

**ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT
FOR
CONSTRUCTION OF
TEST AREA C-74 SUPPORT FACILITY
EGLIN AFB FL**

(RCS 06-039)



2 Feb 07

**Prepared by: Environmental Analysis Section
Stewardship Branch
Environmental Management Division
96 Civil Engineer Group
96 Air Base Wing**

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**FINDING OF NO SIGNIFICANT IMPACT
FOR
CONSTRUCTION OF TEST AREA C-74 SUPPORT FACILITY
EGLIN AFB FL**

RCS 06-039

Pursuant to the President's Council on Environmental Quality regulations for implementing the procedural provisions of the National Environmental Policy Act as put into effect by 40 Code of Federal Regulations (CFR) 1500-1508 and the U.S. Air Force *Environmental Impact Analysis Process* as effectuated by 32 CFR Part 989, the Department of the Air Force has conducted an Environmental Assessment (EA) of the probable environmental consequences for constructing and operating a support facility at Test Area C-74, Eglin Air Force Base (AFB), Florida.

PURPOSE AND NEED (EA Section 1.0, page 2)

The 46 Test Wing needs a new permanent, environmentally controlled support facility to be constructed to properly accommodate the staff assigned to Test Area C-74. A new support facility would provide a centralized work area that consolidates several functions that are currently being conducted in two separate locations. The purpose of this project is to construct a new consolidated support facility that meets current life, health, safety and security codes and will increase mission capability.

CURRENT SITUATION (EA Section 1.0, page 2)

Currently the administrative functions are being performed in a facility that does not meet current construction standards while technicians are required to perform their duties in a 48' box trailer. The trailer is very difficult to heat and cool and is subject to extensive damage if hit by hurricane force winds. Expensive test equipment is also being stored in the trailer. This equipment should be stored in an environmentally controlled area and is currently being damaged due to inadequacy of the box trailer. In addition to the equipment in the area, personnel are also affected by the extreme heat and cold during summer and winter months and have to walk 300 yards to the administrative facility for their breaks, meetings and to use the restroom.

DESCRIPTION OF PROPOED ACTION AND ALTERNATIVES

Proposed action (EA Section 2.1, page 7)

The proposed action is to construct a 2,310 square foot metal facility at Test Area C-74. The facility layout will consist of an access control area, an electronics lab, an administrative area, a conference room, an employee break room, a mechanical/electrical room, a latrine, and a temperature conditioning van storage area. A new septic system will be installed to accommodate the proper disposal of waste water from the new facility. A new crushed limestone driveway (estimated 200 foot in length and 12 foot in width) will also be constructed from the existing asphalt roadway to the new facility so the temperature conditioning van can be properly stored.

No Action Alternative (EA Section 2.2, page 7)

No action would result in maintaining current operations that involve the continued use of a box trailer and an administrative facility that does not meet current life, health, safety and security codes.

Alternative Considered but not Carried Forward for Analysis (EA Section 2.3, page 7)

The new facility could be constructed to the west side of the access road of Test Area C-74, but this area is prone to flooding and is aligned within the firing line of the track, increasing the risk of damage to the building. If constructed in this location, the facility would have to be vacated during test missions.

ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACTS

The EA analyzed potential adverse impacts of the Proposed Action on air and water quality, biological resources, hazardous substances, safety and unexploded ordnance. If the Air Force proponent complies with all federal, state and local regulations governing these programs and implements the precautions and Best Management Practices (BMPs) identified in sections four and five of the subject EA, no environmental impacts should occur from the Proposed Action. No significant adverse impacts were found in any of these areas. Nor is the Proposed Action expected to cause significant, cumulative impacts to any of these resources.

PUBLIC NOTICE

The public review period of this EA was announced in the Saturday, 13 Jan 07 edition of the *Northwest Florida Daily News*. The Draft EA for the Construction of Test Area C-74 Support Facility and the Finding of No Significant Impact were made available for public review and comment at the Fort Walton Beach Public Library, 185 SE Miracle Strip Parkway, Fort Walton Beach Florida; and the Robert L. F. Sikes Library, 1445 Commerce Drive, Crestview, Florida. Public comment period occurred 13 Jan 07 through 27 Jan 07. No comments were received from the public.

FINDING OF NO SIGNIFICANT IMPACT

Based on my review of the facts and the environmental analysis contained in the attached EA and as summarized above, we find the proposed decision of constructing a Support Facility at Test Area C-74, Eglin AFB, Florida, will not have a significant impact on the human or natural environment; therefore, an environmental impact statement is not required. This analysis fulfills the requirements of the National Environmental Policy Act, the President's Council on Environmental Quality and 32 CFR Part 989.



DENNIS D. YATES, Colonel, USAF
Commander, 96th Civil Engineer Group

6 FEB 07

Date

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RCS 06-039

1.0 PURPOSE AND NEED FOR THE PROPOSED ACTION

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The 46 Test Wing needs a new permanent, environmentally controlled operations facility to be constructed to properly accommodate the staff assigned to Test Area C-74. A new support facility would provide a centralized work area that consolidates several functions that are currently being conducted in two separate locations. Currently the administrative functions are being performed in a facility (Figure 1) that does not meet current construction standards while the technicians perform their electronic duties in a 48' box trailer (Figure 2). The trailer is very difficult to heat and cool and would be subject to extensive damage if hit by hurricane force winds. Expensive test equipment is also being stored in the trailer. This equipment should be stored in a controlled environment and is currently being damaged due to inadequacy of the box trailer. In addition to the equipment damage, personnel are also being affected by frequent precipitation, extreme heat and cold during summer and winter months as they walk to and from the administrative facility. The administrative facility is located about 300 yards from box trailer and is used for lunch and restroom breaks as well as scheduled meetings. The purpose of this project is to construct a new consolidated support facility that can be used by all C-74 personnel to better support their test mission.



Figure 1
Proposed Site and Existing Facilities



Figure 2
Current Electronics Lab (Box Trailer) used by Technicians

1.2 LOCATION OF THE PROPOSED ACTION

See figures 1, 3, 4, 5 and 6 for the general and specific location of the proposed action.



Figure 3

Geographic Region of the Proposed Action



Figure 4

Location of Proposed Site in Relationship to Eglin Main Base

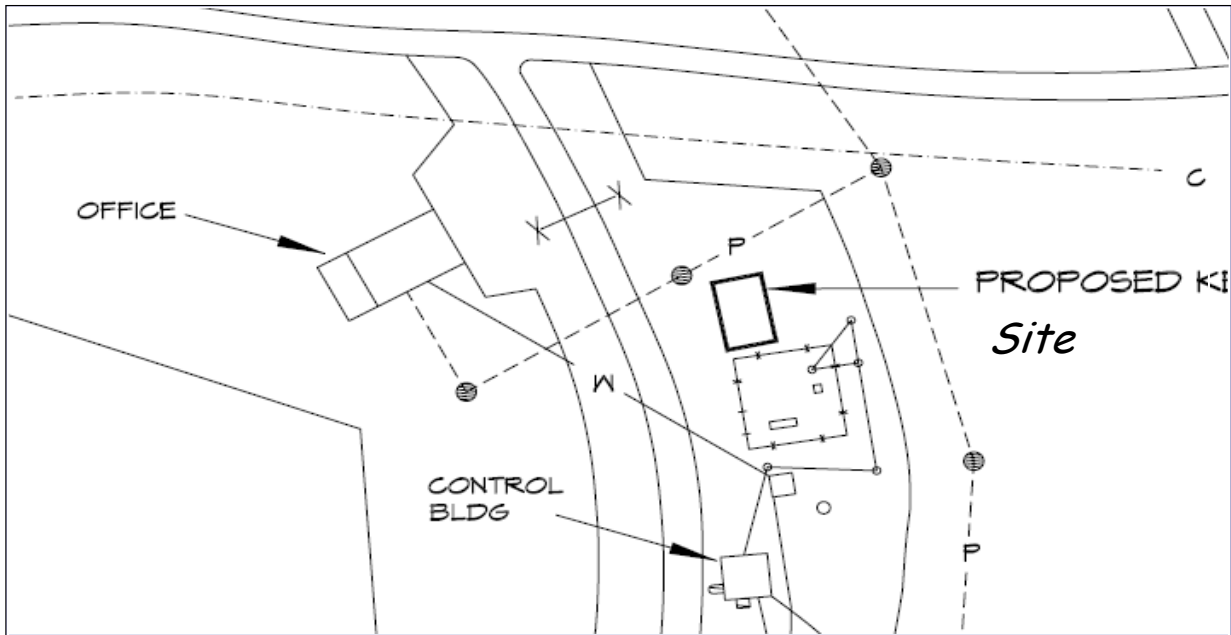


Figure 5
Proposed Site Plan of New Support Facility



Figure 6
Proposed Site for of the C-74 Support Facility

1.3 ISSUES ELIMINATED FROM FURTHER STUDY

The following resources were eliminated from detailed analysis based upon comments provided by Eglin interdisciplinary reviewers and resource managers during the review of the AF Form 813 (RCS 06-039, 31 Jan 2006) and due to the fact that the proposed action is located in a controlled and rural setting. It is the expectation that these parameters would not be adversely impacted and therefore they have not been carried forward for further analysis:

Environmental Justice: After careful analysis of aerial photography it is determined that no minority group or low-income group would be unfairly treated or unduly burdened by implementing or not implementing the proposed action.

Executive Order 13405, "Protection of Children from Environmental Health Risks and Safety Risks", mandates that federal agencies identify and assess environmental and health risks that may disproportionately affect children as a result of the implementation of federal policies, programs, activities and standards (62 Federal Register 19,883-19,888). This controlled range site is located south of Bob Sikes Highway (Range Road 213) on the Eglin reservation and is 6.2 miles from nearest residential area. The proposed action to construct a new operations facility in this restricted area does not pose risk outside the site and will not increase automobile traffic to and from the site. Therefore, risks to children's health and safety are not an issue.

Cultural Resources: No historical or cultural issues/assets exist at or in close proximity to the proposed site of the planned action. Additionally, no effects will occur on any other structures or sites eligible for listing on the National Register. Therefore, a Section 106 consultation with the state historic preservation officer is not required.

Physical Resources: No unique physical features (climate, geology, topography, soils) or areas exist in the vicinity of the proposed action. Construction will take place on a previously disturbed property that is relatively level. According to the Eglin AFB Installation Restoration Program (IRP) Management Action Plan, no known or suspected hazardous or toxic sites are present on or adjacent to the proposed construction site.

Noise: Construction and operation of a new operations facility would not result in more than nominal and temporary changes in the noise environment. While heavy equipment would be used for site contouring for stormwater swales, similar equipment is already in use to support range activities on Range 74.

Ground Water: Under the proposed action, no activities would occur that would impact site or regional groundwater. Construction of the facility would not encroach on underlying bedrock or surficial layer aquifers. All soil disturbances would be confined to the near-surface zone. No impact to groundwater would result.

Traffic: Construction of the new facility would have no impact on traffic. Bob Sikes Highway (RR 213) is a very lightly traveled road that is used mostly by Eglin employed personnel traveling to and from Eglin Air Force Base and its ranges. There are no plans to move additional employees to the site once the new facility is constructed.

Flood Hazard: Proposed construction site is not located within a flood zone. No above-grade structures would be placed within floodplains as a result of the proposed action. Therefore,

implementation of the proposed action would not alter any flood elevations recurrence frequencies.

Visual Resources: Because the proposed site is located on the Eglin reservation and is distant from any residential area, there would be no impact on visual resources resulting from construction and operation of the new operations facility.

Socioeconomics: Implementation of the proposed action is consistent with the land use of the areas as a test range for military activities. This action would have no direct impact on employment. The activities associated with the construction of the operations facility would have a negligible positive impact on local employment relative to the amount of construction-related work occurring in the county. Due to the fact that the site is located in a restricted access area of the Eglin reservation, no impact would occur to recreational activities by the general public.

2.0 DESCRIPTION OF PROPOSED ACTION AND ALTERNATIVES

2.1 PROPOSED ACTION

The 46 Test Wing is proposing the construction of a 2,310 square foot metal facility that will be used as a Test Area C-74 Support Facility (Figures 5 & 6). The facility layout will consist of an access control area, an electronics lab, an administrative area, a conference room, an employee break room, a mechanical/electrical room, a latrine, and a temperature conditioning van storage area. A new septic system will be installed to accommodate the proper disposal of waste water from the new facility. A new crushed limestone driveway (estimated 200 foot in length and 12 foot in width) will also be constructed from the existing asphalt roadway to the new facility so the temperature conditioning van can be properly stored. The new support facility is planned to be constructed in fiscal year 2007 and will be located on the northeastern section of Test Area C-74 (Figures 1, 5 & 6).

2.2 NO ACTION ALTERNATIVE

No action would result in maintaining current operations involving the continued usage of a box trailer and an administrative facility that does not meet current life, health, safety and security codes. See Section 4 for No Action impacts.

2.3 ALTERNATIVE CONSIDERED BUT NOT CARRIED FORWARD FOR ANALYSIS

2.3.1 The new support facility could be constructed to the west side of the access road of Test Area C-74, but this area is prone to flooding and is aligned with the firing line of the track, increasing the risk of damage to the building. If constructed in this location, the facility would also have to be vacated during test missions.

3.0 AFFECTED ENVIRONMENT

3.1 INTRODUCTION

Eglin AFB is located in the northwest Florida panhandle and is situated across three counties: Santa Rosa, Okaloosa, and Walton. Eglin's mission includes research, development, acquisition, test and evaluation of non-nuclear munitions and navigation/guidance systems. Eglin AFB is the home of the Air Armament Center (AAC), which conducts a full spectrum of planning, directing, conducting the test and evaluation of munitions, electronic combat and navigation systems. Eglin AFB is also the home of extensive support services including civil engineering, social actions, transportation, and supply. The base contains 724 square miles of land area and approximately 142,000 square miles of airspace overlying land and water ranges. Natural areas on the Eglin Reservation are classified into seven distinct areas: Sandhills, Wetlands/Riparian Sand Pine, Flatwoods, Pine/Mixed Hardwoods, Barrier Island ecological associations, and the administrative areas. The proposed action would be sited south of Range Road 213 on Test Area C-74 in the northeastern portion of the Eglin Reservation.

3.2 AIR QUALITY

The air quality at the project site and the surrounding area is considered good. All of Florida, including the proposed project area, is classified as being in attainment for all National Ambient Air Quality Standards (NAAQS) (Florida Department of Environmental Protection of Environmental Protection [FDEP], 2006a).

3.3 WATER QUALITY (Surface Water & Wetlands)

This section provides descriptions of the qualitative and quantitative characteristics of water resources within or adjacent to the study area, which include streams, ponds, bays, the Gulf and wetlands.

No streams, lakes, ponds, or impoundments are located within or immediately adjacent to the proposed project area. The nearest surface water (Indigo Pond) is more than 1300 feet from the proposed construction site. There are no wetlands within the immediate proposed excavation and construction area.

Topography in the area of the proposed action is generally flat. Storm water flows in a southeasterly direction but no creeks or other surface waters are present within 0.3 miles of the site. Construction of these facilities will result in an increase in impervious cover of approximately 3,500 square feet. The discharge of untreated storm water in the State of Florida is considered a potential source of pollution and is therefore regulated under 62-25 F.A.C. As defined in 62-25, all new storm water discharge facilities require either a submittal of a Notice of Intent to use the General Permit for Stormwater Discharge Facility Construction, or be covered by an exemption. The general permit is applicable for facilities, which provide treatment through retention or detention with filtration of runoff. It also applies to modifications or reconstruction of an existing storm water management system, provided it is not intended to serve new development, will not increase the associated pollutant loading, and will not change the points of discharge.

Vegetative buffer zones are highly effective for controlling sedimentation and erosion and reducing pollution from stormwater runoff. Sedimentation occurs when excess soil particles accumulate in wetlands or surface waters, which can suffocate organisms (hypoxia) and reduce sunlight needed by aquatic plants and animals. Pollutants that are attached to soil particles are transported by sediment to wetlands and surface waters. Two common pollutants, phosphorus and nitrogen (found in fertilizers), cause excessive algae growth, deteriorate water quality, and can kill fish populations. Vegetative buffers also reduce erosion and improve wildlife habitat.

3.4 BIOLOGICAL RESOURCES

Biological resources include native and introduced terrestrial and aquatic plants and animals.

The northwestern region of Florida is rich in biodiversity, having numerous native plant and animal species. The area is considered potential gopher tortoise habitat, and the following State-Listed species could potentially exist within the project area: gopher frog, bog frog and gopher tortoise. However, based on the latest survey information, no threatened and endangered animal species, species of special concern, or critical habitat has been identified within the project area.

3.5 HAZARDOUS AND TOXIC SUBSTANCES

According to the Eglin AFB Environmental Restoration Program (ERP) Management Action Plan, no known or suspected hazardous or toxic sites are present on or adjacent to the proposed construction site. The petroleum products (oil, lubricants, and fuel) in construction machinery are defined as hazardous materials in Air Force Instruction 32-7086. NOTE: Hazardous Materials (HAZMAT) is considered any material with chemical, physical, or biological characteristics that can cause safety, public health, or environmental concerns. This includes, but is not limited to, pest control agents, cleaners, paints, adhesives, sealers, fuels and lubricants. Small quantities of hazardous materials will be used during the construction of the facility. These materials could pose a threat to the environment if released.

3.6 SAFETY & UNEXPLODED ORDNANCE (UXO)

Construction will take place in a restricted area of the Eglin reservation; therefore, the general public will not have access to the construction site.

Areas identified as historic ranges used for weapon testing and training are considered safety hazards due to the potential presence of UXO. The term UXO refers to ordnance that has failed to operate as designed and may pose a safety hazard. Ordnance may include bombs, missiles, rockets, small arms ammunition, mines, grenades, bulk explosives, mortar and artillery rounds, etc. Under current policy, prior to construction activities in potentially affected areas, trained UXO technicians conduct clearance operations in accordance with prescribed DoD standards. Any UXO that is discovered is removed and disposed by military Explosive Ordnance Disposal personnel. There is no evidence that ordnance have ever been employed or stored in areas associated with this proposed action.

4.0 ENVIRONMENTAL CONSEQUENCES

4.1 AIR QUALITY

Proposed Action

Minimum source emissions would be created by the proposed action if a generator is installed. There would be potential for minor fugitive dust from site preparation and general construction activities. Best management practices (BMPs) including, but not limited to, mulching bare soil and moistening heavy work areas would be implemented during construction to minimize this potential. Construction equipment would generate vehicle emissions. However, the construction period would be of short duration (less than 3 months) and the exhaust from construction equipment onsite would be minor. Any impacts would be temporary and less than significant. The short duration of the construction period would preclude significant interaction effects with other projects and activities. Eglin AFB is classified as an air quality attainment region; therefore, a conformity determination is not required.

Before installing a generator at the new operations facility, Eglin's Air Quality Program and Storage Tank Program managers must be notified so that the generator can be added to Eglin's Air Quality & Storage Tank inventory records.

The 46 Test Wing's compliance with Eglin's Title V permit and with the implementation of these precautions and BMPs is required. Therefore, adverse impacts to air quality are not expected.

No Action Alternative

No change in existing conditions would result from the no action alternative. Therefore, no impacts to air quality would result from the no action alternative.

4.2 WATER QUALITY (Surface Water & Wetlands)

Proposed Action

Stormwater runoff from the construction site would have the potential to negatively impact receiving waters and wetlands. However the project design must include appropriate construction stormwater Best Management Practices (BMPs) consistent with Chapter 6 of *The Florida Development Manual: A Guide to Sound Land and Water Management* (Florida Department of Environmental Regulation, now FDEP, 1988) that would be implemented and maintained to minimize the potential for offsite impacts to receiving waters. These BMPs may include, but would not be limited to, implementation of good housekeeping techniques, installation of gravel construction entrances, use and maintenance of silt fencing, temporary stormwater detention areas with sediment filters, soil stabilization with seed and mulch and temporary right of way diversions. A 100-foot vegetative buffer between adjacent land uses and surface water or wetlands will be used to help prevent pollutants from entering these aquatic environments.

The 46 Test Wing's compliance with state stormwater regulations and the implementation of BMPs is required; therefore, adverse impacts to the water quality are not expected.

No Action Alternative

Under the no action alternative, conditions would remain as they are and no impacts to water quality would result.

4.3 BIOLOGICAL RESOURCES

Although the area is considered potential gopher tortoise habitat, none were found during an initial site inspection. Eglin Natural Resources Section will perform a thorough gopher tortoise survey prior to any ground disturbance. Any gopher tortoise or commensal species found will be relocated to a suitable location according to Eglin's tortoise relocation permit. Since the facilities would be constructed in previously developed locations on the Eglin reservation, no wildlife or other critical habitat would be affected by the proposed action.

No Action Alternative

Under the no action alternative, no construction activity would occur at the site. There would be no change in existing conditions and no impacts to threatened or endangered species or their potential habitats.

4.4 HAZARDOUS AND TOXIC SUBSTANCES

Proposed Action

During construction of the new facility, various petroleum products, hazardous materials or waste will be used or generated.

All hazardous material (HAZMAT) brought onto the installation must be controlled. All HAZMAT must be accompanied by a Material Safety Data Sheet (MSDS); MSDSs must be readily available to the users upon request. All HAZMAT must be properly labeled and in their original container. All unused HAZMAT must be removed from the installation upon completion of the contract.

During construction no fuels or petroleum products would be stored onsite and no equipment maintenance would be performed onsite. The project design would require use of appropriate BMPs for all refueling activities to minimize the risk of contamination from accidental spill of petroleum products during construction. Additionally, project design would require that all equipment be maintained in proper working condition to minimize incidental leakage. Any such leakage would constitute a less than significant impact on the environment.

If a release to the environment occurs, the responsible party must immediately notify the contract administrator. This includes all chemical releases regardless of the quantities.

The 46 Test Wing's compliance with federal, state and local regulations governing these areas is required. Therefore adverse impacts to the environment related to hazardous materials and waste are not expected.

No Action Alternative

Under the no action alternative, conditions would remain as they are and there would be only minimum impacts from toxic and hazardous substances or waste being used or generated at the active test area.

4.5 SAFETY & UNEXPLODED ORDNANCE (UXO)

Proposed Action

The general public will not have access to the construction site because it is within a restricted area of the Eglin reservation; therefore, this eliminates the general public from the possibility of suffering injuries.

Construction activities would be accomplished using traditional methods without the use of high explosives or other similar hazardous materials. Qualified contractors would perform these activities. Contractors would also be required to follow applicable OSHA requirements during construction activities, which typically include the preparation of appropriate Job Site Safety Plans explaining how the contractor would assure job safety throughout the life of the project. No issues associated with facility construction activities would pose any unique adverse impacts to safety.

Based on UXO maps and information obtained from Eglin's Base Safety Office, there is no evidence that the military has ever employed or stored ordnance in the area associated with this proposed action. But based on the extensive historic use of the Range for weapons testing, there may be a small potential for a UXO to be located on the proposed construction site.

The 46 Test Wing's compliance with federal, state and local regulations related to safety and unexploded ordnance is required. Therefore adverse impacts to the environment related to UXO and safety are not expected.

No Action Alternative

Under the no action alternative, condition would remain as they are and no impacts to safety to include possible UXO issues.

4.6 CUMULATIVE IMPACTS

According to the Council on Environmental Quality (CEQ) regulations, the cumulative effects analysis in an EA should consider the potential environmental impacts resulting from the "incremental impacts of the action when added to other past, present and reasonably foreseeable future actions, regardless and what agency or person undertakes such others action" (40CFR 1508.7).

This is the only known proposed project that will or has impacted the northeastern section of the Eglin reservation; therefore, cumulative impacts would be minimal.

4.7 IRREVERSIBLE AND IRRETRIEVABLE IMPACTS

There are no irreversible or irretrievable impacts associated with the proposed action. In the event that Eglin AFB should require the 46 Test Wing to abandon the operations facility and restore the site, the site could be restored to its current condition. The facility could be demolished and removed from the site. The site could be graded to restore the pre-existing topography. The irretrievable commitment of resources would be limited to the approximately .75 acre parcel of real property.

4.8 CONCLUSIONS

Under the Council of Environmental Quality (CEQ) 40 CFR Part 1500; Environmental Quality, AFPD 32-79; and the Department of the Air Force Environmental Impact Analysis Process, 32 CFR Part 989, formerly AFI 32-7061, environmental consequences resulting from the implementation of the proposed action would be minimal. The site is not in an air quality attainment region, supports no threatened or endangered species, and contains no surface water, wetlands, or flood plains. The site contains no asbestos or lead based paint. No cultural resources will be affected. A Finding of No Significant Impact is warranted.

5.0 PLANS, PERMITS, AND ENVIRONMENTAL MANAGEMENT REQUIREMENTS

5.1 PLANS

- Safety Plan will have to be developed by the contractor prior to contract award

5-2 PERMITS

- A storm water construction permit may be required and if required, the stormwater design must be coordinated with Eglin's Storm Water Program Manager

5-3 ENVIRONMENTAL MANAGEMENT REQUIREMENTS

5.3.1 Air quality:

- Implement BMP for fugitive particulate control
- Notify Eglin's Air Quality Program and Storage Tank Program Managers before installing a generator at the new operations facility

5.3.2 Water Quality

- If the swale exemption is used for stormwater control, coordinate the design with Eglin's Storm Water Program Manager
- Stormwater Best Management Practices (BMPs) consistent with Chapter 6 of *The Florida Development Manual: A guide to Sound Land and Water Management* (Florida Department of Environmental Regulation, now FDEP, 1988) will be implemented and maintained to minimize the potential for offsite impacts to receiving waters

5.3.3 Biological Resources

- Eglin Natural Resources Section will be notified prior to any ground disturbance so a thorough gopher tortoise survey can be conducted

- Any gopher tortoise or commensals found will be relocated by the Eglin Natural Resources Section according to Eglin's tortoise relocation permit

5.3.4 Hazardous and Toxic Substances

- Hazardous material (HAZMAT) brought onto the installation must be controlled
- BMPs must be implemented to prevent petroleum and hazardous material spills
- All spills of petroleum or hazardous material must be properly reported

5.3.5 Other Issues

- Approval of site plans for the proposed action must be obtained from the Base Community Planning Officer (796 CEG/CEOPP), the Range Configuration Control Committee (RC3), and the Range Development Executive Steering Committee (RDESC) prior to any construction
- A Base Civil Engineering Work Clearance Request (AF Form 103) must be obtained before digging to construct footings or other foundation work associated with construction or other ground-disturbing activity
- Lay-down areas and areas disturbed by construction equipment would be graded to original contours and reseeded, if necessary
- Construction waste would be disposed of in a construction and demolition (C&D) or sanitary landfill, except for wastes that are recycled by Eglin AFB (lumber, scrap metal, cardboard, and asphalt)
- The proposed action would be regulated under the *Planning and Programming of Facility Construction Projects; the Land Use Plan Component of the Base Comprehensive Plan; the Standard Facilities Requirements Handbook, AFH 32-1084; the Military Handbook, MIL-HDBK-1190 and the Americans with Disabilities Act*

6.0 List of Preparers

Thomas L. Chavers, Project Manager - Author

Years of Environmental Experience: 16

Areas of Responsibility: Project Manager/Technical Advisor

Paul R. Bolduc, Ph.D. Proofreading and Editing

Years of Environmental Experience: 11

Areas of Responsibility: Proofreading/Technical Advisor.