses to comments from the applicant on November 1, 2005. The applicant responded to the request for additional information on June 12, 2006. The USACE continues to review and process the application.

Similarly, FDEP is reviewing anti-degradation (Water Quality Standards) and Section 401 (Water Quality Certification) information pertaining to potential project-related wetland impacts. FDEP issued a *Notice of Intent to Issue (NOI) Ecosystem Management Agreement and Other Related Permits* on October 10, 2005.

## 9.0 Environmental Impacts and Mitigation Measures

In accordance with the technical guidelines set forth in FAA Orders 1050.1E and 5050.4A<sup>20</sup> and Council on Environmental Quality (CEQ) regulations, 40 CFR Part 1500, Chapter 5 of the Final EIS describes the potential benefits and adverse social, economic, and environmental impacts associated with implementing any of the alternatives analyzed in the Final EIS. Included in the discussion of impacts are any adverse environmental effects that cannot be avoided should the Airport Sponsor's Proposed Project or any of the alternatives be implemented, a description of man's relationship between short-term uses of the environment and long-term productivity, and any irreversible or irretrievable commitments of resources.<sup>21</sup> The technical findings provide federal decision-makers and officials, as well as the public, with an understanding of the potential effects of this project on the human, physical, and natural environments.

As discussed in Section 6.3 of this ROD and Section 3.10 of the Final EIS, seven alternatives were carried forward for detailed environmental impact assessment:

- No-Action Alternative: No construction at PFN
- Extend Existing Runway 14-32 6,800 Feet to the southeast
- Extend Existing Runway 14-32 6,800 Feet to the southeast – Engineered Materials Arresting System (EMAS) Scenario 2
- Extend Existing Runway 14-32 8,400 Feet to the southeast
- Relocate the existing PFN airport to the West Bay Site, and construct Runway 16-43 6,800 Feet Scenario 1
- Relocate the existing PFN airport to the West Bay Site, and construct Runway 16-43 6,800 Feet Scenario 2
- Relocate the existing PFN airport to the West Bay Site, and construct Runway 16-43 8,400 Feet (Airport Sponsor's Proposed Project)

The Final EIS presents a detailed examination of the impacts for all alternatives for each year of analysis. The impacts of the FAA's preferred alternative and the No-Action Alternative, and the associated mitigation measures and other impact reduction measures, are discussed in this section of the ROD. **Tables 4** and **5** in Section 7 of this ROD present a side-by-side comparison of the seven build alternatives, in addition to the No-Action Alternative, in terms of environmental impacts. **Table 7** of this ROD identifies those mitigation measures disclosed in the Final EIS that are a condition of approval of this ROD. *See* Section 12 of this ROD for further information regarding conditions of approval of this ROD; *see also* **Appendix I** of this ROD for the complete list of the Airport Sponsor's mitigation commitments.

---

<sup>20</sup> FAA Order 5050.4A was in effect during the EIS analysis and the Final EIS was completed under that order. FAA Order 5050.4B became effective on April 28, 2006.

<sup>21</sup> Potential redevelopment impacts are not discussed in Section 9 of this ROD. Section 9 discusses the impacts of the actions being approved in this ROD.

Panama City-Bay County International Airport  
Record of Decision

**Table 7  
Required Mitigation Measures**

<b>Category</b>	<b>Mitigation Measure</b>
Noise and Compatible Land Use	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ 10,000-foot compatible use zone in accordance with the Airport Detailed Specific Area Plan and Bay County Comprehensive Plan</li> </ul>
Water Quality/ Wetlands	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Preservation and enhancement of wetlands and upland habitat in accordance with the approved mitigation plan</li> <li>▪ Construction BMPs in accordance with FAA Advisory Circular 150/5370-10B</li> <li>▪ Stormwater management system designed to match pre-project discharge rates and outfall to existing discharge points</li> <li>▪ Baseline surface and ground water quality monitoring data collected on the site (groundwater) and in downstream areas (surface waters), including Burnt Mill Creek, Crooked Creek, and West Bay</li> <li>▪ Construction and post-development monitoring of water quality, sediments, and stream biota</li> <li>▪ Hydrologic restoration, enhancement, and preservation in the mitigation area, including work to improve both streams and wetlands connected with West Bay; voluntary use of special management zones around high quality wetlands, West Bay and associated tidal creeks and marsh; and conservation easements</li> <li>▪ Exceed FDEP Outstanding Florida Water and Bay County requirements for control of runoff as described in Section 5.8.4.3.</li> </ul>
Biotic Communities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Preservation and enhancement of wetlands and upland habitat in accordance with the approved mitigation plan</li> <li>▪ BMPs and sedimentation control guidelines in accordance with FAA Advisory Circular 150/5370-10B</li> <li>▪ Implementation of the Wildlife Management Plan</li> <li>▪ Prohibition on planting of invasive species on Airport property and control of invasive species on mitigation parcels</li> <li>▪ Manage remaining undeveloped lands on airport property to allow wildlife usage until these lands are required for development</li> <li>▪ Preservation, enhancement, and restoration of wetlands and uplands in mitigation area in accordance with the approved mitigation plan</li> <li>▪ Construction and post-development monitoring of water quality, sediments, and stream biota</li> </ul>
Endangered and Threatened Species	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Preservation and enhancement of wetlands and upland habitat in accordance with the approved mitigation plan</li> <li>▪ Payment of mitigation fee for incidental take of gopher tortoise or relocation of gopher tortoises</li> <li>▪ Preservation and enhancement of flatwoods salamander habitat in the mitigation area including completion of habitat assessments on all potential breeding ponds, pine thinning, long-term use of prescribed fire, longleaf planting, observation of voluntary special management zones around potential breeding ponds, and conservation easements</li> <li>▪ Preservation, enhancement, and restoration of habitat for gopher tortoise and other associated species in planted pine uplands in the mitigation area, including slash pine thinning, removal of sand pine, planting of longleaf pine, long-term use of prescribed fire, and conservation easements</li> <li>▪ Implementation of standard protection measures for eastern indigo snake</li> </ul>



Panama City-Bay County International Airport  
Record of Decision

**Table 7  
Required Mitigation Measures**

Category	Mitigation Measure
Hazardous Materials/Waste	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ BMPs for spill prevention and control in accordance with FAA Order 1050.10</li> <li>▪ Above ground storage tanks and above ground piping</li> <li>▪ In the event previously unknown contaminants are discovered during construction, or a spill occurs during construction, work should stop until the National Response Center (NRC) is notified. The NRC telephone number is 800/424-8802.</li> </ul>
Construction	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ BMPs in accordance with FAA Advisory Circular 150/5370-10B</li> </ul>
Surface Transportation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Turn lanes from CR 388 to airport access road at West Bay site</li> </ul>
Floodplains	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ All airport development would meet the requirements of the Bay County Flood Damage Prevention Ordinance, including elevating facilities above base flood level. In addition, all development in the Sector Plan area would meet the requirements of that ordinance.</li> <li>▪ A commitment was made by the Airport Sponsor in the CSMP and as part of the Ecosystem Team Permit to maintain natural drainage patterns. Additionally, the Airport Sponsor commits to design the stormwater management system to match pre-project discharge rates and outfall to existing discharge points to minimize potential downstream impacts from flooding.</li> <li>▪ Exceed FDEP Outstanding Florida Water and Bay County requirements for control of runoff as described in Section 5.8.4.3.</li> <li>▪ Large areas of existing floodplain associated with tributaries of Burnt Mill and Crooked Creeks and West Bay within the proposed mitigation parcels will be preserved in perpetuity.</li> <li>▪ Inclusion of all practicable measures in the design of the proposal to minimize harm and to restore and preserve the natural and beneficial floodplain values affected.</li> </ul>
Historic, Architectural, Archaeological, and Cultural Resources	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ If historic properties or unanticipated effects on historic properties or cultural resources are discovered during construction, all related construction activities would immediately cease and the Airport Sponsor would immediately notify the FAA. The FAA would then determine what action should be taken to resolve any adverse effects. The FAA would also notify the SHPO/THPO and any Tribe that might attach religious and cultural significance to the affected property, and, if necessary, the Advisory Council on Historic Preservation (ACHP), within 48 hours of discovery. The notification should describe the actions proposed by the FAA to resolve the adverse effects. The SHPO/THPO and the Tribe shall respond within 48 hours of notification and the FAA shall take into account their recommendations and carry out appropriate actions. The FAA shall provide a report of the actions taken to address the effects on these resources.</li> </ul>

Source: Adapted from the Airport Sponsor's Mitigation Commitment table as shown in **Appendix I** of this ROD.

## 9.1 Noise and Compatible Land Use

### Impacts

For the West Bay Site 8,400 foot Alternative, no significant noise impacts associated with aircraft operations would be expected. Implementation of the West Bay Site 8,400 foot Alternative would reduce the number of persons impacted by aircraft noise levels when compared to the No-Action Alternative. Noise from generators and other construction equipment would occur during the construction of the new airport but ambient noise levels outside the proposed property boundary of the relocated airport would be unchanged. While the West Bay Site 8,400 foot Alternative does not require noise mitigation, the Airport Sponsor is committed to reducing the potential for future noise complaints and ensuring land use compatibility.

Implementation of the Airport Sponsor's Proposed Project would not result in significant noise impacts as defined in FAA Orders 1050.1E and 5050.4A.

The West Bay Site 8,400 foot Alternative would have no noise impacts to residences or persons. The Airport Sponsor has proposed a residential exclusion zone (ACUSTZ)<sup>22</sup> that would be defined by a 10,000-foot buffer surrounding a relocated airport at the West Bay Site. With the proposed implementation of the ACUSTZ, the West Bay Site 8,400 foot Alternative would minimize the potential for noise-sensitive land uses to be constructed in the vicinity of the relocated airport. Moving the airport to the West Bay Site would allow for the airport and ancillary development to be planned in a detailed and comprehensive manner. The West Bay Sector Plan and the adopted Airport and West Bay DSAPs are the first steps in this process.

Implementation of the West Bay Site 8,400 foot Alternative would avoid development of non-compatible land uses as defined in Table 5-1, *Suggested Land Use Compatibility Guidelines in Aircraft Noise Exposure Areas*, of the Final EIS. The No-Action Alternative would be compatible with the comprehensive plan for Panama City as it assumes the continued operation of PFN in its existing location and would have minimal impacts on land use due to increases in aircraft noise. As mentioned above, the Airport Sponsor has proposed a residential exclusion zone (ACUSTZ) that would be defined by a 10,000-foot buffer surrounding a relocated airport at the West Bay Site.

### Mitigation

No noise mitigation would be required for the No-Action Alternative or the West Bay Site 8,400 foot Alternative. The Airport Sponsor has committed to reducing the potential for future noise complaints and ensuring land use compatibility through implementation of a residential exclusion zone (ACUSTZ) that would be defined by a 10,000-foot buffer surrounding a relocated airport at the West Bay Site.

## 9.2 Social/Induced Impacts

### Impacts

The No-Action Alternative and the West Bay Site 8,400 foot Alternative would not require any relocation of residences, community facilities, or businesses or displacement of any persons. No disruption in transportation patterns would occur in the vicinity of the West Bay Site. No environmental or medical conditions would result from the No-Action or the West Bay Site 8,400 foot Alternative that would affect children's health or safety. Therefore, there would be no significant social impacts.

---

<sup>22</sup> ACUSTZ refers to the Airfield Compatibility Use Special Treatment Zone as adopted in the Bay County Comprehensive Plan, Section 12A Airport Sub-element, Policy 12A.2.b. **Appendix J** of this ROD contains the Land Donation Agreement which provides a copy of the relevant section of the Bay County Comprehensive Plan.

Businesses at the existing airport could relocate to the West Bay Site as a result of the implementation of the West Bay Site 8,400 foot Alternative and it is not anticipated that any jobs would be lost. Businesses that relocate would not be eligible for federal relocation assistance and would be required to negotiate a new lease with the Airport Sponsor. Although there would be employment opportunities with the No-Action Alternative, future development at the Existing Site would be limited. There would be limited induced socioeconomic opportunities related to the No-Action Alternative. Permanent job opportunities beyond those currently available would be limited. Forecasted growth in operations could potentially induce development; however, there is little developable land surrounding PFN.

The West Bay Site 8,400 foot Alternative would displace no existing homes or businesses. This alternative would likely attract general aviation, retail/commercial, office, and industrial tenants that would provide additional regional employment opportunities. These changes, in addition to the projected population growth in Bay County, could cause a shift in Bay County's development patterns. The development patterns have the potential to create a new center of economic activity in Bay County. As indicated in Table 5-26, *Fiscal Impact Assessment for Airport and West Bay DSAPs*, in the Final EIS, there would be substantial changes in land use. More than 9,980 jobs are projected within the West Bay Site study area. In addition to Bay County residents, those residing in portions of Washington, Walton, and Gulf Counties within a 30-minute drive of the West Bay Site could also experience induced socioeconomic opportunities.

The West Bay Site 8,400 foot Alternative would have induced socioeconomic impacts related to the implementation of the West Bay and Airport DSAPs. The West Bay and Airport DSAPs accommodate projected changes in patterns of population, movement and growth, public service demands, and changes in business and economic activity to the extent influenced by the Airport Sponsor's Proposed Project. With the West Bay DSAP, there would be more than 6,000 acres of residential development, which would house approximately 14,135 persons in more than 5,840 dwelling units.

Mitigation

No mitigation is required.

**9.3 Environmental Justice**

Impacts

There would be no environmental justice impacts from the No Action Alternative or West Bay Site 8,400 foot Alternative. The West Bay Site 8,400 foot Alternative would not result in disproportionately high and adverse impacts to minority or low-income populations.

Mitigation

No mitigation is required.

**9.4 Air Quality**

Impacts

Bay County is currently in attainment of the NAAQS for all criteria pollutants. Although the West Bay Site 8,400 foot Alternative would lead to increases in criteria pollutant emissions when compared to the No-Action Alternative, these increases are not significant.

The results of the Emissions and Dispersion Modeling System (EDMS) dispersion analysis conducted for the Final EIS indicate that the West Bay Site 8,400 foot Alternative would not result in concentrations of NO<sub>2</sub> or PM<sub>10</sub> that exceed the NAAQS. The results of the roadway intersection analysis indicate that the West Bay Site 8,400 foot Alternative would not significantly increase carbon monoxide (CO) concentrations at roadway intersections near the West Bay Site. CO concentrations at major roadway intersections would be below the 1-hour and 8-hour average NAAQS established for CO.

Implementation of the West Bay Site 8,400 foot Alternative would not result in any exceedances of the NAAQS.

#### Mitigation

No mitigation is required for the West Bay Site 8,400 foot Alternative.

The Airport Sponsor is considering various emission control strategies to (1) offset temporary construction emissions and operational emissions, and (2) reduce future airport-related emissions to the extent possible. The Airport Sponsor will encourage airline use of measures and equipment for emission control.

### **9.5 Water Quality**

#### Impacts

Impacts to water quality would be greater with the West Bay Site 8,400 foot Alternative than the No-Action Alternative due to direct loss of streams and wetlands and indirect impacts to surface water and groundwater.

*Surface Water* - Approximately 596.2 acres of wetlands and 7,279 linear feet of streams would be impacted with the West Bay Site 8,400 foot Alternative. The concentration of pollutants in stormwater from this alternative is due to projected increased growth in the number of flights at the West Bay Site and the larger impervious areas at the West Bay Site. There are no direct impacts to the Burnt Mill and Crooked Creek, but direct impacts to tributaries of these streams (Kelly Branch, Bear Branch and Morrell Branch) will occur. The drainage patterns in the major systems, Burnt Mill and Crooked Creek will be maintained. The drainage patterns in the smaller systems of Bear Branch, Kelly Branch and Morrell Branch will be altered. In general, some flow that is currently going into Kelly Branch will be diverted in part to Bear Branch and Morrell Branch. This could have the effect of reducing base flow in the remaining portion of Kelly Branch and thereby impacting aquatic functions. The potential impacts include discharge of pollutants into adjacent streams and wetlands; direct loss of habitat; and increased volume and rate of discharge. Because impervious cover for the West Bay Site was estimated at 58 percent for water quality treatment purposes based on the Conceptual Stormwater Management Plan (CSMP) for the West Bay Site 8,400 Alternative, the volume of runoff would be greater than that of the West Bay Site under its current vegetative conditions as a result of a decrease in infiltration.

Implementation of the West Bay Site 8,400 foot Alternative may result in short and long-term surface water quality impacts from stormwater runoff. Short-term impacts from construction activities may result in increases in sedimentation and turbidity in surface water resources in proximity to and down stream of disturbed areas. Long-term impacts could occur from operation of this alternative and include increased volumes of stormwater runoff from impervious surfaces such as runways, taxiway, aprons, terminal facilities, parking, and the ground transportation system. Implementation of the West Bay Site 8,400 foot Alternative would result in increased quantities of stormwater runoff from approximately 799 acres of impervious areas within the Crooked Creek and Burnt Mill Creek watersheds. This is based on an assumption of a maximum of 58 percent impervious cover for the West Bay Site 8,400 foot Alternative.

The effects of increased runoff volumes and peak discharges are stream erosion and increased acute changes in salinity. Stream erosion can impair stream habitat as well as create increases in sedimentation and turbidity. Additionally, lawns and other landscape areas would contribute and increase stormwater runoff as compared to traditional silviculture activities that represent existing conditions at the West Bay Site. Lawn and landscape maintenance activities associated with the airport facilities may contribute concentrations of ammonia nitrogen, nitrate, dissolved phosphorous, and Total Kjeldahl Nitrogen.

Burnt Mill Creek and Crooked Creek are classified as Class III streams and impacts potentially affecting them would be reduced by dilution and natural attenuation of pollutants before they reach West Bay, a Class II water body. Surface water classifications (Class I to Class V) are arranged based on the degree of protection required with Class I waters having the most stringent requirements. Class II waters are designated based on their use for shellfish harvesting or propagation. Class III waters are designated based on their use for recreation, propagation, and maintenance of a healthy and well balanced population of fish and wildlife. There are no direct impacts to Burnt Mill and Crooked Creeks, but there are possible secondary impacts to these streams through the direct loss of wetlands and tributaries of these streams on the West Bay Site. Many of the stream and wetland systems on the West Bay Site have been previously altered by silviculture activities. It is anticipated that the removal of these systems would disrupt the ecological function of the wetlands and streams immediately downstream of the West Bay Site.

The influx of treated stormwater runoff into the tannin colored streams in the West Bay project area and ultimately into West Bay is a possible issue of concern for the West Bay Site; however, given that the proposed West Bay Site constitutes only 13.9 percent of Crooked Creek and 3.7 percent of Burnt Mill Creek drainage basins, it is unlikely that color changes in the two primary streams would have a significant affect on the water color in West Bay. It is more likely that color would be altered in the smaller, secondary tributaries to Burnt Mill and Crooked Creeks that have associated riparian wetlands proposed to be impacted or filled.

Another source of pollutants in runoff is from atmospheric deposition of air pollutants such as nitrogen and sulfurous compounds. The concentration of pollutants in stormwater runoff from the West Bay Site 8,400 foot Alternative would be greater than would be expected from the No-Action Alternative due to projected increase growth in the number of flights at the proposed West Bay Site under the Airport Sponsor's forecast and larger impervious areas associated with the construction of a longer runway system and supporting impervious areas.

The proposed West Bay Site would have a deicing facility and the quantity of deicing fluid used would depend upon varying weather conditions and aircraft size. The specific location for deicing has not been determined, but the deicing would be routed to a holding tank for storage and removal. Any accidental discharge of deicing agents is recognized as a potential harmful contaminant to Burnt Mill and Crooked Creeks. The West Bay Site 8,400 foot Alternative would have to conform to the monitoring requirements for the treatment of ethylene glycol in stormwater runoff as specified in the Airport's National Pollution Discharge Elimination Systems (NPDES) Permit.

*Groundwater* – Potential impacts to groundwater from this alternative would include contamination from spills, leaking storage tanks, or infiltration of polluted runoff, as well as reduction of infiltration and recharge from increased impervious cover. Another potential impact to groundwater would be that recharge and discharge areas within the West Bay Site would be covered with new impervious surfaces as a result of implementation of the West Bay Site 8,400 foot Alternative. This could affect downstream wetlands and base and surface flow in the downstream areas. Based on the CSMP and existing data from US Geological Survey (USGS) studies, accurate prediction of the precise impact that the development of the West Bay Site 8,400 foot Alternative would have on base flow in the streams immediately below the site is not feasible. However, it is possible to perform a comparative assessment based on anticipated recharge potential of the pre-development site versus the post development site. The USGS has determined estimated annual mean recharge rates of as much as 12-15 inches per year for the Bay County area in pervious areas such as silvicultural lands. The West Bay Site 8,400 foot Alternative would add approximately 455 acres of impervious areas to the Crooked Creek basin and 344 acres to Burnt Mill Creek basin.<sup>23</sup> Therefore, it can be assumed that most of the 12 to 15 inches per year would not infiltrate the soil in those impervious areas as it does in the existing conditions. This water

---

<sup>23</sup> Based on a maximum impervious cover of 75 percent according to the CSMP.

would become stormwater runoff flowing into drainage swales adjacent to the runways, taxiways, and other impervious areas.

Based on the CSMP, the runoff from the majority of the impervious cover proposed for the West Bay Site 8,400 foot Alternative would not be treated through infiltration devices that would result in direct recharge of groundwater. The devices proposed are considered acceptable for stormwater treatment by FDEP. However, the devices treating the majority of the runoff are dry detention basins that filter a minimum of 0.75 inches of runoff through a sand/gravel bed system with under drains that would mostly discharge into existing drainage ways as opposed to wetland flats. As such, infiltration and groundwater recharge would not be directly achieved by these devices. This could result in a reduction of base flow in streams down-gradient of the existing groundwater recharge areas.

*Water Supply and Wastewater* – The impacts to water supply and wastewater would be less for the West Bay Site 8,400 foot Alternative than the water supply and wastewater impacts at the Existing Site under the No-Action Alternative due to the proposed use of a recycle facility for the car wash area at the West Bay Site. No water recycling facility exists at the Existing Site, thus the No Action alternative would generate both more wastewater and a greater demand on the water supply. Bay County currently has capacity to accommodate the potable water demand for the No-Action and the West Bay Site 8,400 foot Alternative. Bay County also has the capacity to accommodate the wastewater for the No-Action Alternative. There is currently no sewer service for the West Bay Site 8,400 foot Alternative. The Airport Sponsor would construct a wastewater treatment facility for the West Bay Site.

#### Mitigation

*Surface Water* – The Airport Sponsor's mitigation commitments regarding water quality are included in Appendix R of the Final EIS. FDEP issued a *Notice of Intent to Issue (NOI) Ecosystem Management Agreement and Other Related Permits* on October 10, 2005. Through the ETP process, several Net Environmental Benefits (NEBs) were defined by FDEP and the Airport Sponsor. These NEBs for water quality included designing the stormwater management system to meet the FDEP Outstanding Florida Water (OFW) criteria even though the stormwater runoff will not discharge to a State designated OFW. In addition, the Airport Sponsor committed to design the storm water system to maintain existing drainage patterns and hydrologic basin outfalls in the post development condition. All post development outfalls will be located near or at their pre-development outfall locations to sustain existing wetland hydro-periods.<sup>24</sup> A copy of the NOI and the NEBs are included in Appendix U of the Final EIS. The Airport Sponsor will implement a construction and post-construction monitoring program that includes water and sediment quality sampling and monitoring of stream biota. Details of this monitoring program, as proposed to FDEP, are included in Appendix R of the Final EIS. The monitoring plan includes baseline surface and ground water quality monitoring data collected on the site (groundwater) and in downstream areas (surface waters), including the main creeks and West Bay. The purpose of the monitoring program is to document water quality conditions in downstream water bodies (Burnt Mill and Crooked Creeks and the northern portion of West Bay) during airport construction and post-development periods, detect any significant changes in water quality, determine if those changes in water quality are the direct result of activities or conditions on the airport property, and to take corrective action to alleviate water quality degradation related to construction or operation of the airport.<sup>25</sup>

Short-term impacts to the water quality of Crooked and Burnt Mill Creeks from stormwater runoff would be significantly decreased through implementation of Best Management Practices (BMPs) as required by the EPA's NPDES stormwater permit for construction activities, FAA Advisory Circular 150/5370-10B, *Standards for Specifying Construction of Airports*, as well as state and

---

<sup>24</sup> FDEP, *Notice of Intent to Issue Ecosystem Management Agreement and Other Related Permits*, October 10, 2005.

<sup>25</sup> PBSJ, *Construction and Post Development Water/Sediment Quality and Biological Monitoring Plan for the Panama City-Bay County International Airport Relocation*, 2005.

local requirements. The FDEP monitors waters in these two basins as a part of the ambient monitoring program. Therefore, the effectiveness of these BMPs in protecting biotic and human health from surface water degradation would be assessed through this monitoring program.

In conjunction with the Ecosystem Team Permitting of the West Bay Site, a CSMP has been prepared by the Airport Sponsor for the West Bay Site. The CSMP has been designed for the construction of the Airport Sponsor's Proposed Project as well as the Airport Sponsor's envisioned future build-out scenario for the 4,037-acre site.<sup>26</sup> The CSMP is consistent with FAA policy on stormwater facilities; provides the water quality treatment requirements of the FDEP; and has sufficient attenuation requirements designed to meet the Bay County Development Code.

The proposed stormwater management system would consist of stormwater collection systems and stormwater treatment/attenuation ponds. The stormwater collection system would include linear dry retention facilities, inlets, pipes and other means to collect (and treat where possible) stormwater runoff and convey it to the stormwater ponds. The stormwater collection system would utilize swales to collect and route runoff to downstream dry retention facilities for water quality treatment and attenuation. For the airside, these facilities are located in the runway safety areas. Stormwater quality treatment and attenuation for runways, taxiways, and aprons would be performed in retention systems (between the runway/taxiway safety areas) where the water quality volumes would be retained detention systems. Stormwater quality treatment and attenuation for the apron, buildings, and parking lots would be achieved in the landscaping areas on the landside portions of the aviation or general use areas on the airport and two linear retention facilities on each side of the perimeter road. Spreader swales would be utilized to the extent practical in the exterior linear facility to simulate sheet flow at the eastern and southeastern borders of the airport.

In areas where runoff cannot be entirely treated/attenuated in linear dry retention facilities, the runoff would be conveyed to the ponds. Also, in the general use or aviation areas with no swale systems, stormwater runoff would be collected with inlets and pipes draining to ponds. The primary locations for the dry retention ponds are the open areas within the runway protection zones. Stormwater management ponds within the terminal access loop road would provide water quality treatment for the terminal area, general use areas and parking lots. One of these ponds may be a wet pond with impervious side slopes and a fountain for water aeration. This pond would be designed such that it would not pose a wildlife safety hazard (steep slopes, concrete lining etc.). Water quality treatment would be provided in dry retention facilities upstream of the pond while attenuation would be provided within the wet pond.

The proposed outfalls for the dry treatment facilities would be raised catch basins, weir overflows, and other structures as appropriate. Water quality recovery would depend on percolation through the bottom soils or possible under drain systems.

The stormwater management system would maintain the hydrologic basin outfalls in the post development conditions. All post development outfalls would be located near or at their pre-development outfall locations to sustain existing wetland hydroperiods. No wetland areas would be used for water quality treatment or attenuation within the West Bay Site boundaries.

The stormwater management system has been designed to accommodate an additional 50 percent water quality volume to meet Outstanding Florida Water (OFW) criteria on a voluntary basis. The Airport Sponsor has also designed a centralized fueling facility with above ground storage tanks and piping system with secondary containment. This will allow for closer monitoring of fuel usage and potential spills and will allow for easier detection and repair of leaks, thus, potentially minimizing impacts to ground and surface water from fuel spills.

---

<sup>26</sup> Construction of the Airport Sponsor's envisioned future build-out scenario is not reasonably foreseeable and is not approved in this ROD.

The Airport Sponsor has committed to hydrologic restoration, enhancement, and preservation in the 9,609 acre mitigation area, which includes improvements to the streams and wetlands connected to West Bay. Enhancements include the use and implementation of special management zones around high quality wetlands, West Bay, tidal creeks and marshes. The mitigation areas would be placed under conservation easements.

*Groundwater* – Potential impacts to groundwater from the West Bay Site 8,400 foot Alternative would be minimized by the use of oil/water separators to treat runoff, and by the stormwater pollution prevention plan required by the anticipated Multi-Sector Stormwater General Permit to be issued by FDEP.

*Water Supply and Wastewater* – Sufficient water supply is available for the West Bay Site 8,400 foot Alternative. Although no mitigation is required, to minimize impacts on potable water supply, the Airport Sponsor has committed to using conserving plumbing fixtures which are required by the Bay County Comprehensive Plan, in all development plans for the West Bay area including the use of recycle facilities for rental car washing. Xeriscaping would be utilized in all landscaping.

The Airport Sponsor proposes to construct a wastewater treatment plant that would include secondary treatment. This facility is anticipated to consist of an Upflow Sludge Blanket Filtration Process designed to treat 40,000 gallons per day. Disposal of the treated effluent would be via underground adsorption beds. The adsorption beds would require appropriate vegetative cover to facilitate nutrient uptake and a monitoring well system for monitoring groundwater quality. Residuals from the treatment facility would be disposed of at an approved off-site facility. Design and construction of the treatment facility and disposal system would be required to conform to the FAA guidance for wildlife attractants, AC 150/5200-33 (July 27, 2004).

Based on information provided by the Airport Sponsor, the carwash facility is being designed with three reclaim systems to serve two separate car wash stations. Each of the three reclaim systems would be a pre-treatment system with two settling tanks to catch solids and a process (ozonation, filtration or cycloning separation) that would remove finer particles. Oil-water separators (with corrugated plates) would be used to retain greases and oils prior to the recycled water being discharged to the sites wastewater treatment facility. FDEP recognized several NEBs associated with the water and wastewater system design during the ETP process. FDEP determined that the utilization of an absorption twice the required size would result in a higher level of reasonable assurance that no adverse impacts to surface waters or wetlands will occur. A copy of the NEBs is included in Appendix U of the Final EIS.

## **9.6 Historical, Architectural, Archaeological, and Cultural Resources, DOT Section 4(f), and Section 6(f) Properties**

### Impacts

The No-Action Alternative would not affect any historic properties or archaeological resources that are eligible or potentially eligible for listing on the NRHP.

The Area of Potential Effect (APE) for the West Bay Site 8,400 foot Alternative has one archaeological resource, Burnt Creek (8BY1025), which is potentially eligible for the NRHP. It is located outside the area of construction. No archaeological sites were identified at the outer marker site. No historic properties would be affected by the West Bay Site 8,400 foot Alternative. Therefore, the West Bay Site 8,400 foot Alternative would not affect any archaeological resources or historic properties that are eligible or potentially eligible for the NRHP.

The FAA has coordinated with the Florida SHPO and interested THPOs or other tribal representatives. See Appendix M of the Final EIS. The SHPO has concurred with the FAA's finding that the proposed undertaking at the West Bay Site would have no affect on historic properties. See Letter S-003 dated January 14, 2005 in Volume III of the Final EIS.



The FAA has also coordinated with the SHPO and various THPOs or other tribal representatives regarding an MOA that requires the creation of a conservation (historic preservation) easement for the Robinson Bayou South site (8BY935), in the event that the West Bay Site 8,400 foot Alternative is implemented. (See **Appendix H** of the ROD for the executed MOA and associated correspondence.) The conservation (historic preservation) easement would result in avoidance of any adverse effects to the 8BY935 site.

**Mitigation**

If historic properties or unanticipated effects on historic properties or cultural resources are discovered during construction at the West Bay Site, all related construction activities would immediately cease and the Airport Sponsor would immediately notify the FAA. The FAA would then determine what action should be taken to resolve any adverse effects. The FAA would also notify the SHPO/THPO and any Tribe that might attach religious and cultural significance to the affected property, and, if necessary, the Advisory Council on Historic Preservation (ACHP), within 48 hours of discovery. The notification should describe the actions proposed by the FAA to resolve the adverse effects. The SHPO/THPO and the Tribe shall respond within 48 hours of notification and the FAA shall take into account their recommendations and carry out appropriate actions. The FAA shall provide the SHPO and other interested parties a report of the actions taken to address the effects on these resources.

**9.7 Biotic Communities**

**Impacts**

Biotic community impacts for the West Bay Site 8,400 foot Alternative are summarized below in **Table 8**. Biotic communities for the West Bay Site are shown on **Figure 3**.

<b>Table 8</b>		
<b>Biotic Communities Impacts (acres)</b>		
<b>Biotic Communities</b>	<b>No-Action Alternative</b>	<b>Airport Sponsor’s Proposed Project</b>
Pine Flatwoods	0	0
Scrubby Pine Flatwoods	0	0
Xeric Oak	0	0
Coniferous Pine Plantation - Hydric	0	301.7
Coniferous Pine Plantation - Mesic	0	666.2
Coniferous Pine Plantation -Xeric	0	115.4
Streams and Waterways (syn. Ditches)	0	10.6
Reservoirs Less than 10 acres	0	0
Bay Swamps	0	0
Titi Swamp	0	155.6
Titi-Bay-Pine-Swamp	0	72.5
Mixed Wetlands	0	0
Cypress	0	19.3
Hydric Pine Flatwoods	0	17.8
Wetland Forested Mixed	0	16.3
Shrub Wetland	0	0.3
Freshwater Marshes	0	0
Sawgrass Marsh	0	0
Salt Marsh	0	0
Herbaceous Depression	0	2.1
<b>Total</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>1,377.8</b>

Source: Kimley-Horn and Associates, Inc., 2006.

FAA determined that the Airport Sponsor's Proposed Project would have minimal impact on Essential Fish Habitat (EFH) and that any secondary impacts that may occur would be adequately mitigated. National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) reviewed the EFH Assessment and determined that they had no EFH conservation recommendations to offer.

#### Mitigation

The Airport Sponsor's mitigation commitments regarding biotic communities are included in Appendix R of the Final EIS. The mitigation plan includes enhancement or restoration of existing pine plantation to historic natural communities such as pine savannah, enhancement and preservation of stream corridors and preservation of large continuous parcels adjacent to Burnt Mill and Crooked Creeks and West Bay. The habitat diversity anticipated with the implementation of the mitigation plan will benefit wildlife and listed species.

Construction and post-development monitoring of water quality, sediments and stream biota will be conducted by the Airport Sponsor. Measures to minimize potential impacts to aquatic habitats include formulation of an erosion and sedimentation control plan, provision for waste material and storage, and stormwater management measures. Federal, state and local BMPs and sedimentation control guidelines would be adhered to during the construction stages of the project. The use of approved erosion and sedimentation control structures, phasing construction activities, the prompt revegetation of exposed surfaces, limiting in-stream activities and revegetating stream banks immediately following the completion of grading would further reduce impacts.

During design and construction, BMPs and sedimentation control guidelines in accordance with FAA Advisory Circular 150/5370-10B would be incorporated to reduce impacts to the vegetation and associated wildlife. Oil, grease, fugitive dust, and other pollutants would be minimized by such measures as watering of haul roads, ramps, and pits during dry periods; application of asphalt emulsion to road surfaces; traffic control; and timely revegetation and stabilization of disturbed areas.

The loss of wildlife habitat would be partially mitigated through the enhancements proposed by the Airport Sponsor within the wetland mitigation area through implementation of the draft Wildlife Management Program (where practical) and through preservation of native habitats as proposed in the West Bay Area Sector Plan. The airport property outside of the West Bay Site 8,400 foot Alternative boundary would be managed to allow wildlife usage until these lands are required for airport development.

Mitigation for the loss of wildlife habitat would also be provided for by the mitigation parcels located just south of the airport property south of CR 388. These parcels are located adjacent to high quality salt marsh habitats and Burnt Mill and Crooked Creeks. The mitigation parcels, like the West Bay Site, have been impacted by silviculture activities. The Airport Sponsor has committed to a mitigation plan that includes restoration of these impacted environments from silviculture to pine savannah habitat that was historically dominant in this area. Additionally, large expanses of salt marsh habitat would be preserved and enhancement of stream corridors is also proposed. The restoration of large, contiguous areas would provide enhanced habitat for wildlife. The mitigation plan includes installation of wood duck boxes in larger cypress, gum and mixed forested wetland areas, installation of osprey nesting platforms near the coastal portions of the mitigation area, relocation of gopher tortoises to restored/enhanced upland habitats, removal of feral hogs, preservation of large areas of salt marsh habitat utilized by wading and shore birds, creation of tree islands, conversion of existing silviculture lands to historic habitats, and maintenance of natural stream buffers. Additional details regarding the proposed mitigation plan for the mitigation parcels are included in Section 5.13 of the Final EIS.

The impacts to fragmented habitat can be minimized through the preservation of large contiguous habitat areas and by providing linkages between preservation areas. The proposed mitigation areas would be part of a larger contiguous preservation area proposed as part of the West Bay Area Sector Plan.

As described in Section 4.10.6 of the Final EIS, invasive species were documented at the West Bay Site mitigation parcels. No invasive species were documented at the West Bay Site 8,400 foot Alternative. Invasive species would be removed in areas of proposed development. Further, invasive species would be prohibited from being planted on the Airport Sponsor's property. Exotic vegetation would be controlled through herbicide application as needed. In addition, feral hogs were documented on the mitigation parcels and the Airport Sponsor proposes to control feral hogs through a professional shooting and trapping program.

Based on a review of the CSMP and discussions with the Airport Sponsor regarding mitigation commitments, the following mitigation would be implemented to minimize the potential impacts to EFH resources.

- Short-term impacts to the water quality of Crooked and Burnt Mill Creeks from stormwater runoff would be significantly decreased through implementation of BMPs as required by the EPA's NPDES stormwater permit for construction activities as well as state and local requirements.
- Stormwater management system will be designed to meet OFW criteria.
- Existing flow patterns will be maintained such that rate and volume of flow is consistent in the pre- versus post-construction conditions.
- Xeriscaping will be utilized where practical to minimize water usage and the need for chemical applications (fertilizers and herbicides).
- Fueling facilities will be centrally located and will utilize above ground storage tanks, above ground piping systems and secondary containment, making leak detection and spill prevention easier to identify and correct.

Additionally, the Airport Sponsor has identified three parcels for wetland and stream mitigation as depicted on **Figure 4** of this ROD. Parcel 1 is located south of CR 388 between Burnt Mill and Crooked Creeks and extends southward to a Gulf Power Company power line easement. Parcel 2 is also located south of CR 388, east of Burnt Mill Creek and extends southward to West Bay and the power plant discharge canal. Parcel 3 is located south of the power plant canal extending southward to West Bay Point. Details regarding the mitigation plan are provided in Section 5.13.3 of the Final EIS. The overall mitigation plan objective is to convert planted pine areas to historic wet pine flatwoods, wet pine savanna, mesic pine flatwoods and sandhill habitats through restoration and enhancement activities. Parcels 2 and 3 are located adjacent to West Bay. In addition to the proposed wetland and stream enhancement activities, the mitigation plan includes preservation of approximately 843 acres of salt marsh habitat. These salt marsh areas provide habitat and, because the salt marshes would be surrounded by mitigation activities, future development pressures are eliminated.

## **9.8 Endangered and Threatened Species**

### Impacts

FAA initiated consultation with the USFWS and NMFS. Coordination with NMFS is summarized in Section 5.10.4 in the Final EIS. The FAA prepared and submitted a Biological Assessment (BA) assessing the potential impacts to federally listed species for the West Bay Site alternatives. USFWS reviewed this document and concurred with the FAA determination regarding affects to listed species, including a determination of "may affect, likely to adversely affect" the flatwoods salamander. See Appendix T of the Final EIS for a copy of the final BA. The USFWS completed a Biological Opinion (BO) for the flatwoods salamander and concluded that the relocation of the airport to the West Bay Site would not jeopardize the continued existence of this species (See October 3, 2005 Biological Opinion in Appendix T of the Final EIS). As part of the BO, the USFWS also issued non-discretionary *Terms and Conditions* to be implemented by the Airport Sponsor and/or FAA and USACE. The determination by the USFWS and the *Terms and Conditions* required by USFWS are included in **Appendix E** of this ROD.

The West Bay Site 8,400 Alternative has the potential to impact flatwoods salamander breeding habitat. However, USFWS determined that the potential impacts to flatwoods salamander habitat would not jeopardize the continued existence of the species and acknowledged that the proposed enhancements within mitigation parcels could actually benefit the species.

#### Mitigation

The Airport Sponsor's mitigation commitments regarding listed species are included in Appendix R of the Final EIS. The Airport Sponsor proposes to compensate for threatened and endangered species habitat impacts for the West Bay Site 8,400 Alternative through preservation and enhancement of wetland and upland habitats. A majority of the mitigation includes enhancement of lands impacted by silviculture activities with the goal of restoring the historic pine savannah habitat. Fire management, hydrologic enhancements, and thinning of canopy vegetation are some of the activities proposed to restore the native habitats. Further, large expanses of salt marsh habitat would be preserved adjacent to West Bay providing wading bird habitat. As acknowledged in the Biological Opinion prepared by the USFWS for the flatwoods salamander, the proposed mitigation efforts will provide more suitable habitat what will be managed in perpetuity than the habitat occurring on the West Bay site. Additionally, the Airport Sponsor's stated mitigation goals will be to improve habitat on the mitigation parcels for several listed species including flatwoods salamander, gopher tortoises, Eastern indigo snake, wading and shorebirds, bald eagle and Florida black bear.

The proposed mitigation areas would be part of a larger contiguous preservation area proposed as part of the West Bay Area Sector Plan. Within the proposed West Bay Area Sector Plan, conservation areas along existing creeks are proposed which would provide travel corridors between other proposed conservation areas, existing conservation areas, such as Pine Log State Forest, and the proposed mitigation parcels. It is reasonable to assume that mobile species would relocate to adjacent habitats and that the mitigation parcels would enhance the usage and usefulness of these areas for listed species.

The lands outside the West Bay Site 8,400 foot Alternative boundary but within the West Bay Site would be managed and preserved to allow wildlife usage until these lands are required for development.

## **9.9 Wetlands**

#### Impacts

Comprehensive field reconnaissance of the West Bay Site area was conducted to evaluate the impacts to jurisdictional waters subject to permitting by the FDEP and USACE. Based upon field data interpretation and graphical analysis of the No-Action Alternative and West Bay Site 8,400 foot Alternative, wetland impacts range from no impacts (No-Action Alternative) to 596.2 acres (West Bay Site 8,400 foot Alternative). These impacts are summarized in Table 5-75, *Summary of Impacts for Wetlands and Non-Wetland Waters of the U.S.*, in the Final EIS.

The FAA has considered the results of the FDEP's Ecosystem Team Permit (ETP) process and concurs that net ecosystem benefits will result from the implementation of the West Bay Site 8,400 foot Alternative. See Appendix U of the Final EIS for FDEP's discussion of net ecosystem benefits.

#### Mitigation

After independent review, the FAA supports the USACE's determination that the conceptual mitigation strategy for the West Bay Site 8,400 foot Alternative would provide sufficient wetland functional lift to offset the proposed wetland functional loss expected from the direct impact to wetlands. The Airport Sponsor's mitigation commitments regarding wetland and stream impacts are included in Appendix R of the Final EIS. Subsequent to publication of the FEIS, the FAA became aware of updates to the mitigation plan. **Appendix K** of this ROD contains the most current mitigation synopsis.

FDEP issued a *Notice of Intent to Issue (NOI) Ecosystem Management Agreement and Other Related Permits* on October 10, 2005. FDEP approved the Airport Sponsor proposed mitigation plan and determined that several Net Environmental Benefits (NEBs) would result from the implementation of the mitigation plan. The mitigation plan provides for the enhancement, restoration and preservation of wetland, upland and stream habitat located adjacent to Burnt Mill and Crooked Creeks and along large portions of West Bay. Removing these parcels from potential development pressures allows for better protection of West Bay and its resources, which is consistent with the Sector Plan goals and objectives.

The mitigation plan provides for mitigation for direct impacts to both FDEP jurisdictional and isolated non-jurisdictional wetlands. Indirect impacts (secondary impacts) will be mitigated within a 300-foot buffer area as opposed to FDEP's standard 30-foot buffer area. The evaluation of the impacted wetlands and proposed mitigation results in a significant lift in replacing wetland values and functions as defined by the Wetland Rapid Assessment Procedure, which was the tool used to assess the quality of the wetlands and mitigation parcels. The timing of the mitigation phases will result in implementation of, in some cases, mitigation prior to the actual impact to wetlands on the West Bay Site. Furthermore, based on the wetland functional assessments conducted as part of the ETP process, the ecological lift anticipated with the implementation of the mitigation plan exceeds the required mitigation based on ultimate (beyond 2018) development of the airport. A conservation easement will be placed over the entire mitigation area for preservation in perpetuity. The conservation easement will limit the uses to activities associated with the planned enhancements and passive recreation with limited access to the public.

## **9.10 Floodplains**

### Impacts

The West Bay Site 8,400 foot Alternative would result in significant floodplain encroachment. The floodplain impacts would occur in flood zone A within the floodplains of Kelly Branch, Bear Branch, and Morrell Branch. For the West Bay Site 8,400 foot Alternative, 207.1 acres would be impacted.

The FAA has determined that due to safety, operational, and engineering siting requirements, there is no practicable alternative to floodplain encroachment at the West Bay Site. The West Bay Site lies within the headwaters of Burnt Mill Creek and Crooked Creek systems. According to the CSMP prepared by the Airport Sponsor's consultant and as defined in the ETP process, floodplain compensation is not required. Nonetheless, the Airport Sponsor has committed to design the stormwater management system to match pre-project discharge rates and outfall to existing discharge points. Other than construction standards that require protection of buildings from flooding, Bay County does not have a program specifically regulating activities in floodplains.

With implementation of the mitigation described below as well as the proposed mitigation for wetland impacts in Section 5.13.3 of the Final EIS, the adverse impacts on natural and beneficial floodplain values would be appropriately offset and would not result in 1) a considerable probability of the loss of human life, 2) likely future damage associated with the encroachment that could be substantial in cost or extent, including interruption of service on or loss of vital transportation facility, and 3) a notable adverse impact on natural and beneficial floodplain values.

### Mitigation

Proposed measures to protect and enhance natural and beneficial floodplain values, decrease runoff from impermeable surfaces, prevent alteration of hydrologic patterns, and minimize induced secondary development and construction impacts for the West Bay Site 8,400 foot Alternative are discussed in Section 5.8.3 of the Final EIS. The following list summarizes the proposed mitigation measures that would aid in the protection of floodplain functions. These mitigation measures are referenced in Appendix R of the Final EIS and include the following:

- Land use controls: All airport development would meet the requirements of the Bay County Flood Damage Prevention Ordinance, including elevating facilities above base flood level. In addition, all development in the Sector Plan area would meet the requirements of that ordinance.
- Design of the West Bay Site 8,400 foot Alternative to allow adequate flow circulation and preserve free, natural drainage: A commitment was made by the Airport Sponsor in the CSMP and as part of the Ecosystem Team Permit to maintain natural drainage patterns. Additionally, the Airport Sponsor has committed to design the stormwater management system to match pre-project discharge rates and outfall to existing discharge points to minimize potential downstream impacts from flooding.
- Control of runoff: The Airport Sponsor has committed to exceed FDEP (Outstanding Florida Water criteria) and Bay County requirements as described in Section 5.8.3 of the Final EIS.
- Preservation of existing floodplain: Large areas of existing floodplain associated with tributaries of Burnt Mill and Crooked Creeks and West Bay within the proposed mitigation parcels will be preserved in perpetuity.
- The Airport Sponsor will include all practical measures in the design to minimize harm and to restore and preserve the natural and beneficial floodplain values affected.

### **9.11 Coastal Zone Management Program and Coastal Barriers**

#### Impacts

No significant impacts are associated with either coastal zones or coastal barriers for the West Bay Site 8,400 foot Alternative. The State of Florida has concurred with the FAA's determination that the Airport Sponsor's Proposed Project is consistent with the enforceable policies of the Florida Coastal Management Program (FCMP) to the maximum extent practicable, pending the receipt of the necessary state resource permit, which will serve as the final finding of consistency with the FCMP. See the FDEP correspondence dated February 2, 2005 in Appendix W of the Final EIS and correspondence dated June 29, 2006 in **Appendix F** of this ROD. The FDEP issued a *Notice of Intent to Issue (NOI) Ecosystem Management Agreement and Other Related Permits* on October 10, 2005. See Appendix D of the Final EIS.

#### Mitigation

No mitigation is required.

### **9.12 Wild and Scenic Rivers**

#### Impacts

There are two wild and scenic rivers in Florida. Both the Loxahatchee and the Wekiva Rivers are located in other regions of Florida and neither is located in the study area for the EIS. Therefore, the No-Action Alternative or the West Bay Site 8,400 foot Alternative would not impact any rivers designated as, or potentially qualify for inclusion into, the National Wild and Scenic Rivers System.

#### Mitigation

No mitigation is required.

### **9.13 Farmlands**

#### Impacts

There is no prime farmland, unique farmland or farmland of state or local importance that would be impacted by the No-Action Alternative or the West Bay Site 8,400 foot Alternative.

#### Mitigation

No mitigation is required.

#### **9.14 Energy Supply and Natural Resources**

##### Impacts

For the West Bay Site 8,400-foot Alternative, the proposed terminal building would be located at the midpoint of the primary runway to minimize taxi lengths. The proposed terminal would use a modern HVAC system to obtain higher energy efficiency than the existing airport. Coordination with local energy and natural resource suppliers has indicated their ability to meet the projected demands of the West Bay Site 8,400 foot Alternative. The No-Action Alternative would not require an additional supply of energy or natural resources.

##### Mitigation

No mitigation is required.

#### **9.15 Light Emissions**

##### Impacts

For the West Bay Site 8,400-foot Alternative, light emissions would be localized and the proposed lighting system would avoid impacts to local residents and motorists. The 10,000-foot ACUSTZ would provide a buffer from adjacent land uses and would minimize light impacts to surrounding land uses. Therefore, the FAA concludes that no significant project-related light emission impacts would be expected from the West Bay Site 8,400-foot Alternative. The No-Action Alternative would not result in light emissions beyond current emissions at the Existing Site.

##### Mitigation

No mitigation is required.

#### **9.16 Solid Waste Impact**

##### Impacts

The Steelfield Landfill is approximately 16.5 miles (26,500 meters) northwest of the Existing Site and 7.5 miles (12,000 meters) west of the West Bay Site. Because this landfill receives ash from the incinerator and not putrescible waste, it is not a bird attractant for either the No-Action Alternative or the West Bay Site 8,400 foot Alternative.

The No-Action Alternative would not result in an increase in solid waste generation. The West Bay Site 8,400 foot Alternative would be expected to generate the same amount of solid waste as the existing airport facility. The solid waste facilities in Bay County would have sufficient capacity to handle the solid waste generated by the construction and subsequent operation of the West Bay Site 8,400-foot Alternative.

##### Mitigation

No mitigation is required.

#### **9.17 Hazardous Materials**

##### Impacts

The No-Action Alternative would not impact any areas/structures of known contamination. No impacts to known contaminated areas/structures would occur as a result of the West Bay Site 8,400 foot Alternative. However, there is the potential for contamination from standard fueling facilities and other hazardous material storage as a result of the development of the West Bay Site

### Mitigation

Daily activities associated with the West Bay Site 8,400 foot Alternative would require the use and storage of fuels, oils, solvents, and other chemicals. In addition, many of these operations generate hazardous waste. BMPs will be incorporated into the handling, storage of hazardous materials to avoid and minimize discharge of petroleum products as well as other hazardous wastes. BMPs for spill prevention and control will be implemented in accordance with FAA Order 1050.10. The Airport Sponsor proposes to consolidate the fuel storage facilities in a centralized location as opposed to multiple fuel farms that occur at the existing airport facility. Furthermore, all fueling facilities would incorporate only aboveground storage tanks and aboveground piping systems, resulting in more efficient early detection of leaks and discharges and maintenance for the facilities. Secondary containment measures should be utilized on these tanks as well as any drums stored at the facility. Implementation of good housekeeping procedures and implementation of BMPs for the storage, handling and transport of hazardous materials would reduce the likelihood of discharge to the environment. However, even with the implementation of BMPs, discharges of fuel or other hazardous materials are possible. To minimize impacts to contaminated soil or groundwater, soil and groundwater sampling and characterization of potential contaminants should be performed. If contamination is identified, proper treatment and disposal of the materials would be required. In the event previously unknown contaminants are discovered, work will stop until the National Response Center is notified.

### **9.18 Construction Impacts**

#### Impacts

No construction impacts would be associated with the No-Action Alternative. The West Bay Site 8,400 foot Alternative would result in temporary construction impacts related to noise, air quality and soil erosion but would be designed to comply with local, state and federal regulations to minimize construction impacts.

*Noise* - The West Bay Site 8,400 foot Alternative is located in a rural, undeveloped area. Noise impacts during airport construction would be temporary.

*Air Quality* - Construction equipment would produce air emissions from vehicle exhaust. The West Bay Site 8,400 foot Alternative would require an estimated 67,860 construction hours. The project specifications would incorporate the provisions of FAA AC 150/5370-10B, *Standards for Specifying Construction of Airports* (April 25, 2005).

*Soil Erosion* - Soil exposure during the clearing and grubbing of the land could result in soil erosion impacts. Construction at the West Bay Site would require clearing and grubbing of 1,378 acres for the West Bay Site 8,400-foot Alternative.

The West Bay Site 8,400-foot Alternative would be designed and constructed in accordance with state and local regulations associated with development activities, including construction.

#### Mitigation

Best management practices for construction will be implemented in accordance with FAA Advisory Circular 150/5370-10B. Construction vehicles will access the West Bay Site from CR 388 via the access route included in the initial development phase as disclosed in the FEIS. The Airport Sponsor has committed to a construction and post-development water and sediment quality and biological monitoring plan at the West Bay Site. The purpose of this monitoring is to detect any significant changes in water quality and to take corrective action to alleviate water quality degradation related to construction of the airport. See Appendix R of the Final EIS for details of the monitoring plan.

Bay County has adopted ordinances governing noise levels, air pollution and erosion control during construction. The West Bay Site 8,400 foot Alternative would comply with the criteria set forth in these ordinances.



*Noise* - Limiting construction activities to daylight hours on weekdays would minimize noise impacts to the surrounding communities.

*Air Quality* - The provisions of FAA AC 150/5370-10B would be required in the project specifications. Item P-156 of this circular is entitled, "Temporary Air and Water Pollution, Soil Erosion, and Siltation Control." Methods to control dust and other air pollutants are outlined in Item P-156. These methods include: exposing the minimum area of erodible earth; applying temporary mulch with or without seeding; using water sprinkler trucks; using covered haul trucks; using dust palliatives or penetration asphalt on haul roads; and using plastic sheet coverings. The Airport Sponsor has committed to these methods. *See* Appendix R of the Final EIS.

*Soil Erosion* - The provisions of FAA AC 150/5370-10B would be required in the project specifications. Item P-156 of this circular is entitled, "Temporary Air and Water Pollution, Soil Erosion, and Siltation Control." This item consists of temporary control measures to control water pollution, soil erosion, and siltation through the use of berms, dikes, dams, sediment basins, fiber mats, gravel, mulches, grasses, slope drains, and other erosion control devices or methods. The Airport Sponsor has committed to temporary erosion control methods (terrestrial and in water) and to dewatering methods. *See* Appendix R of the Final EIS.

The FDEP requires the use of BMPs to control erosion during construction of a project. Construction of the West Bay Site 8,400 foot Alternative and redevelopment of the Existing Site would require NPDES permits from FDEP for construction (62-621.300(4)(a) F.A.C.). As part of these permits, Stormwater Pollution Prevention Plans must be prepared and implemented during all project construction phases. These plans include BMPs required for erosion control as well as reporting and monitoring requirements and pollution controls for other potential pollutants.

## **9.19 Surface Transportation**

### Impacts

For either the No-Action Alternative or the West Bay Site 8,400-foot Alternative, no public roads would be closed or realigned. The modeled traffic conditions indicate a marginal traffic increase from the West Bay Site 8,400-foot Alternative beyond deficiencies in the No-Action Alternative (background traffic conditions). The only exceptions were increased airport-related traffic on two of the roadways, US 98 Alt and US 98, by 2018. Increases in traffic would be experienced on US 98 Alt and US 98 in the vicinity of the intersections with SR 79 with the West Bay Site 8,400-foot Alternative.

### Mitigation

The Airport Sponsor has committed to providing turn lanes at CR 388 and the new airport access roadway. Other improvements, such as additional signals, upgrading signals, or additional turn lanes are identified to accommodate the projected increases in traffic at US 98 Alt and US 98 and intersections in the vicinity of the West Bay Site. *See* Section 5.23.3 of the Final EIS. There are currently no commitments or programs by the Airport Sponsor or state or local transportation officials for construction of these identified improvements. While the FAA has identified these traffic improvements, the FAA does not fund roadway improvements that are beyond providing accessibility to an airport. Funding eligibility determination is outside the scope of the EIS process. The timing and funding of the intersection improvements would need to be coordinated through the county and state transportation planning process.

## 9.20 Surface Transportation Noise

### Impacts

No increases in surface transportation noise levels would occur as a result of the No-Action Alternative. Although outside the scope of the Final EIS and the FAA's statutory authority, the recommended transportation improvements for the West Bay Site 8,400 foot Alternative discussed in Section 9.19 of this ROD would require subsequent NEPA analysis.

### Mitigation

No mitigation is required at this time.

## 9.21 Design, Art, and Architecture

### Impacts

There would be no design, art, or architectural impacts associated with either the No-Action Alternative or the West Bay Site 8,400 foot Alternative. The West Bay Site 8,400 foot Alternative would be designed to be compatible with regional design and architecture.

### Mitigation

No mitigation is required.

## 9.22 Secondary and Cumulative Impacts

### Impacts

For the No-Action Alternative minimal cumulative impacts are anticipated for all the cumulative impacts categories assessed for the socioeconomic environment, water resources and biotic communities environment, or the physical and human environments. *See Table 5-92 of the Final EIS, Assessed Cumulative Impact Categories.*

The analyses of cumulative impacts summarized in Section 5.26.4.4 of the Final EIS includes not only those components of growth that are induced as a result of development at the West Bay Site and the Existing Site, but also known developments that are likely to occur with or without implementation of the West Bay Site 8,400 foot Alternative. The effects of induced development are included in the summaries of cumulative impacts that follow.

With the West Bay Site 8,400 foot Alternative, minimal cumulative impacts are anticipated for the following categories: surface transportation impacts, floodplains, biotic communities/listed species, noise, compatible land use, cultural resources, and hazardous materials.

Socioeconomic environment, wetlands, and water quality could have cumulative impacts. These categories are discussed below in more detail.

*Socioeconomic* - The West Bay Site 8,400 foot Alternative could substantially change growth patterns and development within the 45-minute drive time contour shown on Figure 5-72 of the Final EIS, but particularly in Bay County. With the West Bay Site 8,400 foot Alternative there could be a considerable increase in socioeconomic opportunities. The West Bay Site 8,400 foot Alternative could attract general aviation, retail/commercial, office, and industrial tenants, and could provide additional regional employment opportunities. Therefore, the number of persons employed in the study area could greatly increase in management/professional, service, sales/office, and production/transportation fields. The two DSAPs (Airport and West Bay) associated with the West Bay Sector Plan could be the long-term plans for development related to future airport operations as well as the associated residential, commercial, light industrial, conservation, and agricultural/timberland uses in the airport and West Bay DSAP areas.

*Wetlands* - Cumulative impacts to the wetlands within the Burnt Mill Creek and Crooked Creek drainage basins could stem from proposed future development as detailed in the Airport DSAP, the portions of the West Bay DSAP and West Bay Sector Plan within the study area boundary, and the proposed mitigation parcels for the West Bay Site alternatives.

In the Airport DSAP, all 1,936.4 acres of wetlands could be impacted based on the proposed ultimate build-out scenario, which does not consider avoidance or minimization of wetlands impacts beyond initial development. Based on the proposed development areas identified in the West Bay DSAP, 1,480 acres (approximately five percent of the total wetlands within the drainage basins) of wetlands could be impacted by development. The remaining 2,039 acres of wetlands would be protected within the proposed West Bay Conservation Area (WBCA). According to proposed land uses and development areas identified in the West Bay Sector Plan, 5,118 acres or less of wetlands (approximately 18 percent of the total wetlands within the combined drainage basins) could be impacted by future development. The remaining 14,431 acres of wetlands would be protected within the proposed 37,232-acre WBCA. It is also assumed that approximately 20 percent of the wetlands in the area outside the sector planning boundaries, 725 acres, could be disturbed over time as development moves into the area surrounding the airport and West Bay DSAPs.

*Water Quality* – Impacts to streams could result from ultimate development of the West Bay Site 8,400 foot Alternative, within the Sector Plan boundaries, and in areas within the study area that are outside of the Sector Plan boundary. The Airport DSAP areas contain approximately 21,957 linear feet of streams and, at full build out, all of the streams would likely be impacted. The portion of the West Bay DSAP within the study area contains approximately 94,388 linear feet of streams. The exact amount of direct impacts to these streams if the West Bay DSAP were fully implemented cannot be accurately determined at this time.

Based on the proposed land uses within the Sector Plan, it is anticipated that 60 percent of the streams would remain with minimal watershed impact. The portion of development (commercial, business, and roadway) that would have greater than 25 percent impervious surface would become “impaired” and the remaining portions of development that have less than 25 percent impervious surface would range from “impacted” to “impaired.”

The withdrawal of groundwater for landscaping purposes, combined with decreased infiltration of runoff due to the increased impervious cover of the development, account for the majority of groundwater impacts. However, it is not possible at this time to determine the amount of cumulative impacts due to the speculative nature of future development.

Because the West Bay Site study area is currently undeveloped, additional water and wastewater capacity would be required to provide potable water for the area due to anticipated increases in demand. Additionally, because there is currently no sewer service for the proposed West Bay Site (requiring the Airport Sponsor to propose onsite wastewater treatment), it is anticipated that either similar treatment would need to be provided for each development project or Bay County would have to expand its collection system and capacity to provide for the new development.

*Floodplains* – The Burnt Mill Creek and Crooked Creek drainage basins and contributing sub-basins contain 18,551 acres within the FEMA-regulated 100-year floodplain. Based on the locally-approved development plans, the following cumulative impacts to the 100-year floodplain could occur: the Airport DSAP area would impact 621.7 acres; the West Bay DSAP would impact 679 acres; and the Sector Plan (areas outside the West Bay and Airport DSAPs) could impact 3,328 acres.

*Listed Species* – Several state and federally listed species could occur within the study area. A Biological Opinion (BO) was issued by USFWS to address the impacts associated with the alternatives at the West Bay Site. In addition, a BO for the West Bay to East Walton Regional General Permit (RGP) addresses potential impacts to listed species for the subset of the Sector

Plan area included in the RGP. The Sector Plan provides an overlay and guide for future development but the timing and details of future development are unknown. Additional impacts could vary based on the type of development (commercial, retail, agriculture). Until known, the impacts to listed species cannot be identified or quantified. However, a general evaluation of the potential cumulative impacts to the flatwoods salamander was conducted for the BO and was included in Appendix T of the Final EIS and **Appendix E** of this ROD.

Two potential scenarios were considered when evaluating cumulative impacts to flatwoods salamander within the cumulative affect study area. One involved evaluating potential habitat loss based on the Bay County Future Land Use Map (FLUM) only and the other evaluated affects utilizing the West Bay Sector Plan Overlay. An analysis of each wetland with these two scenarios was evaluated as to the wetlands potential to support flatwoods salamander. It was determined under the first scenario that approximately 33,000 acres of wetlands in the study area, 14,775 acres of wetlands would be on conservation lands, which allow up to two residential density units per acre depending on the special treatment zone in which they occur. The largest portion, 14,870 acres, would be managed intensively for silviculture under the FLUM. The potential impacts to wetlands within general commercial, industrial, public institutional and residential land uses (including “conservation”) are difficult to predict. However, the majority of those wetland types described as good are projected to be in “conservation” or remain in silviculture according to the existing FLUM.

Under the second scenario, approximately 21,000 acres of wetlands in the study area would be on conservation lands, which, unlike the existing FLUM, are not allowed any residential density units. The second largest portion of wetlands, 2,768 acres, would be managed intensively for agriculture/silviculture. The potential impacts to wetlands within the other land use categories are difficult to predict, but approximately 64 percent of the wetlands will be in conservation if the plan is carried forward. However, these lands include only 243 of the 6,048 acres that are considered potential breeding habitats in the sector planning area. Therefore, approximately 75 percent of the total potential habitat could be subject to future Section 404 Permit requirements. The proposed action includes the loss of four potential flatwoods salamander ponds totaling 13.1 acres. This acreage represents approximately one percent of the available 1,048 acres of potential breeding wetlands within the sector planning area.

The BO also acknowledged that within the study there are two mitigation banks or portions of mitigation banks (West Bay to East Walton Regional General Permit conservation units and Breakfast Point Mitigation bank) that specifically target enhancements or restorations and that would improve flatwood salamander habitat. Within the region, large-scale mitigation parcels are proposed for up to 25,066 acres. These lands within the mitigation banks would be managed with a more natural fire regime, thinned timber, and potential restoration of the historic hydrology. This would benefit approximately 25,066 acres of natural habitat, much of which lies within the 74,706 acres of the Sector Plan.

#### Mitigation

*Socioeconomic* – No mitigation is required.

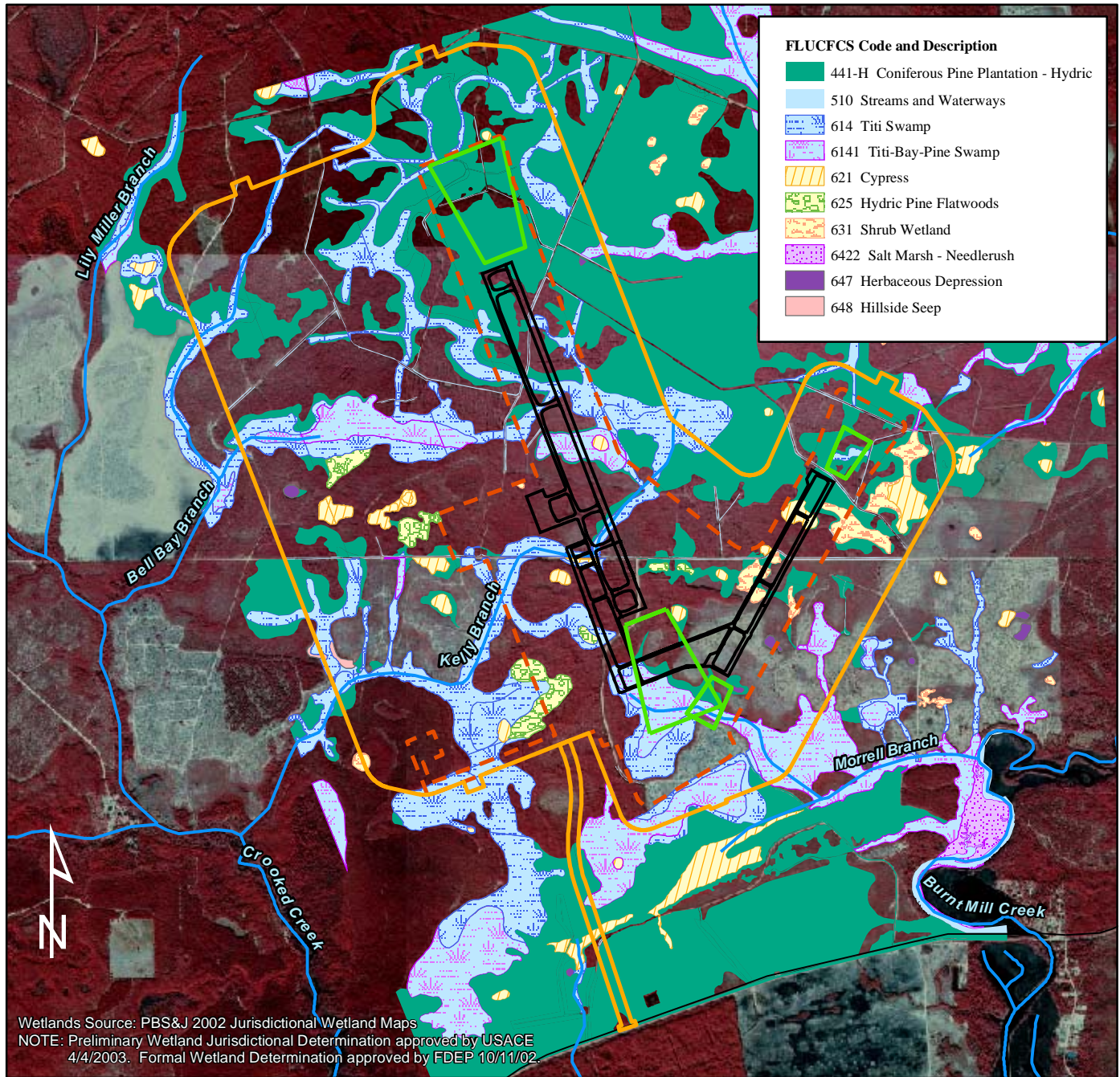
*Wetlands* – The Airport Sponsor has identified three parcels south of CR 388 along West Bay for wetland compensatory mitigation. Of the 9,609 acres that comprise the mitigation parcels, approximately 8,311 acres are wetlands and would be preserved and/or enhanced by the proposed mitigation plan.

*Water Quality* – The use of stormwater management practices for runoff treatment and peak discharge attenuation as required by the FDEP and Bay County for Class II and III waters may mitigate some of these effects. Section 9.5 of this ROD provides a detailed description of the water quality mitigation measures.

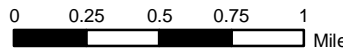
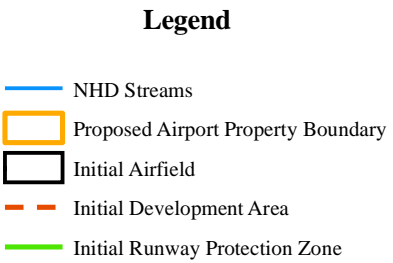
Panama City-Bay County International Airport  
Record of Decision

*Floodplains* – The mitigation parcels contain approximately 5,649 acres of floodplain that would be preserved and/or enhanced by the proposed mitigation plan, thereby removing this area from potential cumulative development impact. In addition, the West Bay Sector Plan has designated 37,232 acres as preservation areas. Much of this area contains wetlands and streams with regulated floodplains that would be removed from cumulative development impact.

*Listed Species* – As future development occurs within the Sector Plan, each development project will be subject to review and approval by regulatory agencies and avoidance and minimization of impacts to listed species will be evaluated at that time.



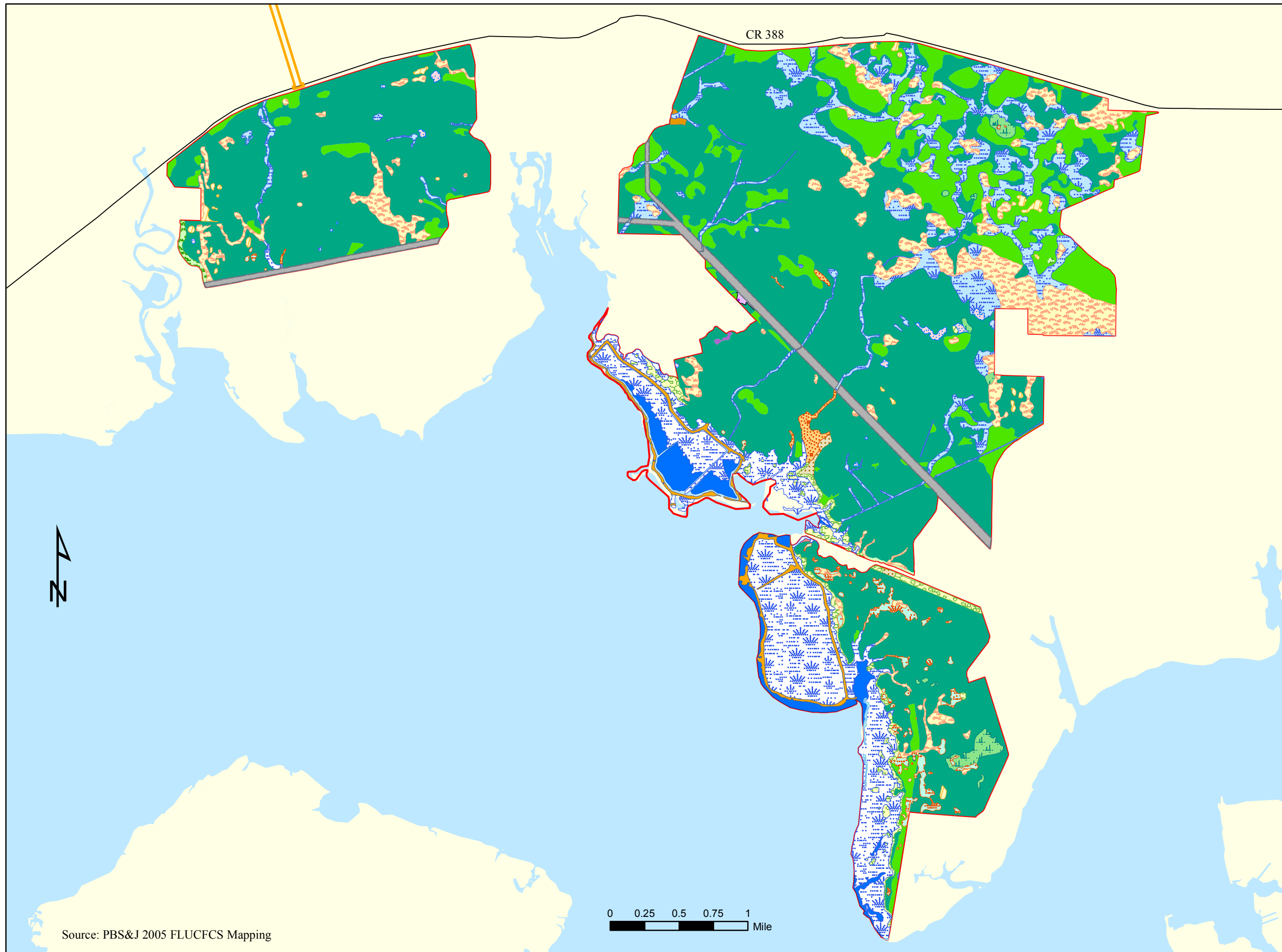
Wetlands Source: PBS&J 2002 Jurisdictional Wetland Maps  
 NOTE: Preliminary Wetland Jurisdictional Determination approved by USACE 4/4/2003. Formal Wetland Determination approved by FDEP 10/11/02.



**Figure 3**  
**Jurisdictional Wetlands with**  
**Overlay of Airport Sponsor's**  
**Proposed Project**  
 Panama City-Bay County  
 International Airport EIS







**Legend**

**FLUCFCS Code and Description**

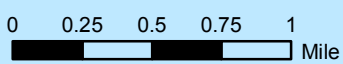
411	Pine Flatwoods
412	Longleaf Pine Xeric Oak
423	Oak-Pine-Hardwood
427	Live Oak
436	Upland Scrub, Pine and Hardwoods
441	Upland Pine Plantation
441/600	Hydric Pine Plantation
500	Open Water
510	Streams and Waterways
610	Wetland Hardwood Forest
613	Gum Swamp
614	Titi Swamp
615	Stream and Lake Swamps (Bottomlands)
621	Cypress
625	Hydric Pine Flatwoods
630	Wetland Forested Mixed
640	Vegetated Non-Forest Wetlands
641	Freshwater Marsh
642	Saltmarsh
643	Wet Prairie
652	Shorelines
747	Dikes and Levees
832	Electrical Power Transmission Lines
[Red Outline]	Mitigation Parcel Boundaries
[Yellow]	Unidentified or Outside of Study Area



**Figure 4**  
**Mitigation Parcels**  
 Panama City-Bay County  
 International Airport EIS



Source: PBS&J 2005 FLUCFCS Mapping



## 10.0 COMMENTS ON THE FINAL EIS

The FAA has carefully assessed and considered comment letters received on the Final EIS in making its decision. **Appendix B** of this ROD provides copies of each comment letter received on the Final EIS with detailed responses to comments on major issues raised by the commenting federal and state agencies, public organizations, and individuals. The FAA received a total of 160 comment letters on the Final EIS. This total includes 140 form letters that were received during the comment period (May 19-July 5, 2006).

**Federal:** The EPA submitted a letter with substantive comments on the Final EIS. Three elected officials provided a letter of support for the Airport Sponsor's Proposed Project. *See Appendix B (Federal Agency section).*

**State:** The FDOT and the FDEP submitted letters with substantive comments on the Final EIS. Two elected officials provided a letter of support for the Airport Sponsor's Proposed Project. *See Appendix B (State Agency section).*

**Public individuals:** The FAA received 20 letters and seven form letters with substantive comments from public individuals during the Final EIS comment period. In addition, the FAA received 133 other form letters during the Final EIS comment period. *See Appendix B (Letter I016 provides a sample form letter with responses).* The comments in the form letters indicated lack of support for the Airport Sponsor's Proposed Project. *See Appendix B (Public Individual section).*

**Public organizations:** The FAA received three comment letters from public organizations during the Final EIS comment period. *See Appendix B (Public Organization section).*

Comments received on the Final EIS addressed the following general topics:

- Airspace analysis
- Purpose and need
- Alternatives analysis, including need for analysis of separate air carrier and general aviation airports alternative
- Need for Supplemental or Programmatic EIS
- Forecasts
- Redevelopment of the existing airport site was not adequately addressed
- Air quality analysis, including air toxics
- Wetland impacts and mitigation
- Noise
- Stormwater
- Cumulative/secondary impacts
- USACE purpose and need and alternatives analysis
- Wildlife habitat and marine resources
- Environmentally preferred alternative
- 50-year buildout for proposed project
- Section 7 consultation
- Water quality/stormwater/NPDES permit
- Floodplains
- Threatened and endangered species
- Wildlife habitat
- Non-binding referendum results
- Objectivity of analysis of Final EIS

*See Appendix B* for a copy of the comment letters and the FAA responses to the comments.



## 11.0 Agency Findings

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

### 11.1 The project is consistent with existing plans of public agencies for the development of the area surrounding the airport [49 U.S.C. 47106(a)(1)] and Executive Order 12372.

The determination prescribed by this statutory provision is a precondition to agency approval of airport project funding applications. It has been the long-standing policy of the FAA to rely heavily upon actions of local planning organizations to satisfy the project consistency requirements of 49 U.S.C. 47106(a)(1) [*See, e.g., SOC v. Dole*, 787 F.2d 186, 199 (7<sup>th</sup> Cir., 1986)]. Furthermore, both the legislative history and consistent agency interpretations of this statutory provision make it clear that reasonable, rather than absolute, consistency with these plans is all that is required.

The FAA finds that the project is consistent with the existing plans of public agencies authorized by the state in the area in which the airport is located to plan for the development of the area surrounding the airport, and will contribute to the purposes of the 49 U.S.C. 47101 et seq. The FAA is satisfied that it has fully complied with 49 U.S.C. 47106(a)(1).

The proposed project is also consistent with comprehensive plans that have been adopted by Bay County as described in Section 5.3 of the Final EIS. The FAA has also reviewed and considered the substantial documentation in the EIS record demonstrating that throughout the environmental process the Panama City-Bay County Airport and Industrial District (Airport District) has shown concern for the impact of the proposed development actions on surrounding communities.

Under the provisions of both federal and state law, the Bay County Transportation Planning Organization (TPO) has been designated as the TPO for surface transportation for the Panama City-Bay County region. The Bay County Transportation Planning Organization is also responsible for the Long Range Transportation Plan (LRTP). Review of the Bay County *2030 Long Range Transportation Plan* discloses that aviation planning is not addressed in the LRTP, therefore, the selected alternative it is presumed to be consistent with the LRTP. The WFRPC is the comprehensive land use planning agency for the Panama City-Bay County region. In this capacity, it provides the official population and employment growth forecasts as key inputs into the LRTP. WFRPC submitted a letter to the FAA on March 3, 2005 that stated that the Airport Sponsor's Proposed Project is "generally consistent with the West Florida Strategic Regional Policy Plan, adopted July 15, 1996."

### 11.2 The interests of the communities in or near which the project may be located have been given fair consideration [49 U.S.C. 47106(b)(2)].

The determination prescribed by this statutory provision is a precondition to agency approval of airport development project funding applications. The local planning process over the past decade and the environmental process for this EIS began with a November 7, 2001 Notice of Intent to prepare an environmental assessment and an April 23, 2002 Notice of Intent to prepare an environmental impact statement, and extended to this point of decision. The EIS process provided opportunities for the expression of, and response to, issues put forward by communities in or near the project location. Nearby communities and their residents have had the opportunity to express their views during agency and public scoping meetings in December 2001, at a May 2003 public meeting held prior to issuance of the Draft EIS, during the Draft EIS comment period, at a public meeting held prior to the public hearing, at the public hearing, and during the review period following public issuance of the Final EIS. The FAA's consideration of these community views, including those of federal, state, and local officials, public organizations, and public individuals are set forth in Final EIS Volumes III, IV, and V, and in **Appendix B** of this ROD. Thus, the

FAA has determined that throughout the environmental process, beginning at its earliest planning stages, fair consideration was given to the interest of communities in or near the project location.

**11.3 Appropriate action, including the adoption of zoning laws, has been or will be taken to the extent reasonable to restrict the use of land next to or near the airport to uses that are compatible with normal airport operations [49 U.S.C. 47107(a)(10)].**

On July 24, 2006, the Panama City-Bay County Airport and Industrial District provided written assurance that appropriate action, including the adoption of zoning laws, will be taken to the extent reasonable to restrict the use of land adjacent to or in the immediate vicinity of the relocated Panama City-Bay County International Airport to activities and purposes compatible with normal airport operations. *See Appendix L* of this ROD.

**11.4 The Panama City-Bay County Airport and Industrial District has certified that an opportunity for a public hearing was given to consider the economic, social, and environmental effects of the location and the location's consistency with the objectives of any planning that the community has carried out [49 U.S.C. 47106(c)(1)(A)(i)].**

The Panama City-Bay County Airport and Industrial District has certified by letter dated July 24, 2006, in **Appendix L** of this ROD, that public hearings were held on June 12, 2003 and December 11, 2003 to consider the economic, social, and environmental effects of the location of the proposed new Panama City-Bay County International Airport and the location's consistency with planning that the community has developed.

**11.5 The Panama City-Bay County Airport and Industrial District has certified that the airport management board has voting representation from the communities in which the project is located or has advised communities that they have the right to petition the Secretary of Transportation about the proposed project. [49 U.S.C. 47106(c)(1)(A)(ii)].**

The Panama City-Bay County Airport and Industrial District has certified by letter dated July 24, 2006, in **Appendix L** of this ROD, that the Panama City Bay County International Airport has voting representation from the communities in which the project will be located. *See* State of Florida, House Bill No. 939, Session Law Chapter No. 2005-311 (effective June 14, 2005) (describing voting representation for the airport management board).

The Airport District is comprised of five board members. The Panama City Commission appoints two members, the Bay County Commission appoints two members, and the four sitting board members elect the fifth member. The Airport District, therefore, has voting representation from the communities in which the project is located.

**11.6 Effect on Natural Resources. [49 U.S.C. 47106(c)(1)(B)].**

Under this statutory provision, the FAA may approve funding of an airport development project involving the location of an airport or runway or major runway extension having a significant adverse effect on natural resources, only after determining that no possible and prudent alternative to the project exists and that every reasonable step has been taken to minimize the adverse effect.

The FAA finds that the selected alternative would have significant adverse impacts in the categories of water quality, biotic communities, endangered and threatened species, wetlands, floodplains, and construction impacts without the mitigation described in Section 9 of this ROD. However, given that the impacts at each site are different and each build alternative would have associated significant impacts, none of the build alternatives can be deemed clearly environmentally superior. For this reason, and because only the West Bay Site 8,400 foot

Alternative meets both the FAA's and the Airport Sponsor's purposes and needs, the FAA finds that no possible and prudent alternative exists to the Proposed Project. See Section 7 of this ROD. Although FAA's independent runway length analysis demonstrated that a 6,800 foot runway at the West Bay Site would be sufficient to accommodate projected aviation demand, the Airport Sponsor still seeks the added flexibility that would be afforded by a longer runway at that site. See **Appendix M** for September 8, 2006 letter from the Airport Sponsor.

Because the Airport Sponsor has elected not to modify its goal of attracting new, longer range non-stop service, there is no possible, prudent, or practicable alternative to the West Bay 8,400 foot Alternative. Notably, at this time the eligibility of the Proposed Project for federal funding is limited to the costs of constructing only 6,800 feet out of the total 8,400 feet of the primary runway, consistent with facility needs identified using the FAA TAF and an independent runway length analysis. Finally, the FAA has determined that all reasonable steps have been taken to minimize any significant adverse effects on natural resources through adoption of mitigation measures.

As discussed in Section 5.13.2.4 of the Final EIS avoidance and minimization of wetland impacts on the West Bay site were considered. The Airport Sponsor initiated a *Feasibility Study* to address future demands and included an evaluation of potential relocation sites to develop without geographic constraints. Following the *Feasibility Study* the Sponsor prepared a *Site Selection Study* to identify preliminary relocation sites and an *Airport Layout Alternatives Analysis*. An approximately 9,000 acre area, which includes the West Bay Site, was evaluated by the Airport Sponsor to determine a preferred airport layout alternative based on wetland impacts, aeronautical suitability, operational efficiency, potential for airside development and vehicular access. Eight alternative layouts were developed and were rated good, fair and poor for each of the alternative development parameters discussed above. The Airport Sponsor's Proposed Project was further refined to improve aeronautical suitability and avoid potential conflict with flights over Pine Log State Forest. Through this process the proposed West Bay Site was defined. Details regarding the alternatives analysis are provided in the *Airport Layout Alternatives Analysis*.

Avoidance and minimization of wetland impacts have been considered for the Proposed Project approved in this ROD. At the West Bay Site, several facilities have been sited to avoid and minimize wetlands impacts. For example, the access road was sited to minimize impacts to wetlands to the extent possible considering the large wetland areas that extend along CR 388. The terminal building and wastewater treatment package plant have been sited for the most part in uplands; thus, avoiding and minimizing wetland impacts. However, due to the location of the runways, site geometry and the amount of wetland onsite complete avoidance and minimization of wetlands is not practical. For purposes of determining potential wetland impacts within the remainder of the proposed project's development area, it is assumed all wetlands would be impacted. Additional avoidance and minimization of Waters of the United States could be possible as final site grading and design are completed, but the Final EIS discloses worst case impacts. The majority of the wetlands on the West Bay Site have been historically impacted by silviculture activities and are the lower quality wetlands within the West Bay Site.

The FAA has decided to conditionally approve the selected alternative on implementation of the mitigation measures described in **Table 7** of this ROD. This condition will be enforced through a special assurance included in future federal airports grants related to the Proposed Project that are made to the Panama City-Bay County Airport and Industrial District.

**11.7 There are no actions that include the use of resources protected under Section 4(f) of the DOT Act including significant historic sites [49 U.S.C. 303(c)].**

There are no publicly-owned parks, recreation areas, wildlife and waterfowl refuges, or historic architectural structures located within the West Bay Site; therefore, Section 4(f) does not apply. The West Bay Site study area has one archaeological resource, Burnt Creek (8BY1025). This site

is potentially eligible for the NRHP. It is located outside the construction area and would not be impacted by the Proposed Project. Therefore, Section 4(f) does not apply.

**11.8 There are no actions associated with the project that would require relocation assistance for displaced persons or businesses pursuant to the Uniform Relocation Assistance and Real Property Acquisition Policies Act (42 U.S.C. 4601 et seq.) .**

These statutory provisions, imposed by Title II of the Uniform Relocation Assistance and Real Property Acquisition Policies Act of 1970, require that state or local agencies, undertaking federally-assisted projects which cause the involuntary displacement of persons or businesses, must make relocation benefits available to those persons impacted.

As detailed in Section 5.4 of the Final EIS, the West Bay Site 8,400 foot Alternative will not displace any persons, residences, businesses or community facilities; therefore, no federal relocation assistance would be required.

**11.9 For this project, involving new construction that will directly affect wetlands, there is no practicable alternative to such construction. The proposed action includes all practicable measures to minimize harm to wetlands that may result from such use (Executive Order 11990, as amended).**

Executive Order 11990, as amended, requires all federal agencies to avoid providing assistance for new construction located in wetlands, unless there is no practicable alternative to such construction, and all practicable measures to minimize harm to wetlands are included in the action.

The FAA has selected the West Bay Site 8,400 foot Alternative for approval, which will directly affect 596.2 acres of wetlands and 7,279 linear feet of non-wetland Waters of the U.S. at the West Bay Site. Therefore, consistent with Executive Order 11990, prior to approval the FAA must determine that there is no practicable alternative to such development. In reaching this conclusion, the FAA has assessed the ability of each of the alternatives to meet the purposes and needs of the project as well as other practical considerations. As demonstrated in Section 7.2 and 7.3 of this ROD, all of the West Bay Site alternatives are better able to meet the FAA's purposes and needs than any of the Existing Site alternatives.

With respect to the Airport Sponsor's purposes and needs, the Airport Sponsor still seeks the added flexibility that would be afforded by a longer runway at the West Bay Site even though FAA determined that a 6,800 foot runway at that site would be sufficient to accommodate projected aviation demand according to FAA's TAF and independent runway analysis. The longer runway is necessary to satisfy the Airport Sponsor's stated purpose and need to prepare for future opportunities for accommodating project demand and expansion opportunities. As a result, only the West Bay Site 8,400 foot Alternative would meet both the FAA's and the Airport Sponsor's purpose and need. In addition to these purpose and need considerations, the Airport Sponsor has elected not to modify its goal of attracting new, longer range non-stop service. See **Appendix M** for September 8, 2006 letter from the Airport Sponsor.

Finally, the FAA has considered input from other federal agencies with wetlands expertise. The FAA has coordinated with the USACE relating to the CWA Section 404 permit, and the USACE has indicated that the West Bay Site 8,400 foot Alternative is the least environmentally damaging practicable alternative for Section 404 purposes. See **Appendix A** of this ROD for a letter from USACE regarding the least environmental damaging practicable alternative for Section 404 purposes. In addition, the EPA, which shares responsibilities with the USACE under Section 404 of the CWA, stated in its comments on the Final EIS, "EPA finds that the significant wetland and potential secondary impacts of this proposed project have been reasonably addressed through prospective mitigation and additional F[inal] EIS documentation." See ROD **Appendix B**, EPA Comment Letter on Final EIS dated June 29, 2006. In light of the preceding considerations, including the ability of the various alternatives to satisfy both the FAA's and the Airport

Sponsor's purposes and needs, and the practical considerations that the Airport Sponsor is unlikely to move forward with the project if a 6,800 foot alternative were selected by FAA, there is no possible, prudent, or practicable alternative to the West Bay 8,400 foot Alternative. However, as explained above, at this time the eligibility of the Proposed Project for federal funding is limited to the costs of constructing only 6,800 feet out of the total 8,400 feet of the primary runway, consistent with facility needs identified using the FAA TAF and an independent runway length analysis.

Having concluded that there is no practicable alternative to construction impacting wetlands, Executive Order 11990 also requires all practicable measures be taken to minimize harm to wetlands that may result from approval of the project. Based on the information below, the FAA has determined that the project minimizes impacts to wetlands to the extent practicable and that the mitigation being required as a condition of approval of this ROD more than compensates for the proposed impacts. The proposed conceptual wetland mitigation plan is intended to provide compensatory mitigation for wetlands and Waters of the U.S. removed from the West Bay Site. As noted in Section 5.13 of the Final EIS, the USACE has worked with the FAA to ensure that all practicable measures will be taken to minimize harm to wetlands impacted through development of the selected alternative.

Regarding minimization of impacts, as a general matter, the West Bay Site was selected to avoid direct impacts to the two major stream systems, Burnt Mill and Crooked Creeks and Pine Log State Forest. On a more facility specific level, several facilities have been sited to avoid and minimize wetlands impacts. For example, the access road was sited to minimize impacts to wetlands, but complete wetland avoidance is not possible because large wetland areas extend along CR 388. The terminal building and wastewater treatment package plant have been sited for the most part in uplands; thus, avoiding and minimizing wetland impacts. However, due to the location of the runways, site geometry and the amount of wetland onsite, complete avoidance and minimization of wetlands is not practical. For purposes of determining potential wetland impacts within the remainder of the Proposed Project's development area, it is assumed all wetlands would be impacted. Additional avoidance and minimization of Waters of the US could be possible as final site grading and design are completed, but the impacts disclosed in the Final EIS represent the worst case. The majority of the wetlands on the West Bay Site have been historically impacted by silviculture activities and are the lower quality wetlands within the West Bay Site.

Using Best Management Practices (BMPs) during construction will further contribute to wetland impact minimization. Furthermore, implementation of the wetland compensatory mitigation plan will minimize harm caused by the project. Following issuance of this ROD, the USACE, in consultation with the FDEP, will complete its processing of a Section 404 permit and Section 401 certification, required for the Panama City-Bay County Airport and Industrial District to proceed with development impacting wetlands. The project approvals in this ROD and this wetlands determination are expressly conditioned upon permit approval and conditions to be outlined by the USACE, and upon the Panama City-Bay County Airport and Industrial District accomplishing the wetlands mitigation measures identified in this ROD and any USACE permit approval.

#### Mitigation Parcels

The safety standards set forth in this FAA Advisory Circular 150/5200-33A, *Hazardous Wildlife Attractants On or Near Airports* (July 27, 2004) are recommended for the operators of all public-use airports. Furthermore, for airport sponsors who are the recipients of federal grant funding, adherence to safety standards set forth in FAA advisory circulars is a requirement of standard grant assurances, as acknowledged in section 4-3(a) of FAA AC 150/5200-33A. This AC supports the Final EIS determination that the replacement wetlands for the Panama City-Bay County Airport development actions should not be located in the vicinity of the airport. Given the potential hazard associated with the creation of wildlife attractants within 10,000 feet of jet runways, the FAA, USACE, and FDEP agreed that it would be prudent to allow the Panama City-Bay County Airport and Industrial District to replace these impacted wetlands outside of the

relocated airport's immediate watershed. The replacement wetlands would be located in the same USGS hydrological unit.

As detailed in Section 5.13 of the Final EIS, a wetland mitigation program has been developed to offset the impacts of the project and to recognize other long-term biological concerns. The mitigation plan calls for replacing the filled wetlands. A total of 9,609 acres of compensatory mitigation is proposed. Three mitigation parcels have been identified. Final mitigation requirements will be determined during the Section 404 permit application and review process in consultation with the USACE.

In a letter to the FAA dated August 29, 2006, the USACE concurred with the Final EIS, and stated that the FAA's preferred alternative appears to be the Least Environmentally Damaging Practicable Alternative. The USACE intends to issue a separate Record of Decision combined with a Statement of Findings for compliance with NEPA and the Clean Water Act. *See Appendix A* of the ROD for a copy of this August 29, 2006 letter.

**11.10 This project results in a significant encroachment into a floodplain. Consistent with the policy in Executive Order 11988 and DOT Order 5650.2, there is no practicable alternative to the selected development of the preferred alternative.**

The FAA has concluded that the selected alternative would result in significant encroachment on a floodplain as defined in DOT Order 5650.2, which implements Executive Order 11988. These orders establish a policy to avoid supporting construction within a 100-year floodplain where practicable, and where avoidance is not practicable, to ensure that the construction design minimizes potential harm to or within the floodplain.

Under DOT Order 5650.2, FAA must make a finding that there is no practicable alternative to encroachment on a floodplain. In reaching this conclusion, FAA has considered the floodplain impacts of each of the alternatives, the purposes and needs for the project, and other practical considerations.

All build alternatives (West Bay and Existing Site) would result in floodplain encroachment, as follows. At the Existing Site, the 6,800-foot Runway Alternative would impact 33.4 acres of floodplain, the 6,800-foot Runway EMAS Scenario 2 alternative would impact 44.2 acres of floodplain, and the 8,400-foot Runway alternative would impact 35.5 acres of floodplain. The Existing Site alternatives impact floodplains, but avoid significant floodplain encroachment as defined in DOT Order 5650.2. However, the Existing Site alternatives are located partially within a FEMA designated VE zone (coastal special flood hazard areas with Base Flood Elevations determined). That designation is due to the Existing Site's location adjacent to Goose Bayou, which makes the Existing Site susceptible to flooding as a result of storm surge. Such flooding has occurred in the recent past and resulted in runway closures.

At the West Bay Site, the 6,800-foot Runway Scenario 1 alternative would impact 207.1 acres of floodplain, the 6,800-foot Runway Scenario 2 alternative would impact 183.4 acres of floodplain, and the 8,400-foot Runway alternative would impact 207.1 acres of floodplain. All of the impacts described for the West Bay Site occur in flood zone A within the floodplains of Kelly Branch, Bear Branch, and Morrell Branch. These impacts would be considered significant floodplain encroachments. Where possible, the improvements at the West Bay Site have been located to avoid impacts to floodplains; however, complete avoidance is not practicable given that stream systems and flowing wetland systems with their associated floodplain traverse through the site.

Regarding local floodplain protection controls, Bay County does not regulate activities in floodplains with the exception of construction standards that require protection of buildings from flooding. These standards would be enforced for any of the build alternatives, including the Proposed Project.

DOT Order 5610.2 requires a finding of practicability after examination of what is capable of being done within natural, social, and economic constraints. This requires a careful balancing and application of individual judgment, including the full range of environmental, social, economic, and engineering considerations.

FAA has considered numerous factors in concluding that there is no practicable alternative to approval of the West Bay Site 8,400-foot Alternative. FAA has taken account of the avoidance of social impacts such as noise and relocations which is achieved by approving the preferred alternative. These benefits carry forward into the future in the event that additional expansion is needed. The West Bay Site alternatives avoid the known risk of flooding due to storm surge at the Existing Site, which has occurred in the past as previously indicated. The FAA has also considered safety, operational, and engineering siting requirements, all of which favor approval of the West Bay Site 8,400 foot Alternative. Critically, the FAA has considered the inability of any other alternative to meet both FAA's and the Airport Sponsor's purpose and need, and the Airport Sponsor's intention to pursue only an alternative that meets its stated purpose and need. *See Appendix M* for September 8, 2006 letter from the Airport Sponsor. As a result of each of these considerations, FAA has concluded that there is no practicable alternative to floodplain encroachment at the West Bay Site.

In addition to concluding that there is no practicable alternative, FAA must also minimize potential harm to or within the floodplain. According to the CSMP prepared by the Airport Sponsor's consultant and as defined in the ETP process, floodplain compensation is not required for the West Bay Site 8,400 foot Alternative. The ETP process provides state review of all state permits required for the project. Nonetheless, the Airport Sponsor has committed to and FAA is requiring as a condition of approval of this ROD the following mitigation measures:

- Land use controls: All airport development would meet the requirements of the Bay County Flood Damage Prevention Ordinance, including elevating facilities above base flood level. In addition, all development in the Sector Plan area would meet the requirements of that ordinance.
- Design of the Airport Sponsor's Proposed Project to allow adequate flow circulation and preserve free, natural drainage: A commitment was made by the Airport Sponsor in the CSMP and as part of the ETP process to maintain natural drainage patterns. Additionally, the Airport Sponsor has committed to design the stormwater management system to match pre-project discharge rates and outfall to existing discharge points to minimize potential downstream impacts from flooding.
- Control of runoff: The Airport Sponsor has committed to exceed FDEP OFW and Bay County requirements as described in Section 5.8.4.3 of the Final EIS.
- Preservation of existing floodplain: Large areas of existing floodplain associated with tributaries of Burnt Mill and Crooked Creeks and West Bay within the proposed mitigation parcels will be preserved in perpetuity.
- The Airport Sponsor will include all practical measures in the design to minimize harm and to restore and preserve the natural and beneficial floodplain values affected.

The FAA has concluded that these commitments demonstrate that all possible measures to minimize harm to or within the floodplain will be undertaken.

**11.11 The Airport Sponsor has certified that this project complies with the enforceable policies of the State of Florida's approved coastal management program and is consistent with the Florida Coastal Zone Management Program (FCMP).**

No significant coastal zone impacts are associated with the West Bay Site 8,400 foot Alternative. The Final EIS concludes that the West Bay Site 8,400 foot Alternative is consistent with the policies of the FCMP. FDEP completed its review of the Final EIS and determined that the proposed activity complies with the enforceable policies of Florida's approved management program and will be conducted in a manner consistent with that program. FDEP's issuance of the necessary state resource permit will serve as the final finding of consistency with the FCMP. *See* the correspondence from FDEP dated June 29, 2006 in **Appendix F** of this ROD. FDEP issued its *Notice of Intent to Issue (NOI) Ecosystem Management Agreement and Other Related Permits* on October 10, 2005, signifying its intent to issue the permits that will signify the completion of the coastal zone consistency coordination process. Correspondence dated July 28, 2006 from the Panama City-Bay County International Airport and Industrial District certifies that the proposed relocation of the proposed Panama City-Bay County Airport complies with the enforceable policies of the approved Florida Coastal Zone Management Program and will be conducted in a manner consistent with that program. *See Appendix L* of this ROD.

**11.12 There are no actions associated with the project involving a disproportionately high and adverse impact to minority or low-income populations (DOT Order 5610.2).**

The FAA has determined that no disproportionately high and adverse impacts would occur from the West Bay Site 8,400 foot Alternative, based on the findings that:

- Minority and low-income populations make up less than 50 percent of the total study area population and less than the defined thresholds compared with the reference population;
- While specific block groups that comprise the study area meet or exceed one or both indicators for environmental justice concerns, none of those block groups are located within areas of impact by any of the alternatives;
- In addition, a survey conducted in fall 2004 indicated that no current minority or low-income persons then employed at PFN would be disproportionately affected by job loss, travel options, or other hardships resulting from any of the proposed alternatives, including the West Bay Site 8,400 foot Alternative.

**11.13 The FAA has given this proposal the independent and objective evaluation required by the Council on Environmental Quality (40 C.F.R. Section 1506.5).**

As the Final EIS outlined, a lengthy process led to the ultimate identification of the selected alternative, disclosure of potential impacts, and selection of appropriate mitigation measures. This process began with the FAA's competitive selection of an independent EIS contractor and continued throughout preparation of the Draft and Final EIS, culminating in identification of the selected alternative in this ROD. The FAA provided input, advice, and expertise throughout the planning and technical analysis, along with administrative direction and legal review of the project. From its inception, the FAA has taken a strong leadership role in the environmental evaluation of this project and has maintained its objectivity.



## 12.0 CONDITIONS OF APPROVAL

Section 13 outlines FAA's decision and order. In granting the approvals contained in Section 13, FAA incorporates the following conditions.

### Funding Considerations

The Airport Sponsor intends to apply for Airport Improvement Program (AIP) funding. This ROD includes the environmental determinations necessary to establish eligibility for approval of grants of federal funding. It does not signify an FAA commitment to provide a specific level of financial support, which is a separate future decision that will be made in accordance with other applicable federal laws, FAA policies, and procedures.

The Airport Sponsor is in the process of finalizing a benefit cost analysis and a financial plan in support of its application for grants of federal funding. The FAA has advised the Airport Sponsor that, at this time, consistent with facility needs identified using the FAA TAF and an independent runway length analysis, the costs of constructing only 6,800 feet out of the total 8,400 feet of the primary runway are eligible for AIP funding.

Although funding is a separate decision, the FAA asked the Airport Sponsor to provide preliminary cost data demonstrating that traditional sources of financing are available to construct the project. As the information FAA has received to date is not adequate to support an FAA decision on discretionary grant funding for this project, the approvals in this ROD are conditioned upon the Airport Sponsor's submission of an acceptable financial plan along with its application for federal funding.

### Implementation of Mitigation

In approving this ROD, the FAA is identifying mitigation measures that it deems necessary to avoid or minimize significant environmental impacts associated with approval of the selected alternative. **Table 7** of this ROD includes summaries of the mitigation actions discussed more fully in the Final EIS that are made conditions of approval of this ROD. **Table 7** is included as part of the FAA's approval of the Airport Layout Plan as described in this ROD. The approvals contained in this ROD are specifically conditioned upon full implementation of these mitigation measures.

In accordance with 40 CFR § 1505.3, the FAA will take appropriate steps, through federal funding grant assurances and conditions, airport layout plan approvals, and contract plans and specifications, to ensure that the mitigation actions outlined in this ROD are implemented during project development, and will monitor the implementation of these mitigation actions as necessary to assure that representations made in the Final EIS with respect to mitigation are carried out. These mitigation actions will be made the subject of special conditions included in future federal airport grants to the Airport Sponsor.

The primary responsibility for implementation of the mitigation measures that are conditions of approval of this ROD lies with the Airport Sponsor. The FAA will have oversight responsibility to ensure the mitigation measures are implemented. The FAA finds that these measures constitute all reasonable steps to minimize harm and that they represent all practical means to avoid or minimize environmental harm from the selected alternative and proposed federal actions.

### 13.0 DECISION AND ORDER

In Section 3.13 of the Final EIS, the FAA identified the West Bays Site 8,400 foot Alternative (the Airport Sponsor's Proposed Project) as the FAA's preferred alternative. The FAA must now select one of the following choices:

- Approve agency actions necessary to implement the proposed project, or
- Disapprove agency action to implement the proposed project.

Approval would signify that applicable federal requirements relating to airport development and planning have been met and would permit the Panama City-Bay County Airport and Industrial District to proceed with the proposed development and possibly receive federal funding and/or approval to impose and use Passenger Facility Charge (PFC) funds for eligible items. Not approving these agency actions would prevent the Panama City-Bay County Airport and Industrial District from proceeding with implementation of the West Bay Site 8,400 foot Alternative.

Decision: I have carefully considered the FAA's goals and objectives in relation to various aeronautical aspects of the proposed development actions discussed in the Final EIS. The review included: the purpose and need that this project would serve, the alternative means of achieving the purpose and need, the environmental impacts of these alternatives, and the mitigation necessary to preserve and enhance the human, cultural, and natural environment.

Under the authority delegated to me by the Administrator of the FAA, I find that the project in this ROD is reasonably supported. I, therefore, direct that action be taken to carry out the following agency actions discussed in Section 3 of this ROD, including:

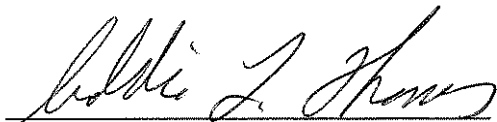
- A. Approval of the ALP with the conditions noted in Section 12 of this ROD for the projects summarized in Section 2.2.2 of the Final EIS, which constitutes the selected alternative in this ROD.
- B. Eligibility for federal grant-in-aid funds and/or PFC, including the following elements:
  - Site Preparation
  - Runway, Taxiway, and Runway Safety Area Construction
  - Terminal and Other Landside Development
  - Installation of Navigational Aids
  - Environmental Mitigation
- C. 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 and evaluate 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.
- D. Development of air traffic control and airspace management procedures to establish and maintain safe and efficient handling and movement of air traffic into and out of the airport under 49 U.S.C. §§ 40103, 40113, and 40120; development and approval of revision to Standard Instrument Approach Procedures (SIAP), Standard Instrument Departures (SID) and Standard Approach Routes (STAR) procedures for the new runways (14 CFR Part 97).
- E. Determinations that the proposed new airfield alignment, including runways and taxiways, conform to FAA design criteria. Approval of protocols for maintaining

Panama City-Bay County International Airport  
Record of Decision

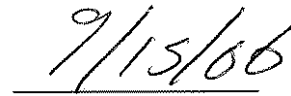
- F. Determinations that air quality impacts associated with the proposed project conform to the State Implementation Plan under Section 176(c)(1) of the Clean Air Act, and amended [42 U.S.C. § 7506(c)(1)], and 40 CFR Part 93.
- G. Review and subsequent approval of an amended Airport Certification Manual for PFN (per 14 CFR Part 139).
- H. Review and subsequent approval of amended air carrier operations specifications for service at PFN.

Finally, based upon the administrative record of this project, I certify, as prescribed by 49 U.S.C. § 44502 (b), that implementation of the proposed project is reasonably necessary for use in air commerce or in the interest of national defense.

Approved:



Eddie L. Thomas  
Acting Regional Administrator, FAA Southern Region



Date

**RIGHT OF APPEAL**

This ROD presents the Federal Aviation Administration'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 Courts of Appeals of the United States in accordance with the provisions of 49 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.