

ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSEMENT

**APALACHICOLA NATIONAL FOREST
HELICOPTER LANDING ZONES
FLORIDA**

**MOODY AIR FORCE BASE
VALDOSTA, GEORGIA**

DECEMBER 2003

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APALACHICOLA NATIONAL FOREST
HELICOPTER LANDING ZONES

FINDING OF NO SIGNIFICANT IMPACT

1.0 NAME OF ACTION

Apalachicola National Forest Helicopter Landing Zones for Moody Air Force Base (AFB), Georgia.

2.0 DESCRIPTION OF THE PROPOSED ACTION AND ALTERNATIVE

2.1 Proposed Action

Moody AFB proposes to obtain a U.S. Forest Service (USFS) Special Use Permit for the 41st Rescue Squadron (41 RQS) to use thirteen sites in the Apalachicola National Forest (ANF), Florida, as HH-60G helicopter landing zones (LZs) for combat search and rescue aircrew training. The thirteen proposed LZs would be located on cleared undeveloped land that is currently designated and utilized by the USFS as helicopter landing sites (helispots) during wildfire operations. The proposed action would require no construction, soil disturbance, or site alteration at the existing helispots.

The 41 RQS would utilize one or two helispots approximately one-hour, twice a week for helicopter approaches, landings, take-offs, and hovering operations during day or night training exercises. Personnel insertions and extraction on the helispots would be practiced via rope, rappel, and ladders. On-ground time at a site would be less than 10 minutes per landing. The helicopters would operate at 500 feet above ground level and below. Sustained hovering operations would occur at altitudes of up to 100 feet. All helicopter fueling and maintenance operations would occur at Moody AFB.

2.2 Alternatives

The three alternatives to the proposed action are: 1) use of all existing helispots at the ANF; 2) limited use of suitable helispots; and, 3) the no action alternative. Based on initial screening criteria, it was determined that the alternative 1 was not feasible and it was dropped from further consideration. Alternative 2 was determined to be merely a subset of the proposed action, and since environmental effects resulting from the implementation of alternative 2 would be identical to the proposed action, this alternative was considered redundant and was dropped from further consideration. The environmental consequences of the no action alternative were evaluated in the environmental assessment (EA).

3.0 SUMMARY OF ENVIRONMENTAL CONSEQUENCES

3.1 Proposed Action

There will not be any significant impacts to the environment as a result of implementing the proposed action. No significant impacts to land use, water resources, biological resources (including rare, threatened, and endangered species), cultural resources, recreational resources, congressionally designated areas, scenic resources, safety, air quality, or hazardous waste will occur as a result of this action. Noise levels in the area will increase during the proposed LZ operations, but will not significantly impact the human or wildlife environment.

No significant cumulative impacts will result from the proposed action when considered in conjunction with other past, present, and reasonably foreseeable future actions.

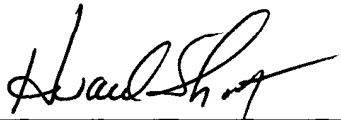
Consultations were conducted with other state and federal agencies in accordance with applicable laws and regulations. The public was awarded the opportunity to review and comment on the proposed action.

3.2 No Action Alternative

Under the No Action Alternative, the proposed sites would not be used as helicopter LZs. There would be no significant impacts to the environment.

4.0 CONCLUSION

The attached EA was prepared and evaluated pursuant to the National Environmental Policy Act (Public Law 91-190, 42 U.S.C. 4321 *et seq.*) and according to 32 Code of Federal Regulations 989, *The Environmental Impact Analysis Process*. I have concluded that the use of the proposed landing zones does not constitute a "major Federal action significantly affecting the quality of the human environment" when considered individually or cumulatively in the context of the referenced act, including both direct and indirect impacts. Comments received during the public review period were considered and the final document revised to reflect the concerns of the public. Therefore, no further study is required, and a Finding of No Significant Impact is thus warranted.



HOWARD SHORT, Colonel, USAF
Chairperson, 347 RQW Environmental Protection Committee

19 Dec 03

Date

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APALACHICOLA HELICOPTER LANDING ZONES
ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT

1.0 PURPOSE OF AND NEED FOR THE PROPOSED ACTION

1.1 Background

Moody Air Force Base (AFB), located 10 miles northeast of the City of Valdosta in south-central Georgia, is home to the 41st Rescue Squadron (41 RQS). The primary mission of 41 RQS is to provide worldwide, deployable long-range combat search and rescue of downed aircrews. The 41 RQS operates HH-60G Pave Hawk helicopters in support of this mission. The main function of the HH-60G helicopter is to conduct day and night operations in hostile environments to recover downed aircrew and other isolated personnel during military conflicts. Other HH-60G tasks include air rescue capability for Moody AFB and local civilian emergency services.

In 1996 an Environmental Assessment (EA) was completed by Moody AFB to determine the environmental impacts related to the proposed relocation of the 41st and 71st Rescue Squadrons to Moody AFB (Relocation EA). This document resulted in a Finding of No Significant Impact (FONSI) that was signed on 5 August 1996. The need for remote helicopter landing zones (LZ) was identified in the Relocation EA, but site-specific environmental impacts were not discussed because specific site locations had not been determined.

Since the Relocation EA, several remote helicopter landing zones (LZ) have been identified and approved for use: fourteen civilian airfields throughout southern Georgia and northern Florida; four limited-use hover areas on Moody AFB; one site on Rock Island at Florida Big Bend Wildlife Management Area for mid-sortie crew swap; and ten sites on private land throughout south Georgia and north Florida. The unique physical setting of each location provides a range of training scenarios for the 41 RQS.

To support the continuing mission of the 41 RQS, thirteen sites have been identified in the Apalachicola National Forest (ANF), Florida for potential use as LZs. This EA addresses site-specific environmental issues related to the use of these thirteen sites as helicopter LZs for search and rescue training maneuvers.

1.2 Purpose and Need

The Moody AFB 41 RQS proposes to use thirteen existing U.S. Forest Service helicopter landing spots (helispots) in the Apalachicola National Forest (ANF), Florida, as HH-60G helicopter landing zones (LZs) for combat search and rescue aircrew training.

The ten existing LZs on private property, southeast of Moody AFB, are the only LZs currently available that simulate combat search and rescue operations on secluded, undeveloped land. Numerous LZs with diverse physical characteristics are needed to develop helicopter crew skills essential to fulfill combat rescue requirements. Additional LZs in isolated areas would provide physical and navigational site diversity needed to maintain combat proficiency.

1.3 Location of the Proposed Action

The Apalachicola National Forest (ANF) is located southwest of the City of Tallahassee in the Florida panhandle. The ANF encompasses approximately 564,000 acres in Leon, Wakulla, Liberty, and Franklin Counties, Florida.

The thirteen U.S. Forest Service (USFS) helispots proposed for use by the 41 RQS are scattered throughout the ANF (See Figure 1-1). Table 1-1 lists the location and acreage of each helispot proposed for use. The helispots range in size from 0.6 to 17 acres. Acreage was determined through boundary surveys conducted with a Trimble Pro-XR global positioning system (GPS) with real-time differential correction of less than one-meter error.

1.4 Decision to be Made and the Decision-Maker

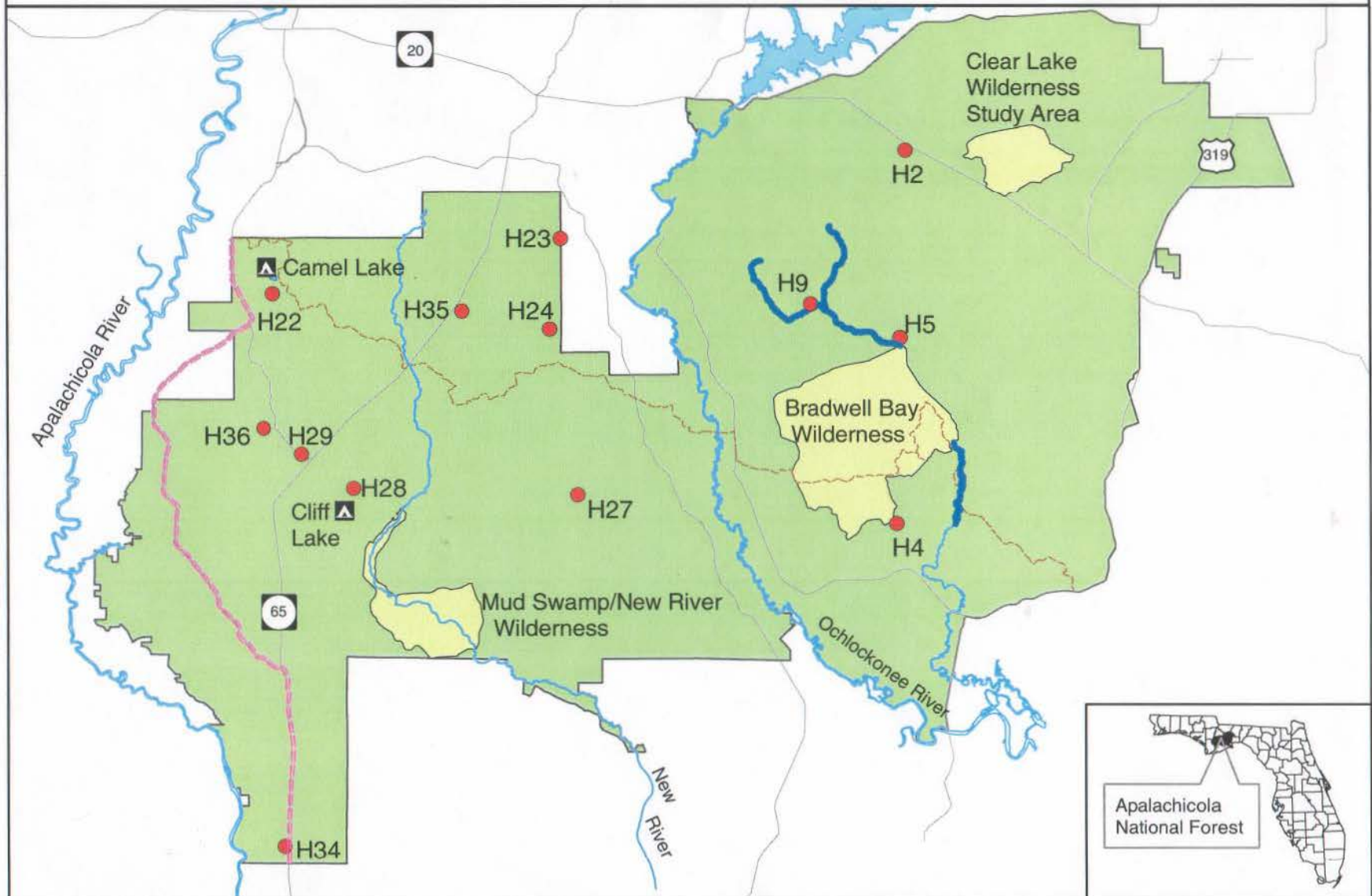
In relation to this project, the decisions to be made are:

- Whether to request a Special Use Permit from the USFS to utilize 13 existing helispots for 41 RQS helicopter air rescue training exercises; and,
- Whether the proposed action will result in significant environmental impacts requiring the preparation of an Environmental Impact Statement.

Per 32 Code of Federal Regulations 989, *The Environmental Impact Analysis Process*, the decision-maker for this action is the Chairman of the Moody AFB Environmental Protection Committee (EPC).

FIGURE 1-1

Helispots and Potentially Affected Areas Apalachicola National Forest



Legend

- Helispots
- Wilderness Areas
- FL National Scenic Trail
- Forest Boundary
- Roads
- Rivers
- Sopchoppy Wild and Scenic River Corridor
- Apalachee Savannas Scenic Byway
- ▲ Campground



Table 1-1. Helispot Locations and Acreages

Helispot	Location	County	Acres
H2	SR 267 & FR 360	Leon	1.6
H4	FR 329 & FR 341	Wakulla	0.6
H5	FR 348 & FH 13	Wakulla	3.6
H9	FR 309 & FR 353	Wakulla	0.8
H22	FR 105 N	Liberty	17
H23	FR 128 A	Liberty	0.9
H24	FR 176	Liberty	0.8
H27	FH 13 & FR 126	Liberty	6.4
H28	FH 13, Cliff Lake	Liberty	2.9
H29	SR 12, Wilma Work Center	Liberty	0.8
H34	FR 124A & SR 65	Franklin	3.4
H35	SR 65 & FR 187	Liberty	4.2
H36	FR 112S & SR 12	Liberty	8

SR - State Road, FR - Forest Road, FH - Forest Highway

1.5 Scope of the Environmental Review

Issues that could potentially be impacted by the proposed action include:

- Land Use
- Water Resources
- Biological Resources (flora and fauna)
- Rare, Threatened, and Endangered (RTE) Species
- Cultural Resources
- Noise
- Recreational Resources
- Congressionally Designated Areas
- Scenic Resources
- Safety
- Hazardous Waste
- Air Quality

1.6 Applicable Regulatory Requirements

The command at Moody AFB has the responsibility to ensure that all projects comply with the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) and the Air Force implementing regulations (32 CFR 989, *The Environmental Impact Analysis Process*), as well as the Clean Air Act, the Clean Water Act, the Endangered Species Act, Executive Order 11990 -- *Protection of Wetlands*, Executive Order 13112 -- *Invasive Species*, the National Historic Preservation Act (NHPA), the Resource Conservation and Recovery Act (RCRA), and other applicable environmental laws and regulations.

Authority for Moody AFB 41 RQS to use National Forest System lands is established under the Master Agreement between Department of Defense and Department of Agriculture Concerning the Use of National Forest System Lands for Military Activity, signed in September 1988 (Appendix A). The use of national forest lands for military training activities is within the statutory authority of the Act of June 4, 1897.

2.0 DESCRIPTION OF PROPOSED ACTION AND ALTERNATIVES

2.1 Minimum Selection Criteria

In the initial screening of a potential training area, the Air Force considered minimum selection criteria. Only properties that met these criteria were considered suitable for detailed analysis. The selection criteria used were:

- Conformance to existing laws and regulations, and Air Combat Command (ACC) and Department of Air Force (AF) policy.
- Physical property requirements:
 - Travel distance - Property must be in relative close proximity to Moody AFB property to minimize flight transit time.
 - Isolated setting - Property must be in rural setting to simulate secluded combat conditions, plus sufficiently dark to train during night maneuvers.

2.2 Detailed Description of Proposed Action

Moody AFB proposes to obtain an USFS Special Use Permit for the 41st Rescue Squadron (41 RQS) to use thirteen existing helicopter landing spots (helispots) in the Apalachicola National Forest (ANF), Florida, as HH-60G helicopter landing zones (LZs) for combat search and rescue aircrew training. Figure 1-1 shows the locations of the thirteen helispots proposed for LZ use. These helispots are located on cleared, undeveloped land that the USFS currently uses for helicopter landing operations. The proposed action would require no construction, soil disturbance, or site alteration of the existing helispots.

The 41 RQS would conduct a maximum of two training exercises per week at the ANF. A typical training exercise would consist of two helicopters utilizing one or two helispots for one hour with an average of four total landings. LZ exercises within the ANF would occur between 7:00 a.m. and 12:00 a.m. eastern time Monday through Friday, with the majority of the exercises occurring Tuesday through Thursday.

During the proposed training, helispots would be used for helicopter approaches, landings, take-offs, and hovering maneuvers. Personnel insertions and extractions on the helispots would be practiced via rope, rappel, and ladders. On-ground time at a site would be less than 10 minutes per landing. The helicopters would operate at 500 feet above ground level or less. Sustained hovering maneuvers would occur at altitudes of up to 100 feet.

The helispots would be marked with green chemical light sticks during night maneuvers. The light sticks would be removed from the helispot at the completion of each training

event. Helicopter fueling and maintenance operations would occur at Moody AFB; no refueling would occur at the helispots or in-flight.

2.3 Alternatives

2.3.1 Alternative 1 - Use of All Existing Helispots

Currently, the USFS maintains and utilizes 23 helispots within the boundaries of the ANF. Under this alternative, the Air Force would use all 23 helispots for training purposes as described in 2.2 above.

The Air Force used minimum selection criteria to screen the 23 helispots to determine compatibility with the military training mission and requirements. The selection criteria used in this screening included:

- Existing helispots that require no clearing or land disturbance
- USFS approval of helispot use
- Size requirements - helispot must provide sufficient obstacle clearance
- Environmental compatibility - no obvious environmental impacts
- Isolated setting - Property must be in rural setting to simulate secluded combat conditions, plus sufficiently dark to train during night maneuvers.

Based on this initial screening, it was determined that only 13 of the 23 helispots were suitable for use by the military. Therefore, this alternative was dropped from consideration and will not be considered further in this document.

2.3.2 Alternative 2 - Limited Use of Helispots

Moody AFB considered the anticipated environmental impacts resulting from the use of fewer combinations of helispots (<13), including restricting the use of those helispots near recreational facilities and wilderness areas (H4, H5, H22, and H28). Under the proposed action (see 2.2 above), each of the 13 helispots would receive an average of 17 hours of use annually (approximately one one-hour visit every three weeks). As the number of helispots to be utilized throughout the ANF decreases, the average number of hours of use for the other helispots will increase to ensure that the minimum number of training hours are met.

The Air Force requires a minimum of four helispots in one area for military training to prevent over-familiarization by pilots. Therefore, with a worst case scenario of limiting use to only four helispots on the ANF, each helispot would receive 55 hours of annual use (approximately one one-hour visit every week).

Since anticipated environmental impacts are more closely related to duration rather than frequency of use, there would not be a significant difference between using 13 helispots

versus using four helispots. Presumably, the environmental analysis conducted for the proposed action should adequately address the environmental impacts associated with the use of fewer helispots on the ANF. Therefore, this alternative was considered redundant and was dropped from consideration. It will not be analyzed further in this document.

2.3.3 Alternative 3 - No Action Alternative

Under this alternative, helispots within the ANF would not be used by the 41 RQS for training maneuvers. As required by NEPA and 32 CFR 989, the environmental impacts of this alternative will be further analyzed in this document.

3.0 AFFECTED ENVIRONMENT

3.1 Introduction

Neither of the analyzed alternatives would have adverse impacts to areas of critical environmental concern, prime or unique farmlands, coastal zones, flood plains, or to Native American religious concerns.

3.2 Land Use

The Apalachicola National Forest (ANF) is owned by the United States Department of Agriculture. The ANF, comprised of 564,961 acres, was established in 1936 on land that was primarily used for timber and turpentine production.

The ANF is one of the largest contiguous blocks of public forestland east of the Mississippi River. The U.S. Forest Service (USFS) manages the land and ecosystems for multiple uses, from recreation-based activities to commodity-based businesses. The ANF offers a wide variety of recreational activities including boating, fishing, camping, hunting, bicycling and hiking. Commercial uses of the ANF range from timber harvesting to worm "grunting" (calling to harvest worms) to honey production.

The thirteen sites proposed for LZs use are currently designated and utilized by the USFS as helicopter landing sites (helispots). The USFS uses these helispots several times a year, primarily during wildfire fighting operations. Individual helispots are designated by the capital letter "H" followed by a number (Figure 1-1).

H29 is the only helispot that is not used exclusively as a helispot. H29 is located in an open area within the boundaries of an abandoned USFS work center compound called the Wilma Work Center. This compound is currently used for equipment storage and as an occasional staging area during wildfire fighting operations. Two vacant buildings, constructed in 1933-34 for a Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC) camp, are adjacent to H29.

Land surrounding H2, H23, H24, H27, H35, and H36 is classified as undeveloped forest and wetlands. USFS land uses located near H4, H5, H9, H22, H28, H29 and H34 that could potentially be affected by the proposed action are identified in Table 3-1 (See Figure 1-1). Detailed descriptions of these land uses are discussed in Section 3.8 - Recreational Resources, Section 3.9 - Congressional Designated Areas, and Section 3.10 - Scenic Resources.

Table 3-1. Potentially Affected U.S. Forest Service Land Uses

Potentially Affected U.S. Forest Service Land Uses	Potentially Affected By	Approximate Distance and Location from Helispot
Clear Lake Wilderness Study Area	Overflight	13000' east of H2
Bradwell Bay Wilderness Area	H4	900' west of H4
	H5	1600' south of H5
	Overflight	
Sopchoppy Scenic River Corridor	H5	500' southwest of H5
	H9	H9 within Corridor
Camel Lake Recreation Area	H22	2600' north of H22 (Edge of lake closest to helispot)
Camel Lake Campground	H22	3900' north of H22
Florida National Scenic Trail	H22	2300' west of H22
Cliff Lake Hunt Camp	H28	700' south of H28
Wilma Work Center	H29	Adjacent to H29
Mud Swamp/New River Wilderness Area	Overflight	14000' southeast of H28
Apalachee Savannahs Scenic Byway	H34	700' east of H34

Private property is located within one mile of H23, H24, H29, and H34. Table 3-2 lists these private property land uses. State government property, Tate's Hell State Forest, borders the Apalachicola National Forest approximately 4000' south of H34.

Table 3-2. Private Property Land Uses Near the Helispots

Helispo t	Private Property Land Use Within One-Mile Radius of Helispots	Distance and Location to Helispot
H23	Private undeveloped forest	Adjacent - east of H23
H24	Private undeveloped forest	2500' east of H24
H29	Abandoned resident	1100' southeast of H29
H34	Private timberland	1500' northwest of H34
H34	Private timberland	1700' northeast of H34

3.3 Water Resources

Wetlands - There are no jurisdictional wetlands located on any helispots. However, wetlands classified as palustrine forested wetlands are adjacent to the following seven helispots: H2, H4, H9, H23, H24, H27, and H35. Palustrine forested wetlands are dominated by trees and shrubs and include inland marshes, swamps, bogs, fens, and floodplains.

Surface Water - The Apalachicola River borders the ANF to the west with the Ochlockonee, Sopchoppy and New Rivers running through the ANF and draining into the Gulf of Mexico (See Figure 1-1). The ANF is situated within four watersheds: Apalachee Bay-St. Marks, Lower Ochlockonee, New, and Apalachicola watersheds. Table 3-3 identifies the helispot surface water drainage locations and watersheds.

Groundwater - The ANF is located within two hydrogeologic regions, the Woodville Karst Region and the Apalachicola Embayment Region. Generally, the eastern portion of the ANF is located within the Woodville Karst Region and the western portion of the ANF lies within the Apalachicola Embayment Region. In both these regions groundwater occurs in two water-bearing zones: a surficial aquifer and the Floridan aquifer system.

Table 3-3. Helispots Surface Water Drainage

Helispots	Surface Water Discharge Location	Watershed
H2	Lost Creek	Apalachee Bay-St. Marks
H4	Sopchoppy River	Lower Ochlockonee
H5	Sopchoppy River	Lower Ochlockonee
H9	Sopchoppy River	Lower Ochlockonee
H22	Big Gully	Apalachicola
H23	Yellow Creek	Lower Ochlockonee
H24	Yellow Creek	Lower Ochlockonee
H27	Juniper Creek	New
H28	West Prong	New
H29	Rowletts Creek	Apalachicola
H34	Ft. Gadsen Creek	Apalachicola
H35	Black Creek	New
H36	Two Barrel Branch	Apalachicola

3.4 Biological Resources (Flora and Fauna)

All of the proposed helispots are currently cleared of woody vegetation and are maintained in a low vegetative state through periodic disking, mowing, or burning. Generally, these sites exist as grassy/herbaceous "islands" of early successional habitat surrounded by areas of older successional habitat, such as immature and mature pine forests and forested wetlands. As a result of this island effect and the small size of the LZs in relation to the surrounding habitat, wildlife occurrence on these sites is primarily limited to transient use. However, edge species and species that utilize early-successional habitat, such as white-tailed deer, eastern wild turkeys, cotton-tailed rabbits, raccoons, opossums, mourning doves, northern bobwhite quail, and some neotropical migratory birds, may utilize these sites for foraging and other uses on a limited basis. Moody AFB personnel conducted field surveys of each helispot during spring and summer 2002 to identify site-specific information on vegetation and wildlife resources. Representative photographs of the vegetative condition of each of these LZs are attached at Appendix B. Information on RTE species is available in Section 3.5.

Helispot H2 is currently vegetated with large areas of bracken fern, grasses, forbs, and other herbaceous species. There is a 7-acre borrow pit pond located adjacent to the helispot to the north-northeast, and a red-cockaded woodpecker (RCW) cluster (RCW Colony 230-6) located 1,145 feet northeast of the boundary of the helispot. The majority of the vegetation in the immediate vicinity of the helispot is comprised of a 15-year old longleaf pine plantation; however, mature stands of slash and longleaf pines are located approximately 125 yards from the edge of the helispot to the south and west. Only avian

species were observed on the site; however, white-tailed deer tracks were present, indicating some use of the area. Birds recorded from the site during field surveys included eastern towhee, common yellowthroat, red-bellied woodpecker, and common grackle.

Helispot H4 is located near the Bradwell Bay Wilderness Area and is maintained in a grassy vegetative state. The majority of the surrounding habitat is comprised of 25-year old slash pine plantations. Immediately to the north of the helispot is a mature longleaf forest approximately 68 years old. White-tailed deer tracks were present on the site. Birds recorded from the site during field surveys included swallow-tailed kite, eastern towhee, Carolina wren, turkey vulture, red-bellied woodpecker, and common yellowthroat.

Helispot H5 is located near the Bradwell Bay Wilderness Area and is currently covered with native early successional vegetation, including gallberry, saw palmetto, grasses, and forbs. A large 13-year old slash pine plantation is located to the southeast of the helispot, and a 45-year old stand of immature slash pole timber is located directly to the northeast of the site. Mature longleaf pine forests over 80 years of age are located to the west and north of the helispot boundary. Red-headed woodpeckers were noted feeding on dead snags adjacent to the site, and yellow-breasted chats were observed calling from within the boundary of the helispot. No other fauna species were recorded during field surveys on this site.

Helispot H9 is currently covered with native early successional vegetation, including gallberry, saw palmetto, grasses, and forbs. This helispot is located very near the confluence of two rivers; therefore, the habitat surrounding the site is predominantly representative of native bottomland hardwood forests (e.g. sweet bay-swamp tupelo-red maple). Small stands of 10-year old slash pine plantations are scattered throughout the area on more upland soils. No mammals or their sign were observed on the site during field surveys. Bird species recorded in the general vicinity of the helispot include hooded warbler, cardinal, eastern towhee, and blue jay. No other fauna species were recorded during field surveys on this site.

Helispot H22 is maintained as a large bahia grass field. Immediately south of the helispot is large longleaf pine regeneration area, and to the west is a bottomland hardwood forest comprised of bald cypress and water tupelo. A small mature longleaf pine forest is located northwest of the helispot, and a 17-year old longleaf pine plantation is located northeast of the helispot. White-tailed deer tracks were seen on the roads surrounding the helispot; however, no other mammals were observed on the area. Cardinals and eastern towhees were recorded as being present on the helispot, and cricket frogs were heard calling from a small wetland immediately north of the site. No other fauna species were recorded during field surveys.

Helispot H23 is vegetated with native grasses, forbs, and brush, including bracken fern, saw palmetto, and scattered longleaf pine seedlings. There is a 12-year old longleaf pine

plantation directly to the south of the helispot. The remaining ANF property near the site is comprised of shrubs and brush and is considered unstocked from a forestry perspective. Private agricultural land exists to the east of the helispot. Animals commonly found in early successional habitat were observed on or near the helispot, including eastern towhee, Carolina wren, white-eyed vireo, and white-tailed deer. No other fauna species were recorded during field surveys.

Helispot H24 is located on fill resulting from the creation of a man-made pond. As a result, there is very little vegetation on the site. The area immediately surrounding the helispot is comprised of a 20-year old slash pine plantation. The remainder of the vegetation in the area is comprised of shrubs and brush, such as white titi, and is considered unstocked from a forestry perspective. No mammals or their sign were recorded on the site during field investigations. Bird species reported on or near the site included hooded warbler, common yellowthroat, chipping sparrow, eastern towhee, and red-bellied woodpecker. All of these species are commonly found associated with early successional habitat, especially those found near wetlands and bodies of water. No other fauna species were recorded during field surveys.

Helispot H27 is currently maintained in grasses, and is surrounded by areas of early successional habitat with shrubs and bushes, including gallberry and saw palmetto. A 3-year old longleaf pine plantation is located to the south and east of the helispot. A 76-year old mature longleaf pine forest is located to the north of the helispot, and a 40-year old slash pine forest is located to the west. No mammals or their sign were noted on this site during field investigations. Birds reported from this site include common yellowthroat and Carolina wren. However, given the early successional habitat surrounding this site, birds and mammals associated with such habitat, including eastern towhees, white-tailed deer, and cotton-tailed rabbits should also be present. No other fauna species were recorded during field surveys.

Helispot H28 is currently maintained in grasses. The majority of the habitat to the west and south of the helispot is comprised of mature saw timber (70-year old slash pine and 79-year old longleaf pine forests). The habitat to the east of the helispot consists of a large pond cypress forest. Deer tracks were noted on the site during field investigations; however, no other mammals were observed. Mourning doves were recorded as being present on the helispot, and eastern towhees, pine warblers, and eastern wild turkeys were reported from habitat adjacent to the site. No other fauna species were recorded during field surveys.

Helispot H29 is immediately adjacent to the Wilma Work Center, and is located entirely within the chain link fence surrounding the compound. This compound is currently used for equipment storage and as an occasional staging area during wildfire fighting operations. Helispot H9 is currently maintained as a lawn adjacent to this compound, and there are several large oaks and pines planted around the helispot. Habitat immediately adjacent to the helispot is comprised of mature longleaf pine forests in several different

age classes (i.e., 73-year old, 83-year old, and 85-year old). Fauna species observed on the site were limited to great crested flycatcher and turkey vulture. Additionally, the area surrounding the compound is an agricultural outlease, and cattle were observed foraging in the forests adjacent to the compound.

Helispot H34 is located on deep sands, and is vegetated with native grasses and forbs. The helispot is surrounded by a 30-acre longleaf pine plantation planted in 2000. Bottomland hardwoods, including bald cypress and water tupelo, follow drainages associated with Fort Gadsden Creek. There is a mature longleaf pine forest located to the southwest of the helispot across the Fort Gadsden Creek drainage. Fauna species recorded from the site include white-tailed deer, eastern towhee, white-eyed vireo, and pine warbler.

The vegetation on Helispot H35 consists of native grasses and forbs, including saw palmetto. The surrounding habitat is comprised of a 12-year old longleaf plantation and 25-30 year old slash pine forests. To the east and south of the helispot, there is a wetland drainage comprised primarily of bald cypress and water tupelo. Fauna species observed on the helispot were limited to red-shouldered hawk and mourning dove. However, early successional species, including yellow-breasted chat and white-eyed vireo, should be present in the habitat surrounding the site.

Helispot H36 is located on a portion of former Dove Field N41. At the time of field surveys, the site was fallow, and was comprised of native grasses and forbs and residual browntop millet stalks. The area to the southeast of the helispot can be classified as a sandhill ecosystem, comprised of scrub oak and scattered mature pines. To the south and northwest of the helispot there is a mature longleaf forest approximately 75 years old. The remainder of the habitat surrounding the helispot is either immature longleaf pine or is classified as being non-stocked. Wildlife observed on the site was limited to great-crested flycatcher and mourning dove; however, white-tailed deer tracks were observed on the helispot. Other species expected in this area would include pine warblers, common flickers, and other species associated with sandhill/longleaf pine forest habitats.

3.5 Rare, Threatened, and Endangered Species

A list of threatened and endangered (RTE) species potentially occurring in the proposed project area was obtained from the U.S. Forest Service, the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission (FWCC), and the Florida Natural Areas Inventory (FNAI) (Table 3-4). Additionally, the Regional Forester lists sensitive species that need to be considered when planning actions on national forests. The list of sensitive species for Apalachicola National Forest is attached at Appendix C.

**Table 3-4. Rare, Threatened, and Endangered Species
Potentially Occurring in Proposed Project Area**

Common Name	Scientific Name	Federal Status
Flatwoods Salamander	<i>Ambystoma cingulatum</i>	Threatened
Eastern Indigo Snake	<i>Drymarchon corais couperi</i>	Threatened
Southeastern American Kestrel	<i>Falco sparverius paulus</i>	None
Gopher Tortoise	<i>Gopherus polyphemus</i>	None
Florida Sandhill Crane	<i>Grus canadensis pratensis</i>	None
Bald Eagle	<i>Haliaeetus leucocephalus</i>	Threatened
Harper's Beauty	<i>Harperocallis flava</i>	Endangered
White Birds-in-a-Nest	<i>Macbridea alba</i>	Threatened
Wood Stork	<i>Mycteria americana</i>	Endangered
Gray Bat	<i>Myotis grisescens</i>	Endangered
Red-cockaded Woodpecker	<i>Picoides borealis</i>	Endangered
Godfrey's Butterwort	<i>Pinguicula ionantha</i>	Threatened
Florida Skullcap	<i>Scutellaria floridana</i>	Threatened

Moody AFB personnel surveyed the helispots for the presence of RTE species during spring and summer 2002. No RTE species were found within the boundaries of any of the helispots. However, it was determined that the proposed action had the potential to indirectly impact some RTE species not located within the boundary of the helispot, but located in close proximity to the site. Based on the list of proposed RTE species, it was determined that intensive surveys for red-cockaded woodpeckers (RCW), bald eagles, and wood storks should be conducted in suitable habitat within a radius of 1,500 feet around each helispot. Site-specific results from surveys are provided below.

RCW field surveys conducted during spring and summer 2002 were in accordance with procedures provided by ANF. Aerial photographs and forest stand maps were used to identify suitable RCW habitat within 1,500 feet of each helispot. Suitable habitat was defined as pine forests greater than 30 years of age, seed tree areas, and shelterwood stands. Stands were surveyed in a systematic manner by personnel with binoculars walking transects based on compass headings. Trees with RCW activity were classified as active, inactive, or abandoned/enlarged, and holes were classified as cavities or starts. Trees were marked in the field with flagging tape and locational data was obtained with a Trimble Pro-XR global positioning system (GPS) with real-time differential correction of less than one-meter error. In accordance with USFS directives, all discovered trees were painted with a 6-inch white band encircling the bole, and a RCW tree tag provided by the USFS was nailed to each tree. Locational information and data collected for each tree (date, species of tree, classification information, and RCW tag number) were exported into an ArcGIS layer projected to North American Datum 1983, Florida State Plane North. Existing geographic information system (GIS) RCW data for the area was provided by ANF personnel in compatible formats. A map showing the proximity of RCW trees to proposed helispots is attached at Appendix C.

The location of bald eagle nests and wood stork rookeries were provided by the FFWCC and USFWS. Since no bald eagle nests or wood stork rookeries were reported within 1,500 feet of any helispots, specific field surveys for these species were not conducted (See map at Appendix C). However, personnel conducting field surveys of the helispots

and RCW suitable habitat were directed to look for and record any sightings of bald eagles, wood storks, large nests, and wading bird nesting concentrations. No sightings of bald eagles, wood storks, large nests, or wading bird nesting concentrations were recorded within 1,500 feet of helispots. According to information provided by FFWCC and USFWS, the closest bald eagle nest to any helispot is located almost 6 miles west of Helispot H2 and the closest wood stork rookery is located 24 miles northeast of Helispot H2 (Appendix C).

Helispot H2: RCW Colony (Cluster) 230-6 is located 1,145 feet northeast of the boundary of the helispot; no other clusters or trees were identified during field surveys. The only RCW cavity tree within this cluster has an inactive cavity and is located 1,360 feet from the boundary of the helispot.

Helispot H4: No RCW clusters or trees were identified within 1,500 feet of this helispot during field surveys. The closest cluster is RCW Colony 338-1, located about 6,810 feet northeast of the boundary of the helispot. This cluster is currently inactive and consists mainly of inactive artificial cavities constructed through drilling.

Helispot H5: No RCW clusters or trees were identified within 1,500 feet of this helispot during field surveys. The closest cluster is RCW Colony 314-4, located about 2,320 feet northeast of the boundary of the helispot. The closest living RCW tree has an enlarged cavity and is located about 2,400 feet from the boundary of the helispot.

Helispot H9: No RCW clusters or trees were identified within 1,500 feet of this helispot during field surveys. The closest cluster is RCW Colony 307-5, located about 7,100 feet to the east/southeast. The closest RCW tree has an enlarged cavity and is located about 7,850 feet from the boundary of the helispot.

Helispot H22: No RCW clusters or trees were identified within 1,500 feet of this helispot during field surveys. The closest cluster is RCW Colony 13-3, located about 7,350 feet to the west. The closest RCW tree has an active cavity and is located about 7,600 feet from the boundary of the helispot.

Helispot H23: No RCW clusters or trees were identified within 1,500 feet of this helispot during field surveys. The closest cluster is RCW Colony 19-1, located about 14,000 feet to the southwest. The closest RCW tree is located about 14,400 feet from the boundary of the helispot.

Helispot H24: No active RCW clusters or trees were identified within 1,500 feet of this helispot during field surveys. The closest cluster is RCW Colony 19-1, located about 9,000 feet north/northwest of the helispot. The closest RCW tree is located about 9,200 feet from the boundary of the helispot.

Helispot H27: No RCW clusters or trees were identified within 1,500 feet of this helispot during field surveys. The closest clusters to this helispot are RCW Colony 50-8 and

RCW Colony 51-8, both located about 2,000 feet to the northeast. The closest RCW tree is classified as an inactive start and is located about 2,430 feet from the boundary of the helispot.

Helispot H28: There are two RCW clusters located within 1,500 feet of this helispot:

- RCW Colony 44-15 is located about 830 feet north of the helispot. Two new RCW trees were identified in this cluster during field surveys. RCW Tree #3385 has an active cavity and is located about 1,040 feet from the boundary of the helispot. RCW Tree #3386 has an inactive start and is located about 1,360 feet from the edge of the helispot.
- RCW Colony 65-2 is located about 735 feet west/southwest of the helispot. Two new RCW trees were identified in this cluster during field surveys. RCW Tree #3384 has an inactive cavity and is located about 817 feet from the boundary of the helispot. RCW Tree #3383 has an active cavity and is located about 1,136 feet from the boundary of the helispot.

Helispot H29: No RCW clusters or trees were identified within 1,500 feet of this helispot during field surveys. The closest cluster is RCW Colony 67-1, located about 1,550 feet southwest of the helispot. The closest RCW tree is located about 1,770 feet from the boundary of the helispot, and is classified as an active cavity.

Helispot H34: Two previously unidentified RCW trees comprising a new cluster were discovered within 1,500 feet of the helispot during field surveys. RCW Tree #3382 has an enlarged cavity and is located 580 feet from the boundary of the helispot. RCW Tree #3381 has an inactive cavity and is located about 760 feet from the boundary of the helispot. The closest previously identified cluster is RCW Colony 110-3, located about 2,370 feet southwest of the helispot.

Helispot H35: No RCW clusters or trees were identified within 1,500 feet of this helispot during field surveys. The closest cluster is RCW Colony 8-5, located about 10,530 feet north of the helispot. The closest RCW tree is located 10,600 feet from the boundary of the helispot.

Helispot H36: No RCW clusters or trees were identified within 1,500 feet of this helispot during field surveys. The closest cluster is RCW Colony 29-4, located about 3,600 feet south of the helispot. The closest RCW tree in this cluster is located about 3,730 feet from the boundary of the helispot.

Maps showing the proximity of RCW cavity trees, bald eagle nests, and wood stork rookeries for each helispot are located in Appendix C.

3.6 Cultural Resources

All thirteen of the proposed helispots are currently used by the USFS for helicopter operations. A cultural resources background check of records at the Florida State Historic Preservation Office and ANF was conducted for all the helispots, the results of which are described in Table 3-5. Based on the results of this background check, and the fact that the proposed action would not alter current land use at the helispots, the Air Force determined that further archeological survey of each helispot was not necessary. Appendix B contains photographs of each helispot.

Table 3-5. Known Cultural Resources at the Helispots

Helispot	Borrow Pit	Cultural Resources Results* - FMSF	Cultural Resources Results* – ANF
H2	Yes	No sites identified. No surveys identified.	No documentation provided by Forest Service (FS) personnel.
H4	Yes	No sites identified. No surveys identified.	FS personnel declared No Cultural Resources (NCR) at the borrow pit (Repp, 1998).
H5	Yes	Three unevaluated sites identified within the vicinity: WA-203, WA-653, WA-374. Recommendation for WA-374 was avoidance. Unable to locate site form-referenced documentation.	FS personnel declared no impact to site WA-374 with its use as a temporary helipad (Repp, 1998).
H9	No	Two potentially eligible sites identified within the vicinity: WA-447, WA-193 Unable to locate site form-referenced documentation	No documentation provided by FS personnel.
H22	No	No sites identified. No surveys identified.	No documentation provided by FS personnel.

Table 3-5 (Continued)

Helispot	Borrow Pit	Cultural Resources Results* - FMSF	Cultural Resources Results* – ANF
H23	No	No sites identified. No surveys identified.	No documentation provided by FS personnel.
H24	Yes	No sites identified. No surveys identified.	No documentation provided by FS personnel.
H27	No	One not-eligible site identified: LI-255. Surveys: <i>Cultural Resources Assessment of Forest Highway 13</i> (1986), and <i>Staging Area Survey – No Cultural Resources</i> (Sept 2000).	No documentation provided by FS personnel.
H28	Yes	No sites identified. No surveys identified.	FS personnel declared NCR at this borrow pit and recommended proceeding with proposed activity (Repp 2001).
H29	No	Three resources identified all structures: LI-280, LI-281, LI-304. No surveys identified.	FS personnel provided a copy of structure documentation (Adams 1986).
H34	Yes	Three resources identified: FR-737, not eligible; FR-784, needs further testing; FR-841, no data. Unable to locate the documentation referenced on the site forms.	No documentation provided by FS personnel.
H35	Yes	No cultural resources, according to survey located.	No documentation provided by FS personnel.
H36	No	No sites identified. No surveys identified.	No documentation provided by FS personnel.

*Results from record search of Florida Master Site File, and information obtained from ANF Personnel.

3.7 Noise

Background

Noise is defined as any sound that is unwanted because it damages hearing, interrupts activities, or is otherwise annoying. Noise effects depend on the type and characteristics of the noise source, distance between the noise source and receiver, receiver sensitivity, and the time of day.

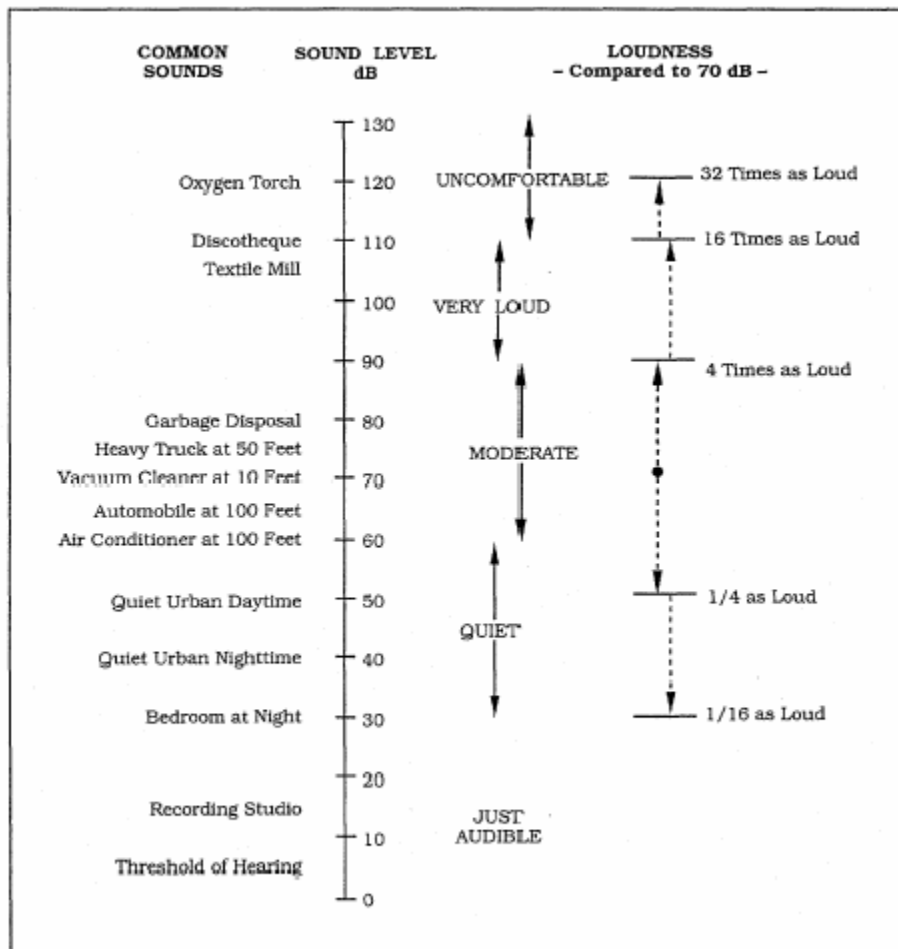
Sound levels are referenced using the decibel (dB) scale. Sound intensities are further refined using “A”-weighting, which de-emphasizes very high and very low frequency sound while emphasizing mid-range sound, thus reflecting the way in which humans hear different frequencies with differing efficiency. In this section, all sound levels are A-weighted unless otherwise noted. Table 3.6 gives examples of A-weighted decibel sound levels for common sounds as well as generalized perceptions of the loudness of these sound levels.

Baseline Noise Level and Existing Conditions

Sound levels in the ANF are typically low, with naturally produced sounds (wind, animals, etc.) setting the ambient noise level; however, the ANF does experience noise from military and civilian aircraft overflights, forestry equipment, vehicles and hunters gunshot. Several military airspace units overlie the ANF, including the Tyndall D and E Military Operations Areas (MOA’s), the Moody Low Altitude Training and Navigation area (LATN), and two low-level high-speed routes. Frequent users of these military airspace units include F-15, F-18, C-130, and HH-60 aircraft. All of the Tyndall D and E MOA’s overlie the western portion of the park and are used predominately by F-15 and F-18 aircraft. C-130 and HH-60 aircraft are the dominant users of the Moody LATN, which overlies all of the proposed CSAR landing zones. The USFS currently uses each of the proposed helispots 1-2 times a year for helicopter landings during wildfire fighting operations.

Land surrounding helispots H2, H9, H23, H24, H27, H29, H34, H35, and H36 is undeveloped timberland. There are no noise-sensitive locations (houses, schools, etc) within a one-mile radius of these helispots and recreational use within one mile of these helispots is relatively rare. At points greater than one mile from the helispots, helicopter noise from a helispot can be expected to diminish to non-intrusive levels (<55 dB for common helicopter types and configurations).

Table 3-6. Common A-weighted Decibel Sound Levels



Source: *Handbook of Noise Control*, U.M. HARRIS, Editor, McGRAW-HILL BOOK CO., 1979

Helispots H4, H5, H22, and H28 are located less than one mile from the following wilderness and recreational areas:

- H4 and H5 - Helispots are 900 feet and 1600 feet respectively from the Bradwell Bay Wilderness Area. Usage rates for the wilderness area are not recorded. Users not following the Florida National Scenic Trail may be located anywhere within the wilderness area.
- H22 - Helispot is roughly 0.5 mile from the Camel Lake Recreation Area and 0.75 miles from the Camel Lake Campground. The campground consists of six campsites. These campsites are used approximately 312 times per year and yearly usage of the recreational area is estimated at 524 per year (U.S. Department of Agriculture, 2002).

- H28 - Helispot is 700 feet from Cliff Lake Hunt Camp. This camp is primarily used by hunters during the general gun season, which occurs from the end of November to the end of January. Usage rates for the hunt camp are not available.

Noise effects on the human environment are addressed in Section 4.6, and noise effects on the wildlife environment, focusing on rare, threatened, and endangered species, are addressed in Section 4.4.

3.8 Recreational Resources

A wide range of recreational opportunities is available within the ANF, including boating, fishing, camping, hiking, swimming, bicycling, and hunting. Several designated recreational sites and campgrounds are scattered throughout the ANF. Only H22 and H28 are located within one-mile of a designated recreation area (See Figure 1-1).

The Camel Lake Recreation Area is approximately 0.5 miles north of H22. This recreation area offers camping, boating, fishing, picnicking, swimming, and hiking. The Camel Lake Campground, 0.75 miles north of H22, is a year-round camping facility with six campsites, restrooms, and drinking water.

H28 is located approximately 700 feet north of the Cliff Lake Hunt Camp. The Cliff Lake Hunt Camp is a primitive campsite with no electricity, drinking water, or permanent restroom facilities. Hunters primarily use this hunt camp during the general gun season, which occurs from the end of November to the end of January.

Hunting could occur on or near the helispots. A large variety of game species are hunted throughout the ANF, including white-tailed deer, dove, and turkey. Specific hunting seasons occur at various times between early fall and mid-spring. During the general gun season in the fall, camping is only permitted at designated campsites, including Cliff Lake Hunt Camp and Camel Lake Campground.

3.9 Congressionally Designated Areas

The 1999 USFS Revised Land and Resource Management Plan for National Forests in Florida (Management Plan) establishes goals, standards, and guidelines for the management of the following congressionally designated lands:

Wild and Scenic River Corridor

The Wild and Scenic Rivers Act of 1968 established the National Wild and Scenic Rivers System to protect and preserve the character of congressionally selected free-flowing rivers. The Act establishes management policies and development controls to maintain a natural environment along the river. River segments designated by Congress as wild and scenic rivers are classified into one of the following categories: wild, scenic, or recreational.

The Sopchoppy River Corridor, located in Apalachicola NF, was determined eligible and recommended for congressional designation as a National Wild and Scenic River. Until Congress makes a final decision, the U.S. Forest Service will manage the Sopchoppy River Corridor to protect those qualities that made it eligible.

The Sopchoppy River West Branch, identified as the headwaters segment, is located 650 feet south of H9 (See Figure 1-1). H9 is within the half-mile wide Sopchoppy River Corridor. This segment of the river has been recommended for scenic classification. Scenic rivers areas are defined in the Wild and Scenic Rivers Act as rivers that are free of impoundments, with shorelines or watersheds still largely primitive and shorelines largely undeveloped, but accessible in places by roads. Motorized travel on land or water may be permitted, prohibited or restricted to protect the river value in a scenic river. The USFS Management Plan does not place any restrictions on motorized travel within the Sopchoppy River Corridor.

Wilderness Areas

The Wilderness Act, established in 1964, created the National Wilderness Preservation System composed of congressionally designated undeveloped Federal land, known as wilderness areas. Wilderness areas are protected and managed to preserve an unmodified natural environment for future generations. According to the Wilderness Act, areas designated as wilderness must be at least five thousand acres in size or be of sufficient size as to make practicable its preservation and use in an unimpaired condition. This provision was presumably included in the act because Congress recognized that wildness exists along a gradient, with the more pristine and undisturbed areas occurring within the interior of the designated wilderness. In other words, areas located just within the designated wilderness boundary may be indistinguishable from the surrounding landscape in terms of noise and sight disturbance, but the more remote an area, the greater the potential for all desired wilderness parameters to exist. Human activity in a wilderness area is limited to primitive recreational uses. Permanent improvements or human habitation including grazing, mining, timber cutting, and motorized vehicles are prohibited in these areas. The USFS Management Plan establishes a goal for wilderness area visitors to be isolated from the sights and sounds of human activity.

The ANF has two congressionally designated wilderness areas, Bradwell Bay Wilderness Area and Mud Swamp/New River Wilderness Area (See Figure 1-1). The USFS has recommended a third area, Clear Lake Wilderness Study Area, for congressional wilderness designation. Currently, Clear Lake is being managed by the USFS to protect its wilderness character until Congress makes a final determination on its designation.

H4 and H5 are the only helispots that are located within one mile of a wilderness area. H4 is 900' east of Bradwell Bay Wilderness Area and H5 is 1580' north of Bradwell Bay Wilderness Area.

All the wilderness areas could potentially experience overflights to a helispot. Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) regulations request that aircraft, including military aircraft, maintain a minimum altitude of 2,000 feet above ground level when traversing wilderness areas.

Florida National Scenic Trail

The U.S. Congress established the National Trails System Act in 1968. This Act created a national system of recreation, scenic, and historic trails for recreation and preservation of outdoor areas and historic resources. In 1983 Congress designated the Florida National Scenic Trail as part of the national system of trails.

An approximately 60-mile segment of the Florida National Scenic Trail traverses the ANF. The USFS Management Plan's objective is to maintain the hiking-only designation of the trail within the nation forest. H22 is located 2300' southwest of the trail (See Figure 1-1). H22 is the only helispot within one mile of the Florida National Scenic Trail.

3.10 Scenic Resources

The National Scenic Byways Program was established under the Intermodal Surface Transportation Efficiency Act of 1991. Under the program, the US Secretary of Transportation recognizes certain roads as National Scenic Byways based on their cultural, natural, recreational, and scenic qualities. The mission of this program is to preserve, protect, interpret, and promote the intrinsic qualities of designated byways.

H34 is located 700' west of the Apalachee Savannahs Scenic Byway (See Figure 1-1). This 31-mile byway starts at State Road 12 and the ANF border, travels south along State Road 379, and continues south to end at State Road 65 and the ANF border.

The USFS *Management Guide: Apalachee Savannahs Scenic Byway* provides guidelines for the management of this byway's scenic value.

3.11 Safety

Safety issues considered in this EA involve flight risks associated with aircraft mishaps. The Air Force classifies aircraft mishaps into four categories: Classes A, B, C, and High Accident Potential. Class A mishaps are those that result in either loss of life or permanent total disability, a total damage cost in excess of \$1 million, destruction of an aircraft, or damage to an aircraft beyond economical repair. Based on historical data of mishaps at all military installations under all flying conditions, the Class A mishap rate for the HH-60 helicopter is one mishap per 33,373 flying hours (Air Force, 2002). Based on the maximum annual 41 RQS flying hours in ANF, the estimated HH-60 mishap rate would be extremely low, with one Class A mishap occurring every 160 years in the ANF.

3.12 Hazardous Waste/Materials

No hazardous substances or petroleum substances are generated, stored, disposed, or treated on the helispots. No hazardous material releases have been identified on the helispots.

3.13 Air Quality

The entire state of Florida is designated an attainment area for the National Ambient Air Quality Standards (NAAQS) for the six air pollutants (ozone, carbon monoxide, nitrogen dioxide, sulfur dioxide, particulate matter, and lead) regulated by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA).

4.0 ENVIRONMENTAL CONSEQUENCES

4.1 Land Use

4.1.1 Proposed Action Alternative

The proposed action to use the thirteen existing helispots would not alter the land, ownership, or management of these sites. Additionally, the proposed use would not restrict USFS helispot use. The 41 RQS would be required to contact the ANF dispatch to obtain permission to use a helispot prior to every ANF training exercise. If the USFS were conducting operations at a helispot, the 41 RQS would not be allowed to use that helispot. Therefore, the proposed use of the thirteen helispots would have little to no effect on existing USFS helispot operations.

H29 would not affect the abandoned Wilma Work Center, which is only used for equipment storage and wildfire staging operations. Equipment storage on the compound does not take place within the H29 boundaries. Additionally, the 41 RQS would not use H29 if Wilma Work Center were being used for USFS wildfire staging operations.

The proposed use of H2, H23, H24, H27, H29, H35, and H36 would have little effect on the surrounding land uses. Therefore, no significant impacts to land use would result from implementing the proposed action on these helispots.

Potential impacts to land uses surrounding H4, H5, H9, H22, H34, and H28 are analyzed in Section 4.6 - Noise, Section 4.8 - Congressionally Designated Areas, Section 4.7 - Recreational Resources, and Section 4.9 - Scenic Resources.

Airspace management for the land areas located between Moody AFB and the helispots was addressed in the Relocation EA (US Department of the Air Force, 1996), with the determination that there were no significant impacts.

4.1.2 No Action Alternative

Land use would remain unchanged under the no action alternative. Therefore, no significant impacts to land use would result from implementation of this alternative.

4.2 Water Resources

4.2.1 Proposed Action Alternative

The proposed action requires no construction or land alteration; therefore, the hydrology of the area would not significantly change. Additionally, use of the helispots would not adversely impact surface water quality or adjacent wetlands. No significant impacts to water resources would result from implementing of this alternative.

Impacts from accidental spills on water resources are addressed in Section 4.11.1 - Hazardous Waste, Proposed Action.

4.2.2 No Action Alternative

There would be no changes to water resources under this alternative. Therefore, no significant impacts to water resources would result from implementation of this alternative.

4.3 Biological Resources (Flora and Fauna)

4.3.1 Proposed Action Alternative

Currently, all of the proposed LZs are maintained in a low vegetative state with no woody vegetation on site. The vegetation that is present consists of native grasses and forbs or domestic agricultural crops, such as brown-top millet, bahia grass, and dove proso, planted for wildlife utilization. The proposed action does not involve construction or ground disturbance, so the impact on flora resources should be minimal. The only direct impact to flora resources would be from the actual landing of the helicopters, which would result in bending standing vegetation under the landing gear; however, given the resilience of grasses and forbs and the current vegetation management practices (e.g., mowing, disking, and burning), there would be no significant impacts to flora resources as a result of implementation of this alternative.

Wildlife utilization of the proposed LZs is primarily limited to transient use, although some foraging on the site may be conducted by common edge species, such as white-tailed deer, raccoons, and cotton-tailed rabbits. Since the proposed action does not involve construction or ground disturbance, there should be no significant impacts on biological resources (e.g., wildlife habitat or wildlife species) as a result of implementation of the proposed action.

Indirect effects on wildlife species would be limited to impacts from increased noise events associated with helicopter training activities. These impacts are addressed in Section 4.4 below in the discussion of noise impacts related to RTE species.

4.3.2 No Action Alternative

There would be no significant impacts to biological resources as a result of implementing this alternative.

4.4 Rare, Threatened, and Endangered Species

4.4.1 Proposed Action Alternative

No rare, threatened, or endangered (RTE) species or USFS-designated sensitive species were discovered during site surveys on the helispots. It is possible that gopher tortoises and eastern indigo snakes may occasionally utilize these sites, primarily for foraging activities during the spring and summer. Also, there is a slight chance that gopher tortoises or indigo snakes, if present, could be killed during helicopter landing activities; however, since both of these species are known to react to ground vibrations caused by vehicles, it is anticipated that these species would vacate the helispots as they become aware of the approach of the helicopters. Training activities conducted on gopher tortoise and indigo snake habitat at Moody AFB, Georgia and on private property in south Georgia and north Florida have not harmed either species. Additionally, since there would be no construction or ground disturbance on the site that might disturb habitat or directly kill RTE species, implementation of the proposed action should not result in significant direct or indirect effects on gopher tortoises, indigo snakes, or any other RTE or sensitive species potentially present on the site.

To access the proposed LZs for training, Moody AFB aircraft would fly directly from the installation to the helispots and then return following training. Overflights such as these have the potential to affect RTE and sensitive species either from the visual effect of the approaching aircraft or from noise generated as a result of aircraft operations. Based on the list of RTE and sensitive species potentially occurring within the proposed project area, three species (bald eagle, wood stork, and RCW) were identified as having the highest potential for impact as a result of helicopter overflights. Breeding bald eagles have been reported to flush from nests at the approach of aircraft (Grubb and King, 1991); however, wildlife agencies routinely use helicopters and fixed-wing aircraft to survey bald eagle nests without noticeable effects. Personal observations by Moody AFB personnel also support the contention that bald eagles become habituated to the presence of aircraft and are not disturbed at the approach or overflight of helicopters (Lee, 2002). It is anticipated that some wood storks might flush from their nests at the approach of an aircraft because their rookeries are also highly visible from above. Because of the conflicting literature on this subject, the USFWS has taken a conservative approach and has mandated (through previous informal consultation) that Moody AFB aircraft maintain a one-mile lateral buffer and a 1,500 ft. altitude (above ground level) around bald eagle and wood stork nests during the breeding season. Pilots are provided with coordinates of all active bald eagle and wood stork nests and plan routes to training areas in accordance with the USFWS directives. Because of this mitigating requirement, there should not be any significant impacts on bald eagles or wood storks as a result of military aircraft overflights resulting from implementation of the proposed action.

Noise events, such as helicopter training, have the potential to cause indirect effects on wildlife species in the area. It has been long recognized that noise events can affect an animal's behavior and reproductive activity, with chronic noise stress resulting in long

term effects on an animal's physiological system (i.e., increased heart rate, and altering of metabolism and hormone balance) (Radle, 2001). In recent years, numerous studies detailing the effects of noise events on wildlife species have been published, often with conflicting results. For example, Kuck et al. (1985) noted that elk calves abandoned areas with high noise events resulting from simulated mine disturbances, while Krausman et al. (1998) reported no alteration of behavior or use of habitat by mountain sheep as a result of military aircraft overflights. Scientific studies concerning the effects of aircraft noise on wildlife species have generally concluded that wildlife species quickly habituate to aircraft noise, with no long-term negative behavioral, reproductive, or physiological impacts (Brown et al., 1999; Doresky et al., 2001; Grubb and King, 1991; Conomy et al., 1998; Delaney et al., 1999; Krausman et al. 1998; Weisenberger et al., 1996). Most of these studies concentrated on the impacts of noise from military jets rather than rotary-winged aircraft (helicopters). Rotary-winged aircraft produce lower sound exposure levels (SEL) than military jets operating at the same altitude (92 decibels (dB) for helicopters vs. 103 dB for F-16 jets, both operating at 500 ft. above ground level). Since these values are based on a logarithmic scale, it is safe to say that noise from helicopter operations is significantly less than that generated from military jet operations.

Limited studies have been conducted on the effect of military aircraft noise on RCWs. In a 3-year study of the effects of military training noise (including helicopter overflights) on RCWs at Fort Stewart, Georgia, researchers determined that RCWs did not flush from nests when helicopters were operated at distances greater than 100 feet from the cavity tree or when noise levels from helicopter overflights were less than 102 dB unweighted (84 dB when weighted to reflect the hearing range of RCWs) (Delaney et al., 2002). Nesting success, including clutch size, nestling survival, and fledging rates were not significantly different between RCW clusters exposed to military training events and control clusters which were not exposed to military training noise (Delaney et al., 2002). Similar studies on the reproductive success of RCWs in a military training environment at Fort Benning, Georgia, demonstrated no noticeable effect on nesting behavior or resultant nesting success (Doresky et al., 2001). These studies suggest that RCWs become habituated to military training activities, including the operation of helicopters, on military installations and do not exhibit significant proximate effects (e.g. alertness, flush response, flight response), which could have a significant effect on individual fitness and population fitness (Delaney et al., 2002; Doresky et al., 2001).

In order to analyze the potential effects of helicopter noise on RCWs at ANF resulting from the proposed action, noise levels were calculated using the NOISEMAP computer model. Noise parameters were calculated for two helicopter engines running at full throttle in a static position at ground level. Sound exposure levels (SELs) and cumulative Day-Night Average Sound Level (DNL) values were calculated with distance parameters based on the proximity of RCWs to helispots. As mentioned in Section 3.5, the closest RCW tree to the boundary of any helispot is 580 feet (H34). Using the noise modeling parameters described above at this distance, the resultant A-weighted dB level (dB(A)) was 77.8, and the DNL was 66.0 dB. These values would be comparable to the noise generated by a garbage disposal or a heavy truck operating 50 feet away (Table 3-6). As

distance increased, the SELs decreased (i.e., 900 ft = 72.4 dBA, 60.1 DNL; 1600 ft = 65.6 dBA, 53.8 DNL; 2600 ft = 60.4 dBA, 48.6 DNL).

Based on the studies conducted at Fort Benning and Fort Stewart and the noise modeling conducted as part of this assessment, operating a helicopter at these SELs should not result in any noticeable effect on RCWs at ANF (Delaney et al., 2002; Doresky et al., 2001). However, it must be noted that the RCW populations on both Fort Benning and Fort Stewart have potentially been exposed to considerable military training (including helicopter overflights) noise for several generations, possibly resulting in the habituation and lack of noticeable proximate effect or effect on nesting success documented by researchers. Arguably, the RCW populations at ANF have not historically been exposed to military training disturbances. However, these populations have been subjected to other intrusive, anthropogenic noise disturbances common to the ANF, including gunfire from hunters, heavy equipment noise from forestry and natural resources management activities, vehicle noise on both interior roads and highways, and aerial overflights from both military and commercial aircraft. Additionally, USFS helicopters use these spots during prescribed burning and wildfire control operations. Therefore, RCWs on ANF have been exposed to noise events similar or greater in size and scope to those outlined in the proposed action. It is anticipated that some initial proximate effects may still occur, but the RCWs and other wildlife species on the site should quickly habituate to the use of the helispots by military aircraft without any significant impact to individuals or populations.

Therefore, given the fact that wildlife species commonly habituate to aircraft noise without any negative effects and given the fact that the proposed action involves the limited use of helicopters at these landing sites (each site would be used approximately once every three weeks), there should be no significant impacts on wildlife species, including RTE species, from noise as a result of implementation of the proposed action.

4.4.2 No Action Alternative

Under the no action alternative, there would not be any significant impacts on any RTE species.

4.5 Cultural Resources

4.5.1 Proposed Action Alternative

Although known significant cultural resources occur at some of the helispots, and some of the other helispots have unknown or unevaluated resources, the activities proposed by the 41 RQS will not result in any ground disturbance and thus have little chance to affect any significant cultural resources. There is a possibility of affecting aboveground resources located along the flight paths between Moody and ANF; however, these effects were analyzed in the Relocation EA (US Department of the Air Force, 1996) and found

to be compatible with HH-60G training maneuvers and non-significant. Therefore, no significant impacts to cultural resources would result from implementing this alternative.

4.5.2 No Action Alternative

Under the no-action alternative, there would not be any significant impacts on any cultural resources.

4.6 Noise

4.6.1 Proposed Action Alternative

The proposed action would result in elevated sound levels near the helispots during 41 RQS training exercises. On average, an exercise would occur at each helispot once every three weeks and last approximately 1 hour. During winter months, most night helispot training would be completed by 10:00 PM. Later sunsets in the summer would force night training to occur at later times. Summer training would be completed before midnight.

Sound generated by the proposed action would have minimal adverse noise impacts to the undeveloped forested land surrounding H2, H9, H23, H24, H27, H29, H34, H35, and H36.

Recreational and wilderness land uses potentially affected by noise from the proposed action are listed in Table 4-1 along with estimated sound levels at these land uses during proposed helispot use. Estimated sound levels were calculated in the Noisemap computer program by modeling two HH-60A helicopter engines running at ground level at the specified distance from a hypothetical listener. In each case, the referenced distance is measured between the closest edge of the helispot and the closest edge of the specified land use. Most users will be located further away than this shortest distance and will therefore be exposed to lower noise levels than those listed.

Recreational users of these land uses could potentially experience annoyance due to the noise caused by the helicopter training maneuvers. However, due to the infrequency of the training exercise (approximately 16 per year at each helispot), and the relatively small number of people expected to be near the landing zones during a training exercise, no significant noise impacts would be expected.

Table 4-1. Estimated Sound Levels at Potentially Noise Sensitive Land Uses

Land Use	Helispot	Shortest Distance from Helispot to Land Use	Estimated Sound Levels (dB) At Land Use*
Cliff Lake Hunt Camp	H28	700'	<77
Bradwell Bay Wilderness Area	H4	900'	<75
	H5	1600'	<69
Camel Lake Recreation Area	H22	2600'	<63
Camel Lake Campground	H22	3900'	<59
Locations more than 1 mile from helispots	All	5280'	<54

*Modeled as 2 HH-60A aircraft at loaded level flight operation power and 0 knots.

Due to the close proximity of H22 and H28 to the Camel Lake Campground and Cliff Lake Hunt Camp respectively, visitors could experience sleep interference during nighttime maneuvers. However, sleep disturbances would be minimal since a night maneuver at H22 or H28 would last one-hour and occur on average less than once every six weeks (approximately 8 times per year). Due to the minimal night usage at H22 and H28 there would be no significant noise impacts expected.

Overflight noise levels in areas located between Moody AFB and the ANF were addressed in the Relocation EA. Sound levels calculated for HH-60 training operations within the Georgia/North Florida area were determined to be compatible with residential uses and other land uses, and were deemed non-significant.

Noise impacts to wildlife are addressed in Section 4.4 – Rare Threatened and Endangered Species.

4.6.2 No Action Alternative

Baseline noise levels at the subject property would remain unchanged under this alternative. Therefore, no significant impacts on noise levels would result from implementation of this alternative.

4.7 Recreational Resources

4.7.1 Proposed Action Alternative

Recreational resources that could potentially be affected by the proposed action include two designated ANF recreational areas, Camel Lake Recreation Area (H22) and the Cliff Lake Hunt Camp (H28), and hunting activities occurring near the helispots.

At its closest edge, Camel Lake is 0.5 miles north of H22 with the Camel Lake Campground 0.75 miles north of H22. A dense forested buffer exists between the entire 0.5 miles separating H22 and the Camel Lake Recreation Area. H22 is not visible from any portion of the Camel Lake Recreation Area and would not affect the area's scenic quality. Cliff Lake Hunt Camp is 700' from H28 with a small pond and no visual barrier separating the helispot from the hunt camp.

The greatest potential effect on these two recreational areas would be aircraft noise. Noise impacts on the human environment are addressed in Section 4.6 - Noise. The proposed action would not result in significant noise impacts at Camel Lake Recreation Area, Camel Lake Campground, or Cliff Lake Hunt Camp.

Approximately 80% of the proposed training maneuvers would be conducted Tuesday through Thursday with 20% occurring on Monday and Friday. No training maneuvers would occur on a weekend when most recreational areas and campsites are used. A maximum of two training maneuvers per week would be conducted within the ANF. On average a particular helispot would be utilized less than once every 3 weeks for one hour. Therefore, the infrequent, temporary use of the helispots only on weekdays would have minimal noise and scenic quality impacts to users of Camel Lake Recreation Area, Camel Lake Campground, and Cliff Lake Hunt Camp.

Hunting activities occurring on or near any of the helispots could be affected during the proposed use of a particular helispot. However, the hunting area affected by a proposed training exercise at a helispot would be extremely small relative to the total available ANF hunting area. A one-mile radius around each helispot is less than 0.4% of the approximate 564,000 acres available for hunting in the ANF. This relatively small area, combined with the infrequent, temporary use of a particular helispot, would have negligible effects on hunting activities throughout the ANF.

No significant adverse impacts to recreational resources would result from implementing the proposed action.

4.7.2 No Action Alternative

Under the no action alternative, no increase in aircraft use would occur on the subject property, and recreational uses would remain unchanged. No significant impacts to recreational uses would result from implementing this alternative.

4.8 Congressionally Designated Areas

4.8.1 Proposed Action Alternative

Wild and Scenic River Corridor

H9 is located 650 feet north of the Sopchoppy River West Branch and is within the Sopchoppy Scenic River Corridor that has been recommended for Congressional designation as a Scenic River. Currently, this river corridor is managed by the USFS to maintain its characteristics as a scenic river.

The USFS Management Plan identifies the following basic goals for a scenic river segments: maintain a predominantly natural environment that is mostly undeveloped, but is accessible in places by roads, boat ramps, and trails. The plan also establishes guidelines to screen structures and roads from the river.

The Sopchoppy West Branch riverbanks are densely vegetated and provide a complete visual screen of H9 from the river. Additionally, a helicopter overflight would not be visible from the river due to the thick vegetation that completely over hangs the river. Use of H9 would not alter the scenic quality of the Sopchoppy River.

Use of H9 would be compatible with Wild and Scenic River Act and the Wild and Scenic River management goals, standards, or guidelines set forth in the USFS Management Plan for scenic segments. Therefore, no significant impacts on Wild and Scenic Rivers would result from implementation of the proposed action.

Wilderness Areas

No proposed helispots occur within designated wilderness areas, no proposed activities would occur within the boundary of any designated wilderness areas, and any overflights of wilderness areas would meet or exceed the FAA guidance of 2000' above ground level.

Pine forests separate the Bradwell Bay Wilderness Area from H4 and H5. These forests act as a visual barrier and neither helispot is visible from the wilderness area. Additionally, the pine trees would block the view of proposed sustained hovering maneuvers that would occur at altitudes of up to 100 feet over the helispots. Because of the proximity of H4 and H5 to Bradwell Bay Wilderness Area (900' east and 1580' north, respectively), helicopter sights and sounds could be experienced from within the wilderness area as a result of the proposed use. However, the proposed infrequent use of

the helispots at the ANF (one one-hour visit to each helispot every three weeks) would make the likelihood of an encounter with a helicopter by a wilderness visitor very low.

Section 4.6 - Noise, addresses the helicopter sound levels at Bradwell Bay Wilderness Area. The proposed action at H4 and H5 would result in no significant noise impacts to Bradwell Bay Wilderness Area.

Per FAA regulations, proposed helicopter overflights would maintain a minimum altitude of 2,000 feet above the surface of the Bradwell Bay Wilderness Area, Mud Swamp/New River Wilderness Area, and Clear Lake Wilderness Study Area.

Proposed LZ operations would comply with the USFS Management Plan, Wilderness Act, and FAA regulations. Specifically, scenic views from Bradwell Bay Wilderness Area would not change; infrequent H4 and H5 usage would create minimal noise impacts; and FAA wilderness overflights requirements would be met. Therefore, the proposed helispot use would result in no significant adverse impacts to wilderness areas.

Florida National Scenic Trail

H22 is 0.4 miles southwest of the Florida National Scenic Trail. The wide forested area between H22 and the trail would completely screen all proposed H22 operations from the trail.

The proposed helicopter maneuvers would not interfere with the visual quality, nature, or use of the trail and would comply with the National Trails System Act and the USFS Management Plan's standards and guidelines for trails. Therefore, the proposed helispot use would result in no significant impacts to the Florida National Scenic Trail.

4.8.2 No Action Alternative

Implementation of the no action alternative would result in no significant impacts to congressionally designated resources.

4.9 Scenic Resources

4.9.1 Proposed Action Alternative

H34 is 700' west of the Apalachee Savannahs Scenic Byway (State Highway 65). A 400' wide area of pine forest and wetland, directly adjacent to the byway, separates H34 from the byway. The proposed use of H34, including hovering maneuvers, would not be visible from the byway. Byway overflights associated with the proposed action would be extremely brief and infrequent, averaging less than once every three weeks. Therefore, no significant adverse visual impacts to the Apalachee Savannahs Scenic Byway would occur.

The following scenic resources are discussed in Section 4.8 - Congressional Designated Resources: Sopchoppy Scenic River Corridor, Florida National Scenic Trail, Bradwell Bay Wilderness Area, Mud Swamp/New River Wilderness Area, and Clear Lake Wilderness Study Area.

The proposed action would comply with the scenic resources standards and guidelines established in the USFS Management Plan. No significant impacts to scenic resources would result from implementing this alternative.

4.9.2 No Action Alternative

Implementation of the no action alternative would result in no significant impacts to scenic resources.

4.10 Safety

4.10.1 Proposed Action Alternative

The estimated HH-60 mishap rate for 41 RQS landing zone training within the Apalachicola NF is approximately one Class A mishap per 160 years. This extremely low mishap rate would not have a significant impact to flight risks.

In the event of an aircraft mishap, the aircrew would immediately notify Air Traffic Control, Moody AFB Command Post, 41 RQS duty officer, and the U.S. Forest Service District Ranger. Procedures outlined in the 347th Wing Mishap Response Plan 127 would be executed. This plan defines responsibilities and prescribes procedures for responding to, investigating, and reporting aircraft mishaps. Operations defined in this plan include initial fire and rescue response, securing the crash site, initial safety investigation, formation of a Safety Investigation Board, securing the wreckage, removal of the wreckage, and reclamation of the scene.

Impacts of a potential fuel spill resulting from an aircraft mishap are discussed in Section 4.11.1 - Hazardous Waste, Proposed Action.

4.10.2 No Action Alternative

Under the no action alternative, aircraft overflights would remain unchanged. Therefore, there would be no significant impacts to safety from implementing this alternative.

4.11 Hazardous Waste/Material

4.11.1 Proposed Action Alternative

All helicopter fueling and maintenance operations associated with the proposed action would occur at Moody AFB. Normal operations of the proposed action would not introduce any hazardous wastes/materials to the helispots.

Accidental leaks or spills of petroleum products may occur from aircraft and associated equipment. Any incidents would be cleaned up under the Moody AFB Spill Prevention, Control, and Countermeasures Plan, and corrective measures would be implemented to protect environmental resources.

A potential fuel spill could result from a helicopter mishap. Estimated mishap rate for the proposed action would be extremely low (See Safety 3.10). Therefore, the potential for site contamination from a mishap would be extremely low. However, if a hazardous material release occurred due to an aircraft mishap, appropriate actions would be taken by the Moody AFB Environmental Flight to ensure site cleanup. Initial actions would include notifying federal, state, and local emergency response authorities; U.S. Forest Service Apalachicola Dispatch; Environmental Protection Agency (EPA); Florida Department of Environmental Protection; local regulators and Air Force Headquarters Air Combat Command. As soon as the investigation boards allow access to the site, a site investigation would be conducted to determine the environmental impact of the crash. Soil and water sampling would be conducted to determine the extent of the contamination. Based on the results of the site investigation, a corrective action plan would be developed which could include removal and disposal of contaminated soil, and/or remediation of contaminated surface and/or groundwater. Site remediation would be coordinated with the Florida Department of Environmental Protection and the U.S. Forest Service.

Because of the existing spill control and countermeasures procedures and the very low likelihood of an aircraft mishap, there would be no significant impacts on hazardous waste as a result of implementing the proposed action.

4.11.2 No Action Alternative

Under the no action alternative, no changes would occur in the use, storage, transportation, treatment or disposal of hazardous substances within the ANF. Therefore, no significant hazardous waste impacts result from implementing this alternative.

4.12 Air Quality

4.12.1 Proposed Action

The proposed action would produce negligible increases in air emissions. The slight temporary increase in air emissions from the proposed action would result in no significant adverse impacts to regional or local air quality.

4.12.2 No Action Alternative

Under the no action alternative, no change in aircraft operations would occur within the ANF. Therefore, no significant impacts on air quality would result from implementation of this alternative.

5.0 CUMULATIVE IMPACTS

This section addresses the potential environmental impacts resulting from the incremental impacts of the proposed action and no action alternative when considered in conjunction with other past, present, and reasonably foreseeable future actions. Assessing cumulative effects includes identifying the geographic extent of the effects and defining the scope of the other actions.

5.1 Proposed Action Alternative

For the proposed action, the geographic area analyzed for cumulative impacts is a half-mile radius around each helispot. The helispots proposed for use are undeveloped and cleared of all woody vegetation. The USFS maintains the helispots in a low vegetative state. No future development is planned on the helispots. Currently, the USFS uses the helispots for helicopter staging areas during wildfire fighting operations. The USFS also uses helicopters to extract/dip water from man-made ponds (dip ponds) adjacent to several of the helispots for extinguishing wildfires (See Table 5-1). Wildfire fighting operations occur approximately once or twice a year at each helispot. This extremely infrequent USFS helicopter use at the helispots would result in minimal environmental impacts.

Past, present, and reasonably foreseeable future actions within 0.5 miles of the helispots are listed in Table 5-1, followed by a description of each action.

The majority of the actions listed in Table 5-1 are intended to preserve and protect the environment. No significant adverse impacts would result from the individual actions described above.

No significant impacts were identified in the analysis of the proposed action by itself. The incremental contribution of effects of the proposed action, when considered with the other past, present, and reasonably foreseeable actions would be negligible. Therefore, no significant cumulative impacts would result from the proposed action.

Table 5-1. Past, Present and Future Actions Occurring Near the Helispots

Helispot	Actions Within 0.5 Miles of Helispot
H2	Longleaf/Slash Pine, Adaptive, RCW - Dip Pond/Lake
H4	Longleaf/Slash Pine, Adaptive, RCW - Bradwell Bay Wilderness Area - Dip Pond
H5	Longleaf/Slash Pine, Adaptive, RCW - Bradwell Bay Wilderness Area - Dip Pond
H9	Longleaf/Slash Pine, Adaptive, RCW - Sopchoppy Wild and Scenic River Corridor
H22	Longleaf/Slash Pine, Adaptive, RCW - Camel Lake Recreation Area
H23	Longleaf/Slash Pine, Adaptive, RCW
H24	Longleaf/Slash Pine, Adaptive, RCW - Dip Pond
H27	Longleaf/Slash Pine, Adaptive, RCW
H28	Longleaf/Slash Pine, Adaptive, RCW, Cattle - Cliff Lake Hunt Camp - Dip Pond
H29	Longleaf/Slash Pine, Adaptive, RCW, Cattle - Wilma Work Center
H34	Longleaf/Slash Pine, Adaptive, RCW - Apalachee Scenic Byway - Railroad/Highway 65 - Dip Pond
H35	Longleaf/Slash Pine, Adaptive, RCW - Railroad/Highway 65 - Dip Pond
H36	Longleaf/Slash Pine, Adaptive, RCW, Cattle

- Longleaf/Slash Pine, Adaptive Management, RCW Management Area - These areas are predominantly longleaf and slash pine forests that are managed with an adaptive approach to maintain or restore ecosystem health. Additionally, these areas are designated as RCW habitat management areas. The goals of these areas are to maintain a rich diversity of native plants and animals, encourage RCW recovery, produce poletimber and large pine sawtimber, and provide recreational opportunities. Specific actions that support management practices in these areas could include timber-stand thinning, reforestation, and low-intensity prescribe burning. Road maintenance activities could also occur within these areas.
- Longleaf/Slash Pine, Adaptive Management, RCW Management Area, Cattle - In these areas the actions would be the same as above with the inclusion of cattle grazing.
- Bradwell Bay Wilderness Area - This area is managed to provide an unmodified natural environment and show little evidence of human influences. Actions in this area could include prescribed fire, road revegetation, structure removal, insect control and primitive recreational activities.

- Sopchoppy Wild and Scenic River Corridor - This scenic river segment is managed to provide a predominantly natural environment along the river. Actions in this area would primarily include recreational activities. The USFS Management Plan identifies this area as suitable for timber production.
- Camel Lake Recreation Area - Recreational activities within 0.5 miles of H22 include boating and fishing on Camel Lake. No future expansion is planned at this recreational area.
- Cliff Lake Hunt Camp - Primarily, hunters use this camp during the general gun season from the end of November to the end of January. This primitive camp offers no amenities such as electricity, drinking water, or permanent restroom facilities. During the general gun season, a portable toilet is placed on site.
- Wilma Work Center - The Wilma Work Center is an abandoned USFS work center. Currently, this compound is only used for equipment storage and an occasional staging area during wildfire fighting operations
- Apalachee Scenic Byway - This byway is managed to preserve, protect, interpret, and promote the scenic, recreation, and interpretive value of this roadway.
- Railroad/State Highway 65 - State Highway 65 and the Apalachicola Northern railroad tracks run parallel to each other as they traverse the western portion the ANF.

5.2 No Action Alternative

Baseline conditions at the helispots would remain unchanged under this alternative. Therefore, no cumulative impacts would be associated with this alternative.

6.0 LIST OF AGENCIES CONSULTED

Due to the minimal adverse impacts of the proposed action, few outside agencies were consulted. Consultation was conducted with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service to ensure compliance with the Endangered Species Act. Consultation was conducted with the Florida State Historic Preservation Office to ensure compliance with federal cultural resources regulations.

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APPENDIX A

**MASTER AGREEMENT BETWEEN
DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE AND
DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE**

MASTER AGREEMENT
BETWEEN
DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE
AND
DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE
CONCERNING

THE USE OF NATIONAL FOREST SYSTEM LANDS FOR MILITARY ACTIVITY

I. PREFACE

A. National Forest System lands provide for the use and enjoyment of the public and are managed under multiple use and sustained yield concepts. The use of these lands for military training activities is within the statutory authority of the Act of June 4, 1897.

B. The availability of National Forest System lands to the Department of Defense provides a variety of geographic and topographic settings to conduct training activities. This is an important resource for developing a strong National defense.

C. Therefore, training activities on National Forest System lands will be authorized when compatible with other uses and in conformity with applicable forest plan(s), provided the Department of Defense determines and substantiates that lands under its administration are unsuitable or unavailable.

D. This agreement does not apply to the use of airspace over National Forest System lands unless directly associated with the land based training.

II. PURPOSE

The purpose of this Master Agreement is to establish procedures for planning, scheduling and conducting authorized military activities on National Forest System lands. It also establishes policies and procedures for supplemental agreements and special use authorizations which are required for all Department of Defense activities (including National Guard and Reserve activities) using National Forest System lands. This agreement replaces the Joint Policy Statements between the Department of Agriculture and (a) the Department of the Army signed July 3, 1951; the Department of the Navy, signed February 19, 1952; and the Department of the Air Force, signed September 12, 1951, which are hereby rescinded.

III. COORDINATION AND COOPERATION

To facilitate the orderly development, management, and administration of National Forest System lands and to provide suitable and appropriate lands to further the National defense effort, the Department of Defense and the Department of Agriculture jointly agree:

A. Availability of Department of Defense Lands - Prior to requesting use of National Forest System lands, the Department of Defense will determine if lands administered by the Department of Defense are available and suitable. In all cases where a special use authorization or supplemental agreement to use National Forest System lands is proposed, Department of Defense will forward its analysis and determination as to the unsuitability or unavailability of DoD land to the affected Forest Supervisor.

B. Planning For the Use of National Forest System Lands - Military training activities on National Forest System lands are actions which require the analysis of environmental impact in conformance with the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) and other statutory and regulatory requirements. The Department of Defense and the Department of Agriculture, Forest Service, will cooperate to accomplish appropriate NEPA compliance. The lead agency concept in 40 CFR 1501.5 will be applied to the process except in cases involving classified activities. In such cases, the Department of Defense Component will be the lead agency.

C. Management

1. Periodically conduct joint reviews of selected activities for the purpose of: (a) determining the effectiveness of supplemental agreements so that the management and mission of both agencies are accomplished; (b) identifying and recommending solutions to existing and potential problems; and (c) monitoring the implementation and effectiveness of environmental mitigation measures.

2. Jointly identify rights-of-way or other authorizations required to implement supplemental agreements or special use authorizations.

3. Have their respective agents mutually refer unresolved points of disagreement to the next higher management level for resolution.

IV. DEPARTMENT RESPONSIBILITIES

IT IS AGREED THAT:

A. The Department of Defense Components will:

1. Provide to the affected Forest Supervisor the

analysis and determination as to the unsuitability or unavailability of Department of Defense lands.

2. Involve the Forest Service designated representative in the initial planning stages of activities proposed on National Forest System lands.

3. During initial planning, provide an unclassified description of proposed activities to the affected Forest Supervisor and cooperate in fulfilling requirements of the National Environmental Policy Act and conducting appropriate environmental analyses.

4. For each training activity, identify a representative of the Department of Defense to serve as liaison to the Forest Service.

5. Cooperate with Forest Service representatives to comply with the terms of this Master Agreement, supplemental agreements, and special use authorizations.

6. Reimburse the Forest Service for costs directly attributable to military training activities, subject to the availability of appropriated funds. This may include, but is not limited to, the preparation and processing of applications, preparation of environmental documents, administration of special use authorizations, and Forest Service liaison officers' time.

7. Explore land interchange as an alternative or mitigating measure when military training activities are not in conformance with the affected Forest Plan.

8. Make every effort to avoid degradation of National Forests and provide for restoration as agreed in the special use authorization.

9. Provide for mitigation measures identified in the environmental analysis and agreed in the special use authorization.

B. The Department of Agriculture, Forest Service will:

1. Make National Forest System lands available for military training activities when such activities can be made compatible with other uses and conform with applicable forest management plans, provided the Department of Defense determines and substantiates that lands under its administration are unsuitable or unavailable.

2. Cooperate with the Department of Defense to expedite decisions associated with military training activities on National Forest System lands.

3. Fully consider all proposals and, when necessary, develop alternatives that may meet the needs of the

Department of Defense and the Department of Agriculture, Forest Service,

4. Ensure that applicable forest management plans include military training activities. Requirements for these activities should be coordinated with the Department of Defense during formulation and development of those plans.

V. SPECIAL USE AUTHORIZATION

The special use authorization for a Department of Defense activity on National Forest System lands requires, but need not be limited to, the following:

1. Identification of National Forest System lands required for the activity.
2. Duties and responsibilities of each agency in the planning process.
3. Procedures for resolving issues, misunderstandings, or disputes.
4. Identification of rights-of-way and other authorizations which may be needed outside the activity area.
5. Incorporate, develop, or reference a basic plan covering monitoring, fire protection and control, public health and safety, recreation, watershed, minerals, timber, grazing, fish, wildlife, public notification, and other appropriate features.
6. Assign responsibilities for restoration of the site. Restoration shall be subject to the availability of appropriated funds.
7. Provide procedures for emergency cessation of military activities where necessary to protect public health, safety or the environment.

VI. SUPPLEMENTAL AGREEMENTS

For recurring Department of Defense activities on Forest Service lands, supplemental agreements to this master agreement may be developed. Within 12 months following the effective date of this agreement, representatives of the Departments of Defense and Agriculture, Forest Service, shall agree upon a schedule for the revision of any existing supplemental agreement which requires modification to conform with this master agreement.

VII. DELEGATION

Authorized representatives of the Forest Service and the Department of Defense may execute special use authorizations and enter into supplemental agreements within the scope of this document.

VIII. MODIFICATION AND TERMINATION

This agreement may be modified or amended upon request of either Department and the concurrence of the other. This agreement may be terminated with 60-day notice of either party.

IX. IMPLEMENTATION

This agreement becomes effective when signed by both parties.

///signed///
Secretary of Defense

Date: 22 Sep 1988

///signed///
Secretary of Agriculture

Date: 30 Sep 1988

APPENDIX B

PHOTOGRAPHS



Photo 1 - Landing Zone H2 - Looking Northwest, 24 April 2002



Photo 2 - Landing Zone H4 - Looking Northeast, 24 April 2002



Photo 3 - Landing Zone H5 - Looking Southeast, 24 April 2002



Photo 4 - Landing Zone H9 - Looking South, 24 April 2002



Photo 5 - Landing Zone H22 - Looking Southwest, 24 April 2002



Photo 6 - Landing Zone H23 - Looking Northeast, 24 April 2002



Photo 7 - Landing Zone H24 - Looking Southeast, 24 April 2002



Photo 8 - Landing Zone H27 - Looking East, 24 April 2002



Photo 9 - Landing Zone H28 - Looking North, 24 April 02



Photo 10 - Landing Zone H29 - Looking Southwest, 24 April 02



Photo 11 - Landing Zone H34 - Looking Southwest, 30 May 2002



Photo 12 - Landing Zone H35 - Looking South, 24 April 2002



Photo 13 - Landing Zone H36 - Looking Northwest, 24 April 2002

APPENDIX C

RARE, THREATENED, AND ENDANGERED SPECIES

Sensitive Animal Species for the Apalachicola National Forest, May 2001

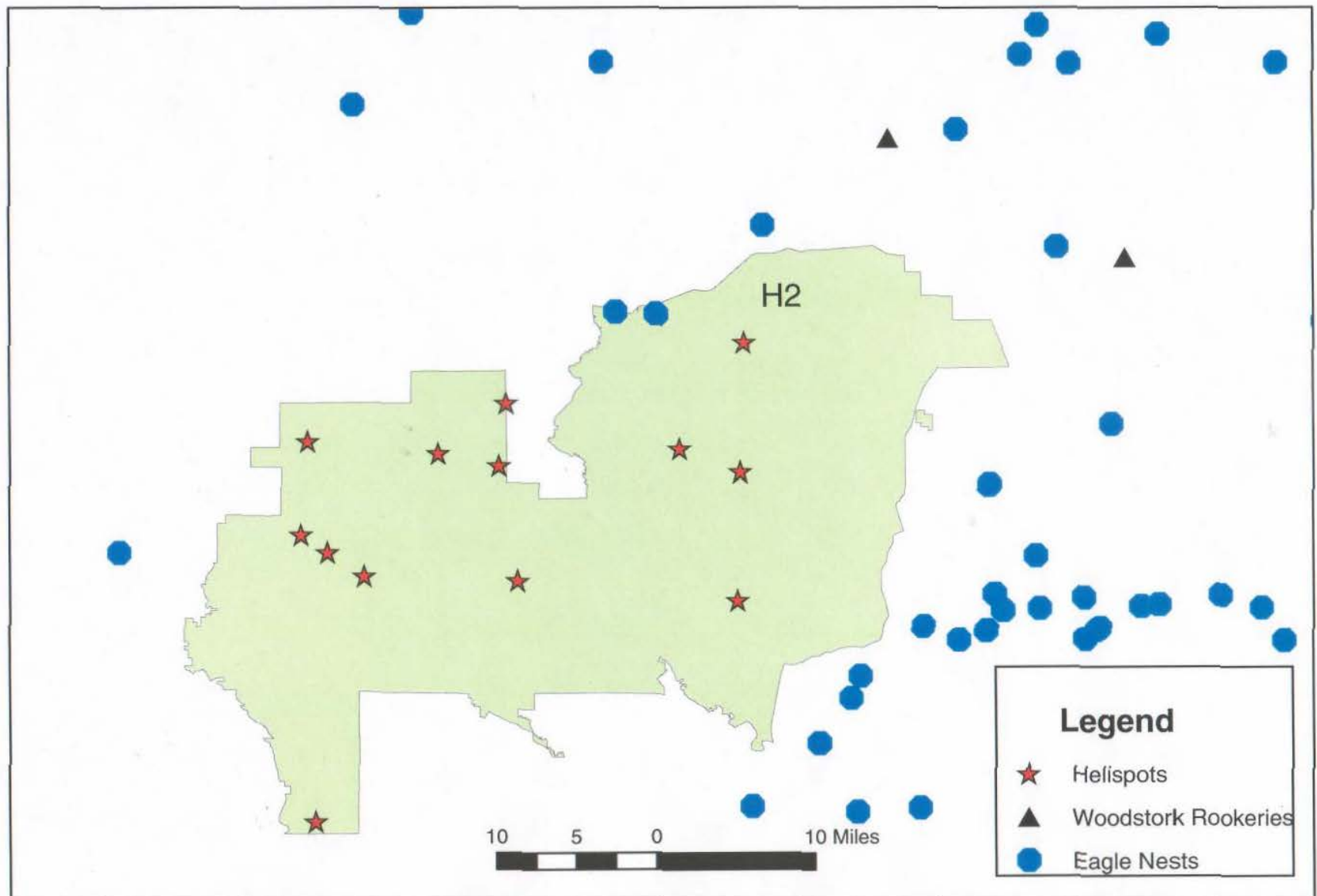
Scientific Name/Common Name	Ranger District
Animals – 22 species	
Mammals – 3 species	
<i>Neofiber alleni</i> /Round-tailed Muskrat	Both
<i>Ursus americanus floridanus</i> /Florida Black Bear	Both
<i>Corynorhinus rafinesquii</i> /Rafinesque's big-eared bat	Both
Birds - 2 species	
<i>Aimophila aestivalis</i> /Bachman's Sparrow	Both
<i>Grus canadensis pratensis</i> /Florida Sandhill Crane	Apalachicola
Reptiles - 4 species	
<i>Gopherus polyphemus</i> /Gopher Tortoise	Both
<i>Lampropeltis getulus goini</i> /Apalachicola King Snake	Apalachicola
<i>Pituophis melanoleucus mugitus</i> /Florida Pine Snake	Both
<i>Pseudemys concinna suwanniensis</i> /Suwannii Cooter Turtle	Both
Amphibians - 3 species	
<i>Amphiuma pholeter</i> /One-toed amphiuma	Both
<i>Desmognathus apalachicola</i> /Apalachicola Dusky Salamander	Both
<i>Notophthalmus perstriatus</i> /Striped Newt	Both
Fish - 3 species	
<i>Alosa alabamiae</i> /Alabama Shad	Both
<i>Ameriurus serracanthus</i> /Spotted bullhead	Both
<i>Micropterus notius</i> /Suwannee Bass	Both
Mollusks - 3 species	
<i>Alasmidonta wrightiana</i> /Ochlochonee Arcmussel	Both
<i>Anodonta heardi</i> /Apalachicola Floater	Apalachicola
<i>Utterbackia peggyae</i> /Florida floater	Both
Crustaceans - 1 species	
<i>Procambarus orcinus</i> /Woodville Cave Crayfish	Wakulla
Insects - 4 species	
<i>Atrytone arogos arogos</i> /Arogos Skipper	Both
<i>Cordulegaster sayi</i> /Say's Spiketail (or Say's Dragonfly)	Wakulla
<i>Progomphus bellei</i> /Belle's Sand Sanddragon (or Sand Clubtail)	Both
<i>Somatochlora calverti</i> /Calvert's Emerald Dragonfly	Both

Sensitive Plant Species for the Apalachicola National Forest, May 2001

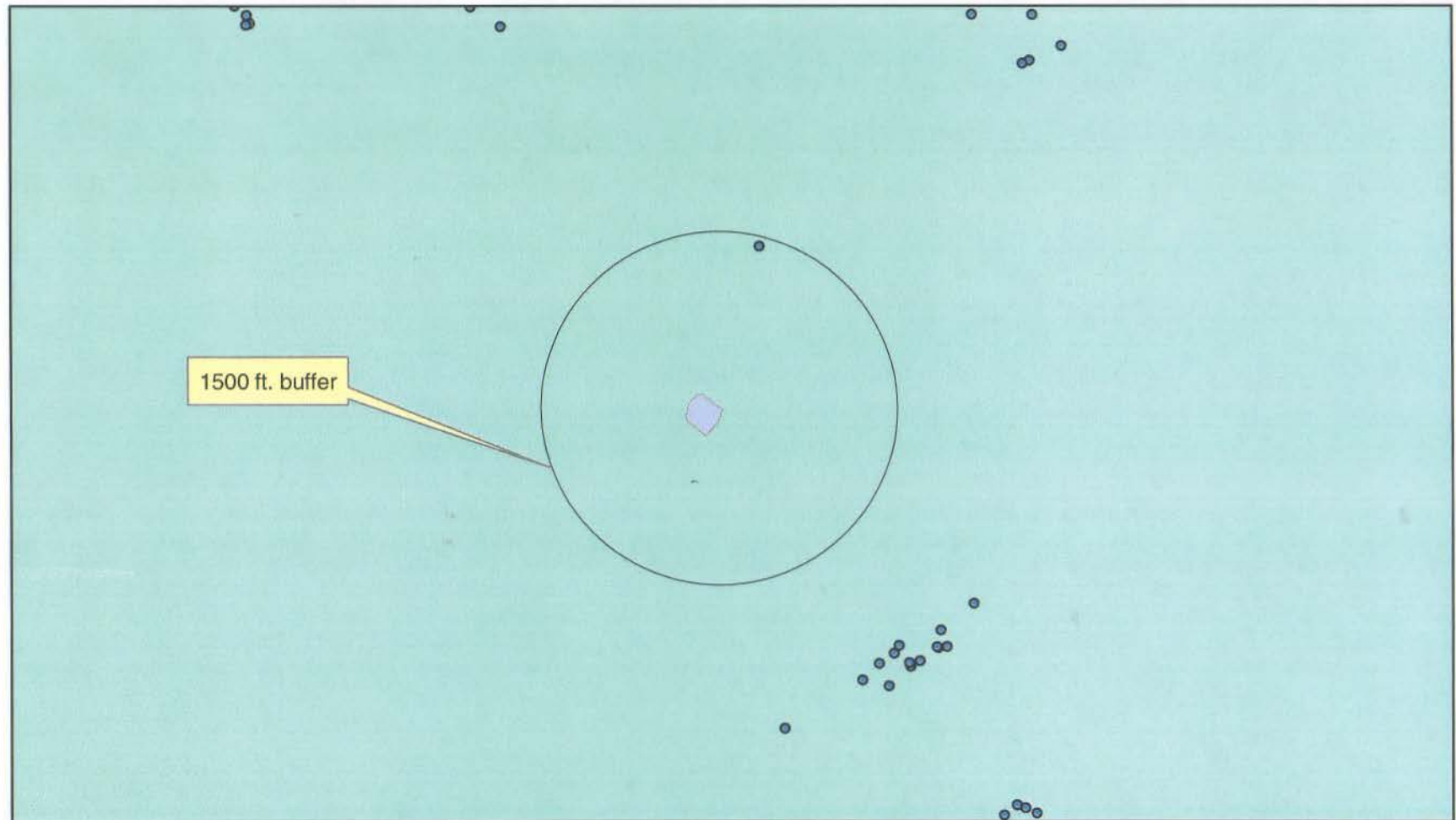
Scientific Name/Common Name (84 species)	Ranger District
<i>Agalinis divaricata</i> /Pinelands false foxglove	Both
<i>Agrimonia incisa</i> /Incised Groovebur	Both
<i>Andropogon arctatus</i> /Pine-Woods Bluestem	Both
<i>Angelica dentata</i> /Coastal-Plain Angelica	Both
<i>Aristida patula</i> /Tall threeawn	Both
<i>Aristida simpliciflora</i> /Southern threeawn grass	Both
<i>Arnoglossum diversifolium</i> /Variableleaf Indian plantain	Both
<i>Arnoglossum sulcatum</i> /Indian plantain	Both
<i>Asclepias viridula</i> /Southern Milkweed	Both
<i>Aster chapmanii</i> /Chapman's Aster	Both
<i>Aster eryngiifolius</i> /Coyote Thistle Aster	Both
<i>Baptisia simplicifolia</i> /Coastal Plain Wild Indigo	Both
<i>Berlandiera subacaulis</i> /Florida Greeneyes	Both
<i>Boltonia apalachicolaensis</i> /Apalachicola Doll's Daisy	Both
<i>Calamintha dentata</i> /Toothed Savory	Both
<i>Carex baltzelli</i> /Baltzell's sedge	Both
<i>Carex decomposita</i> /Cypress-knee sedge	Both
<i>Cleistes bifaria</i> /Small spreading pogonia	Both
<i>Coreopsis nudata</i> /Georgia Tickseed	Both
<i>Euphorbia discoidalis</i> /No Common Name	Both
<i>Forestiera godfreyi</i> /Godfrey's swampprivet	Both
<i>Galactia microphylla</i> /No Common Name	Both
<i>Gentiana pennelliana</i> /Wiregrass Gentian	Both
<i>Hymenocallis henryae</i> /Panhandle Spiderlily	Both
<i>Hypericum chapmanii</i> /A Saint John's-Wort	Both
<i>Hypericum exile</i> /A Saint John's-Wort	Both
<i>Justicia crassifolia</i> /Thick-leaved Water Willow	Both
<i>Lachnocaulon digynum</i> /Bog Button	Both
<i>Lachnocaulon engleri</i> /Engler's bogbutton	Both
<i>Linum westii</i> /West's Flax	Both
<i>Lythrum curtissii</i> /Curtiss' Loosestrife	Both
<i>Macranthera flammea</i> /Hummingbird Flower	Both
<i>Magnolia ashei</i> /Ashe's Magnolia	Both
<i>Matelea floridana</i> /Florida milkvine	Both
<i>Micranthemum glomeratum</i> /Manatee mudflower	Both
<i>Myriophyllum laxum</i> /Piedmont Water-Milfoil	Both
<i>Najas filifolia</i> /Needleleaf waternymph	Both
<i>Nolina atopocarpa</i> /Florida Beargrass	Both
<i>Nyssa ursina</i> /Bog Tupelo	Both
<i>Oxypolis ternata</i> /No Common Name	Both
<i>Parnassia caroliniana</i> /Carolina Grass of Parnassus	Both
<i>Paronychia rugelii</i> /Rugel's nailwort	Both
<i>Phlox floridana</i> /Florida Phlox	Both
<i>Phoebanthus tenuifolia</i> /No Common Name	Both
<i>Physalis arenicola</i> /Cypresshead groundcherry	Both
<i>Physalis carpenterii</i> /Carpenter's groundcherry	Both
<i>Physostegia godfreyi</i> /Apalachicola Dragonhead	Both
<i>Pieris phillyreifolia</i> /Climbing Fetterbush	Both
<i>Pinckneya bracteata</i> /Fevertree	Both
<i>Pinguicula planifolia</i> /Chapman's Butterwort	Both
<i>Pityopsis flexuosa</i> /Bent Golden Aster	Both
<i>Pityopsis oligantha</i> /Coastal-Plain Golden-Aster	Both
<i>Platanthera integra</i> /Yellow fringeless orchid	Both

Scientific Name/Common Name (84 species)	Ranger District
<i>Polygala hooker</i> /Hooker's milkwort	Both
<i>Polygala leptostachys</i> /Slender spike milkwort	Both
<i>Pteroglossaspis ecristata</i> /Wild Coco	Both
<i>Pycnanthemum floridanum</i> /Florida mountainmint	Both
<i>Rhexia parviflora</i> /Small-Flowered Meadow Beauty	Both
<i>Rhexia salicifolia</i> /Panhandle Meadow Beauty	Both
<i>Rhododendron austrinum</i> /Orange azalea	Both
<i>Rhynchospora breviseta</i> /Shortbristle beaksedge	Both
<i>Rhynchospora crinipes</i> /Hairy peduncled beakrush	Both
<i>Rhynchospora macra</i> /Large beakrush	Both
<i>Rhynchospora pleiantha</i> /Brown Beaked-Rush	Both
<i>Rudbeckia graminifolia</i> /Grass-Leaf Coneflower	Both
<i>Rudbeckia nitida</i> /Shiny coneflower	Both
<i>Ruellia noctiflora</i> /White-Flowered Wild Petunia	Both
<i>Schisandra glabra</i> /Bay starvine	Both
<i>Schoenolirion albiflorum</i> /White sunnybells	Both
<i>Silphium simpsonii</i> /Simpson's rosinweed	Both
<i>Sisyrinchium xerophyllum</i> /Jeweled blue-eyed grass	Both
<i>Spiranthes longilabris</i> /Giant spiral ladies"-tresses	Both
<i>Sporobolus curtissii</i> /Pineland dropseed	Both
<i>Sporobolus floridanus</i> /Florida Dropseed	Both
<i>Stachydeoma graveolens</i> (<i>Hedeoma graveolens</i>)/Mock Pennyroyal	Both
<i>Tephrosia mohrii</i> /Pineland hoarypea	Both
<i>Tridens carolinianus</i> /Carolina fluffgrass	Both
<i>Verbesina chapmanii</i> /Chapman's Crownbeard	Both
<i>Warea sessilifolia</i> /Sessile-Leaved Warea	Both
<i>Xyris drummondii</i> /Drummond's Yellow-eyed Grass	Both
<i>Xyris isoetifolia</i> /Quillwort yelloweyed grass	Both
<i>Xyris longisepala</i> /Karst Pond Xyris	Both
<i>Xyris louisianica</i> /Kral's Yellow-eyed Grass	Both
<i>Xyris scabrifolia</i> /Harper's Yellow-eyed Grass	Both

Proximity of Wood Stork Rookeries and Bald Eagle Nests to Helispots



Proximity of RCW Trees to H2

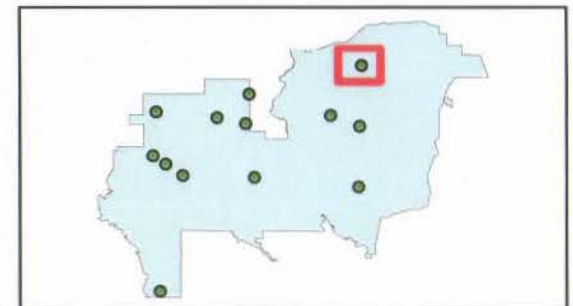


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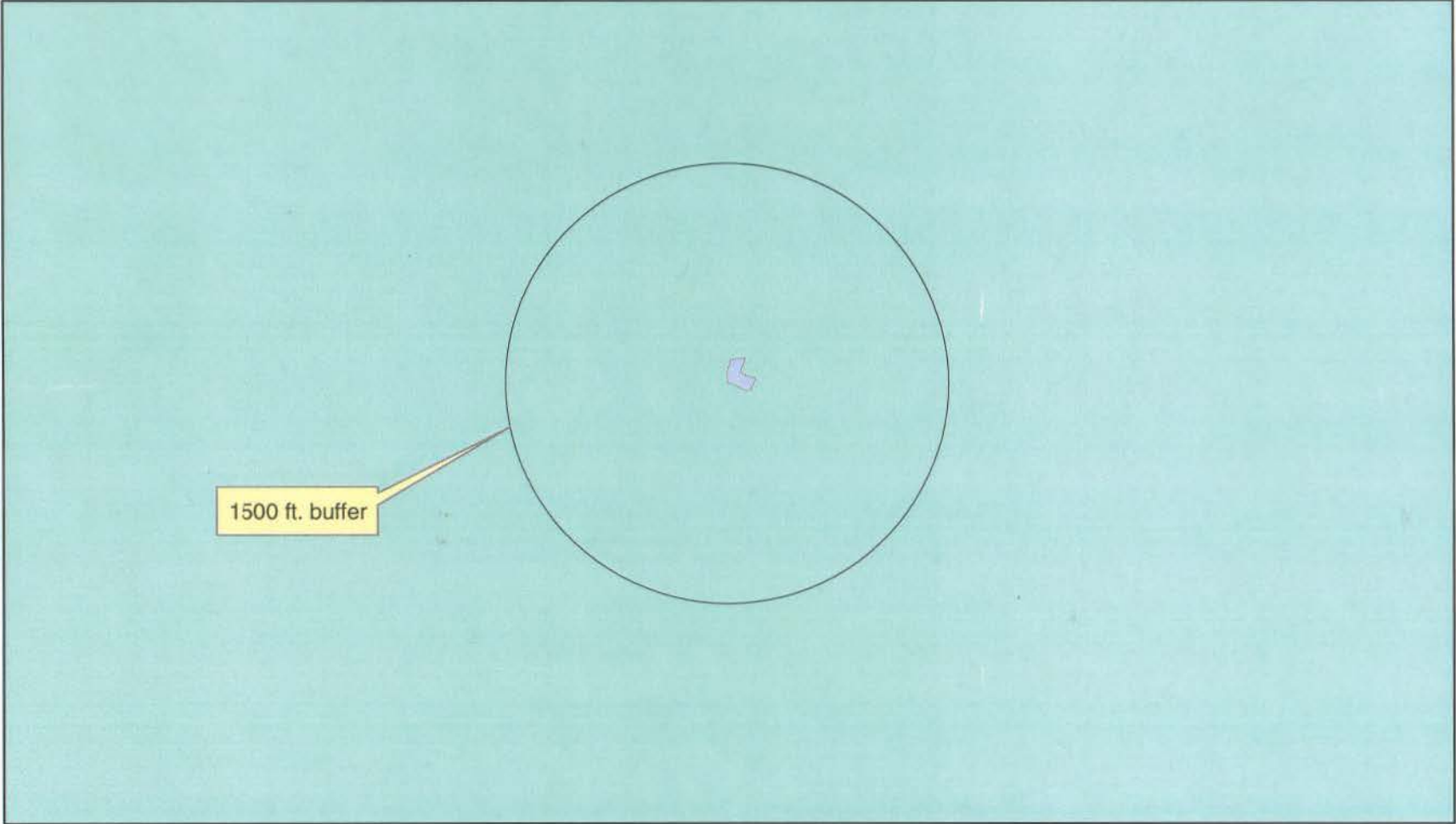
- RCW Trees
- Helispot Boundary



1,500 750 0 1,500 Feet

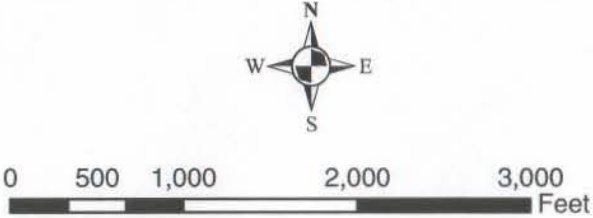


Proximity of RCW Trees to H4

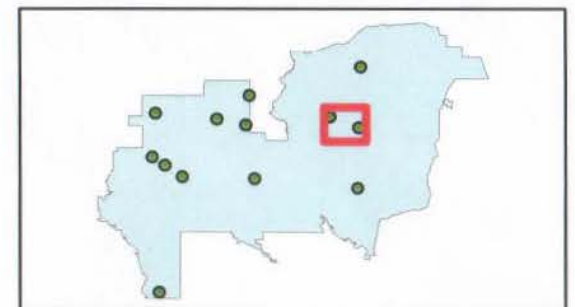
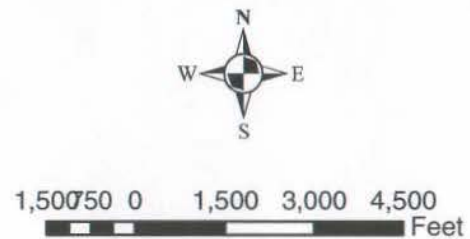
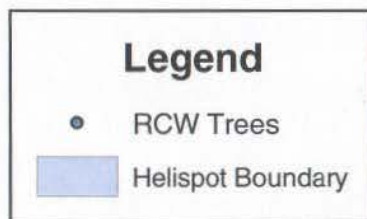
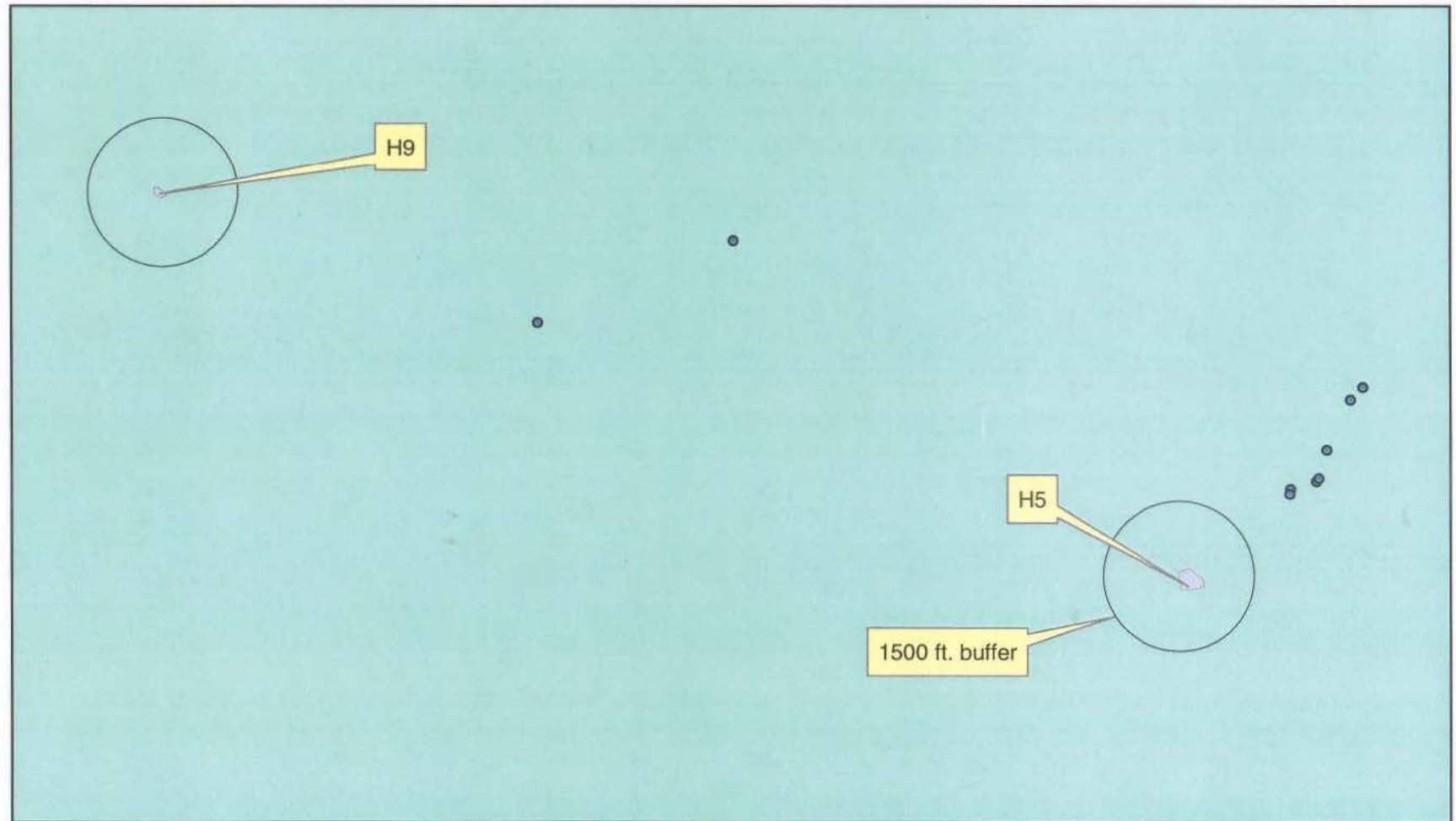


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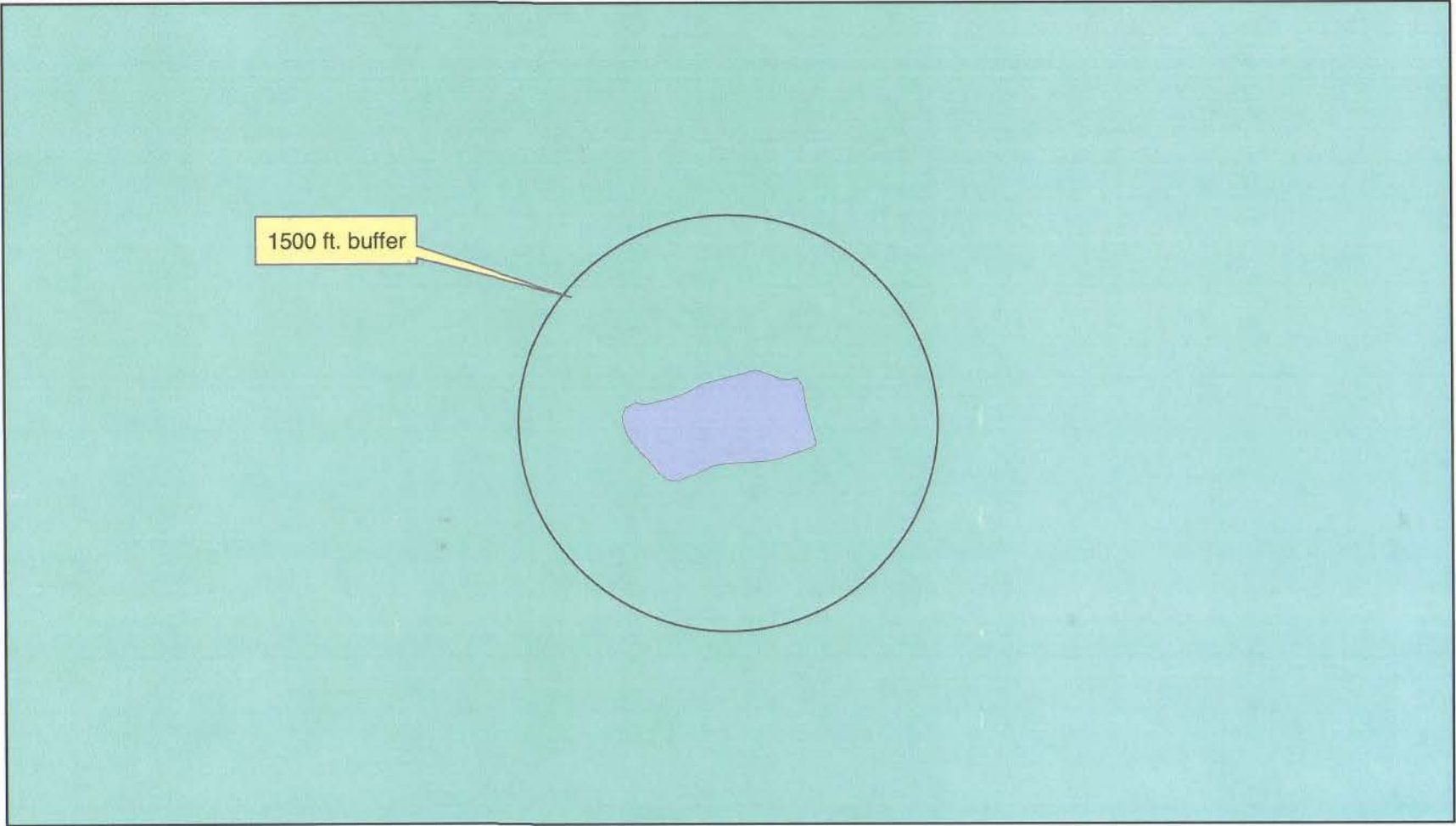
- RCW Trees
- Helispot Boundary



Proximity of RCW Trees to H5 and H9

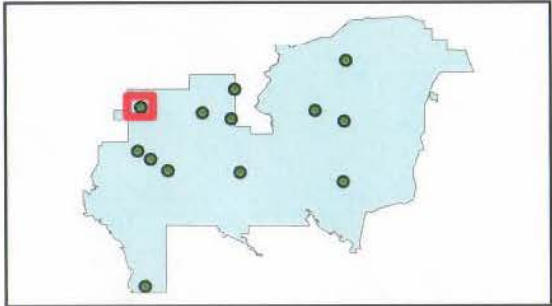
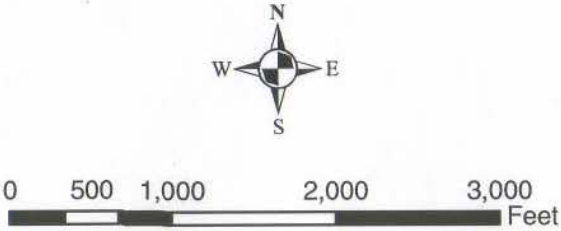


Proximity of RCW Trees to H22

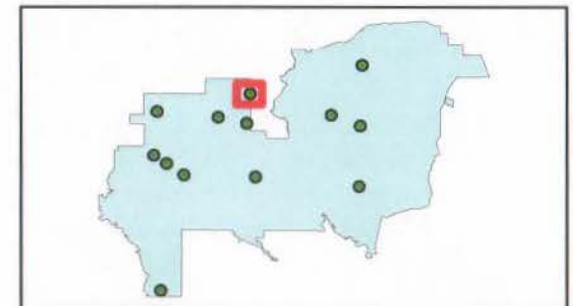
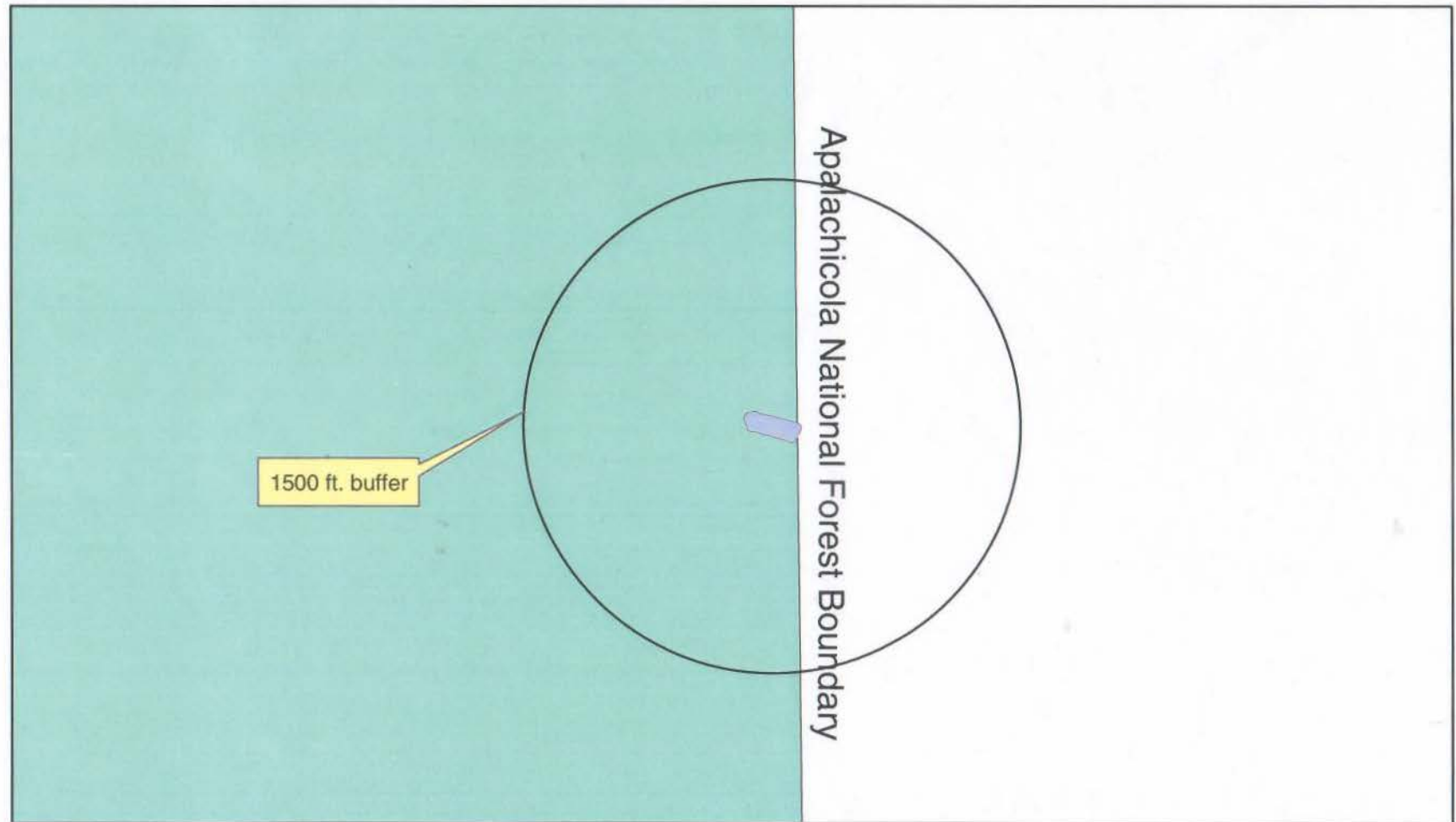


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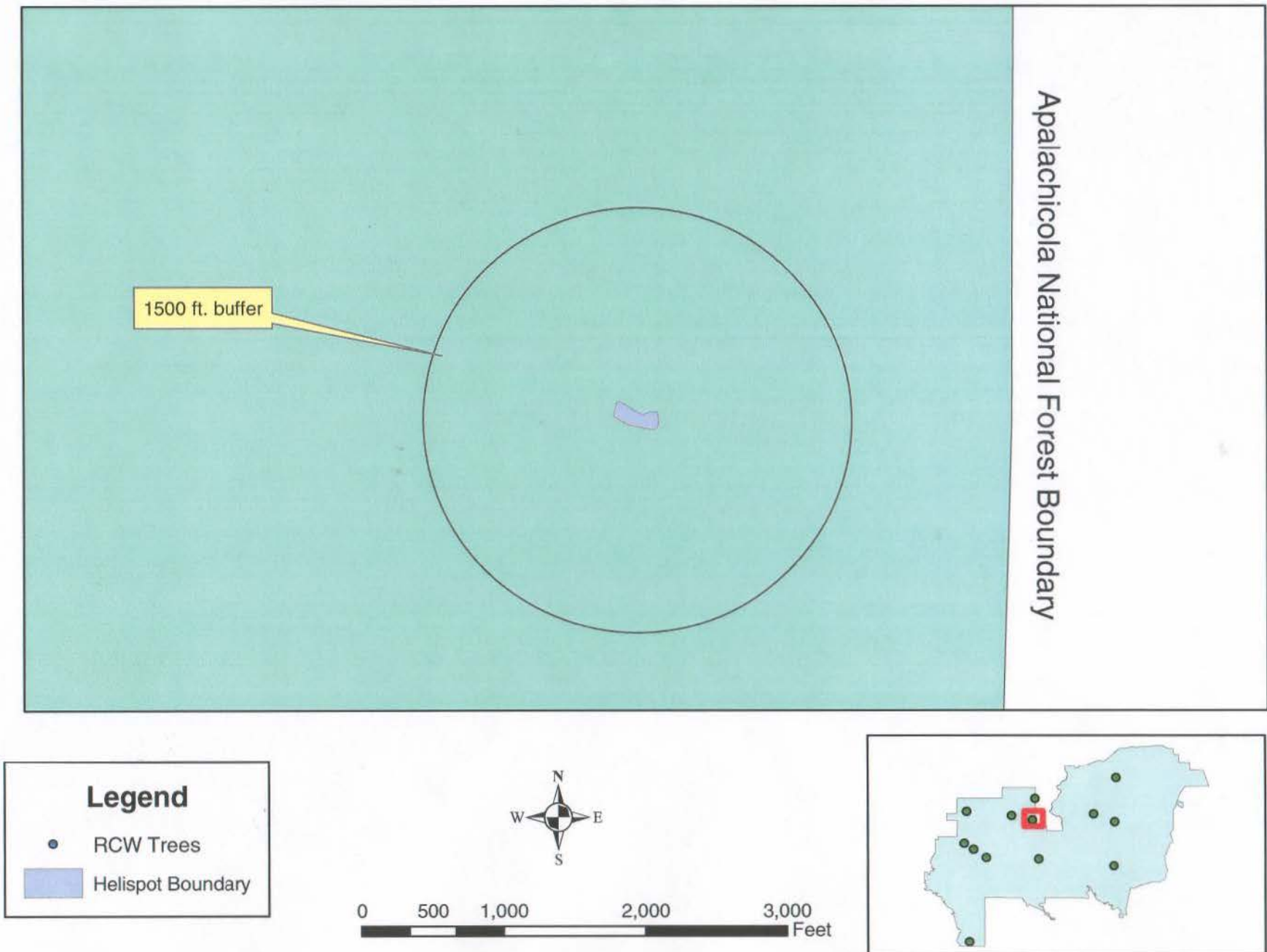
- RCW Trees
- Helispot Boundary



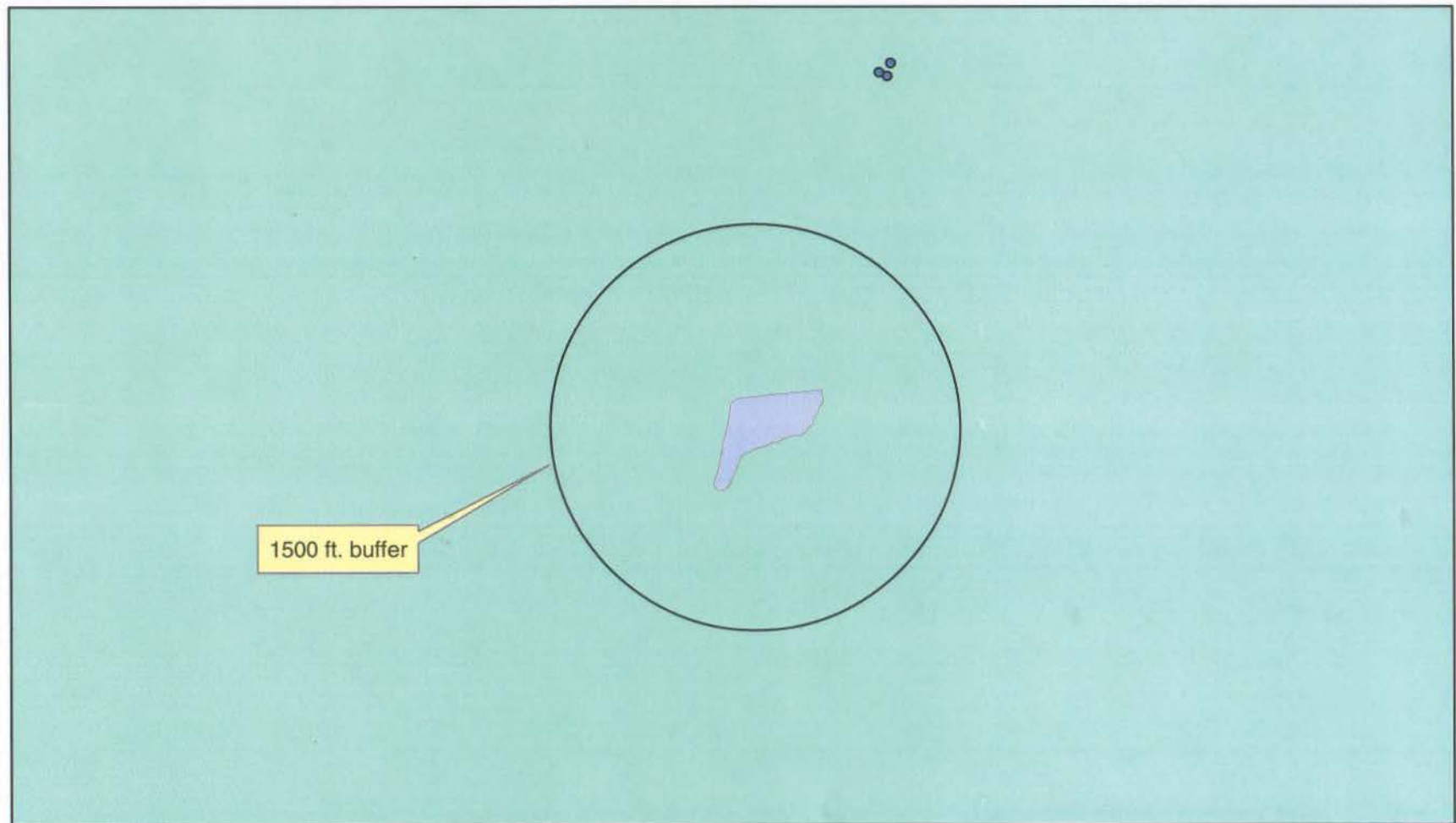
Proximity of RCW Trees to H23



Proximity of RCW Trees to H24



Proximity of RCW Trees to H27

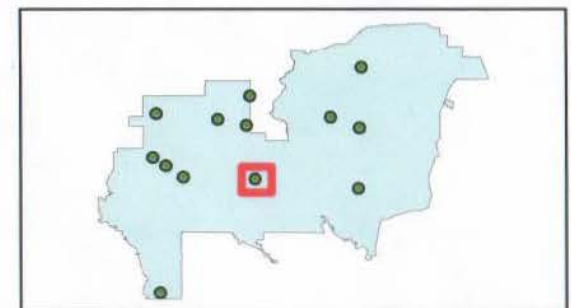


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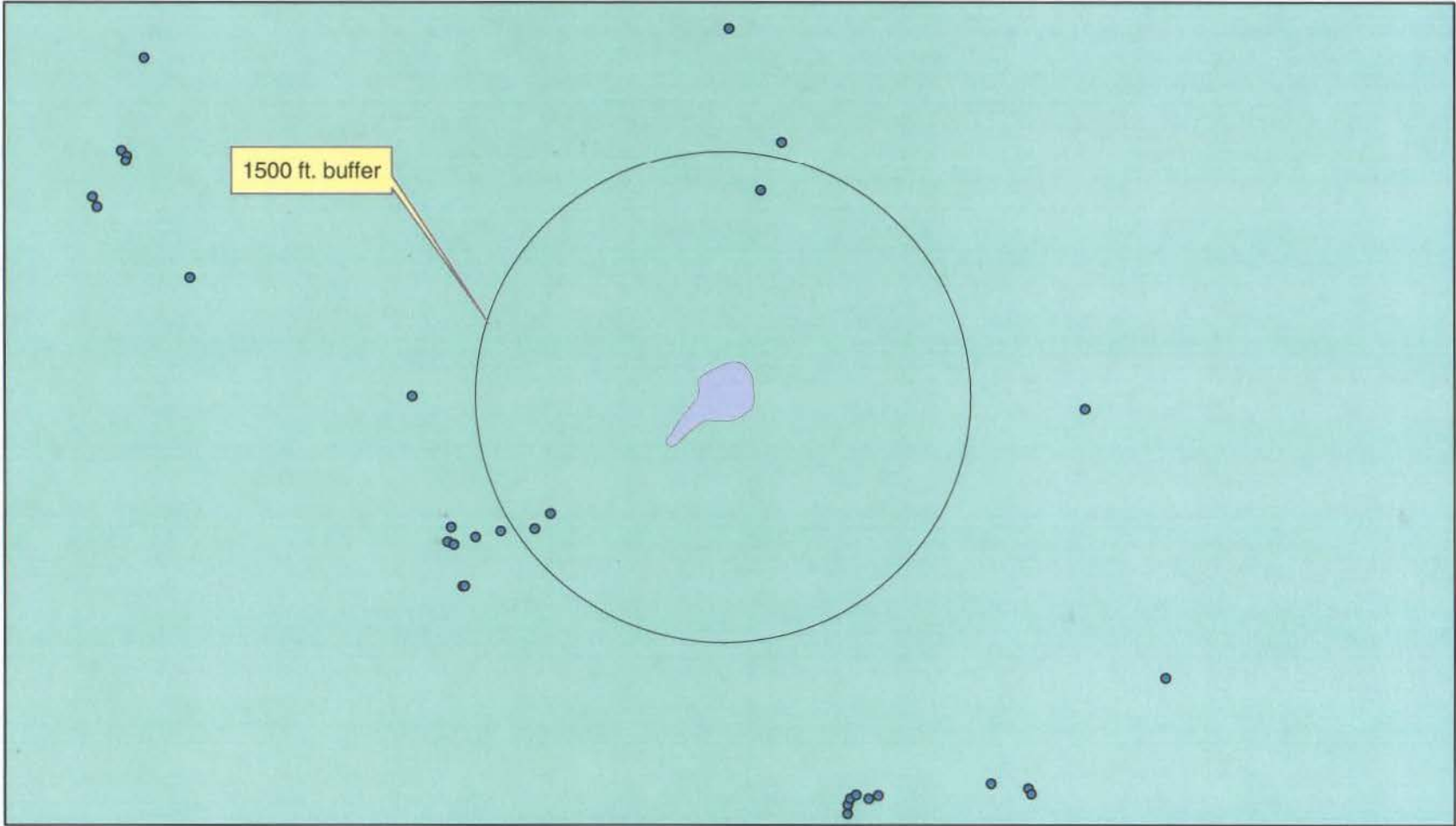
- RCW Trees
- Helispot Boundary



0 500 1,000 2,000 3,000 Feet

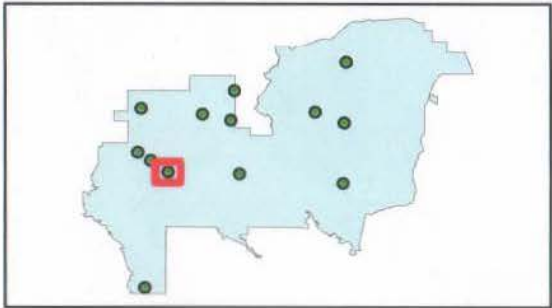
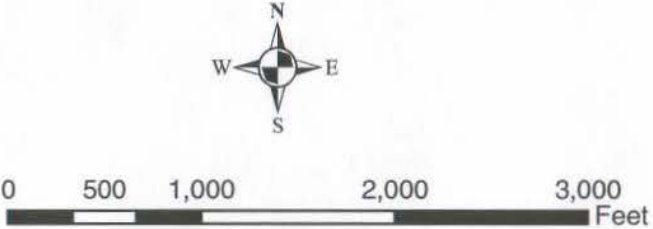


Proximity of RCW Trees to H28

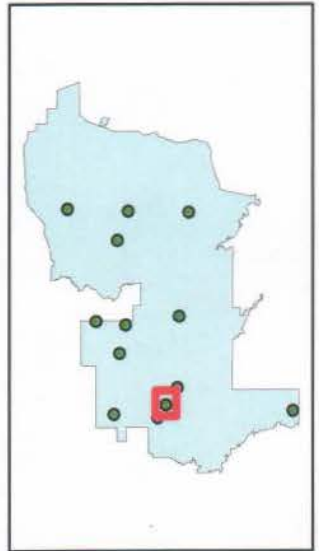
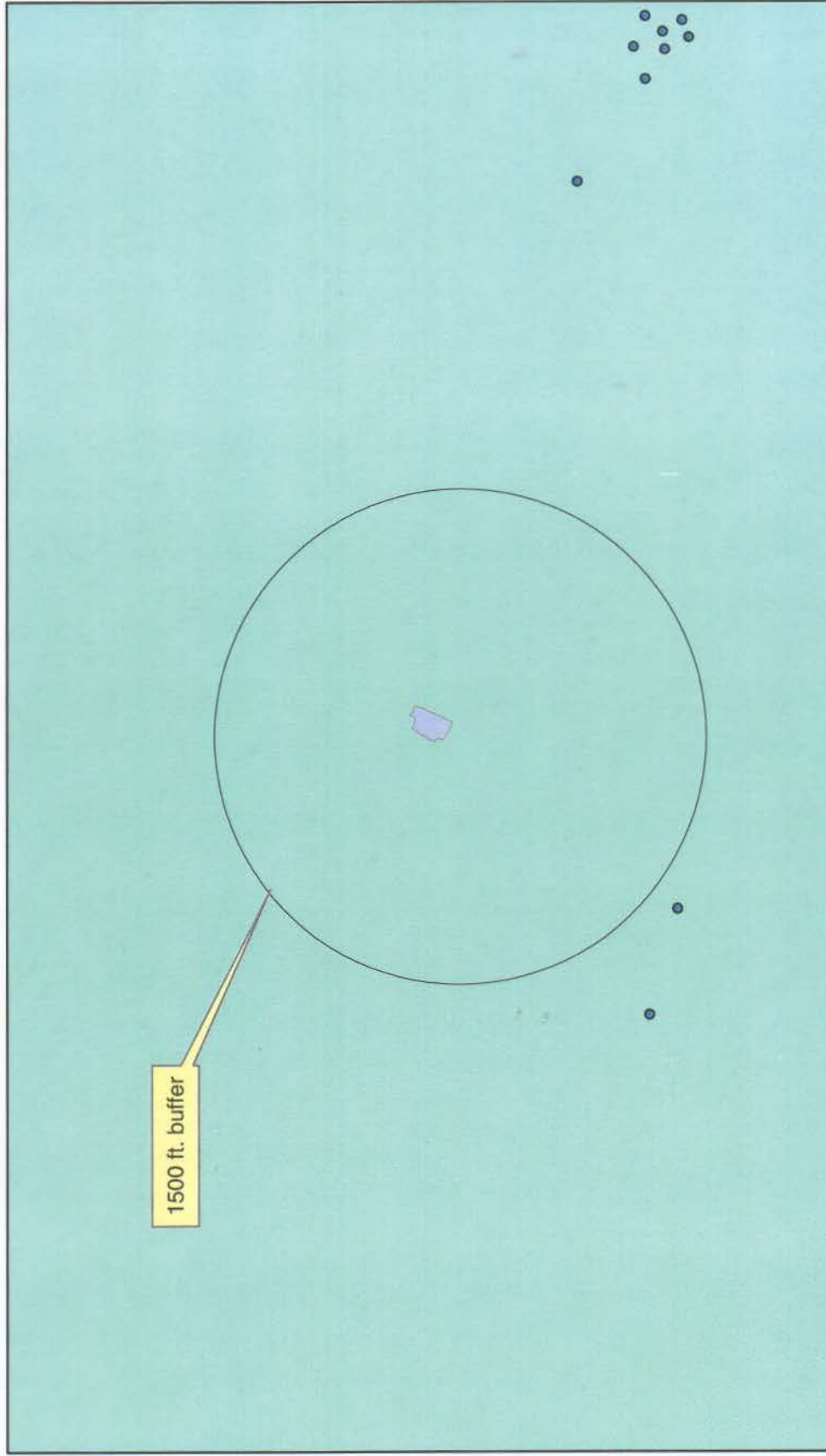


Legend

- RCW Trees
- Helispot Boundary



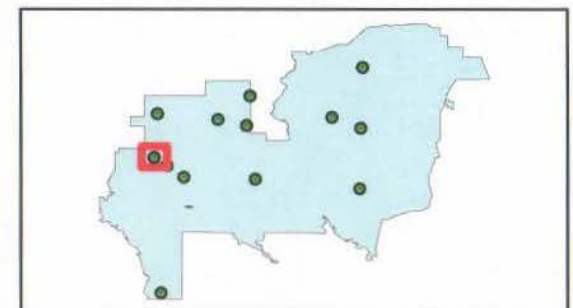
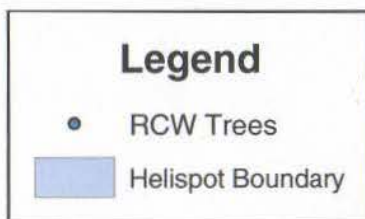
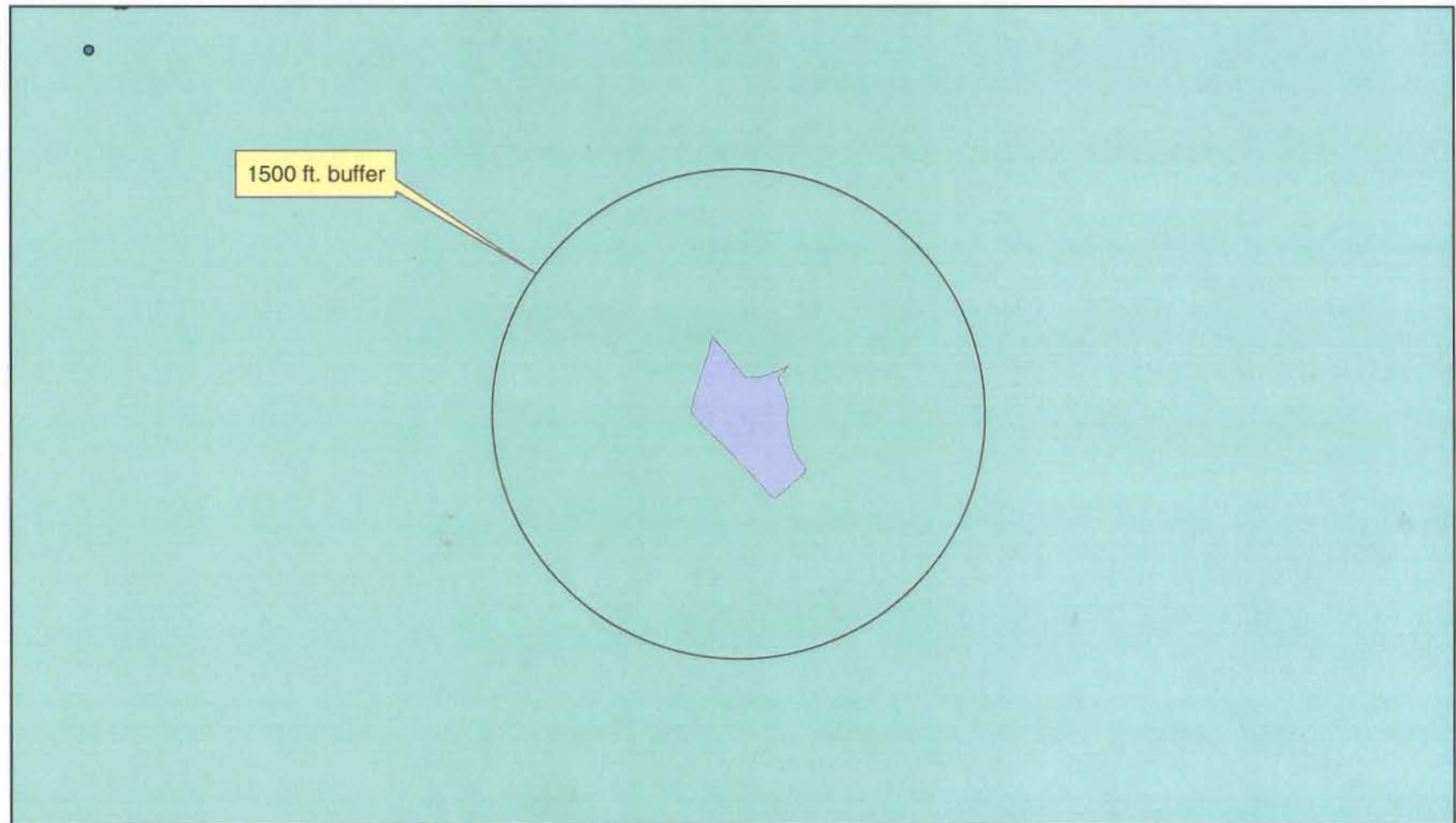
Proximity of RCW Trees to H29



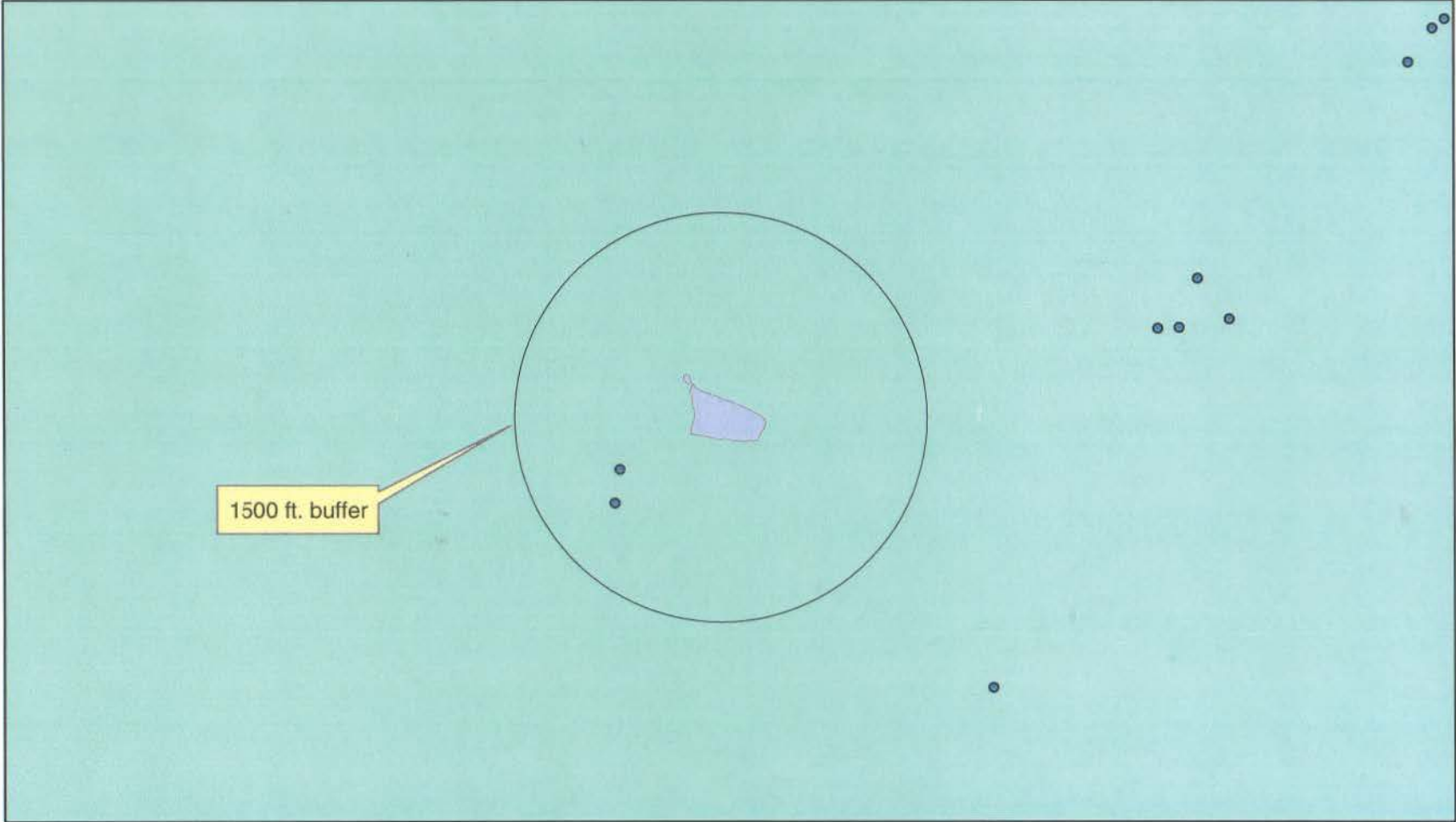
Legend

- RCW Trees
- Helispot Boundary

Proximity of RCW Trees to H30

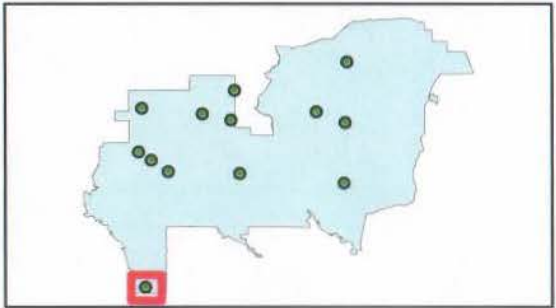
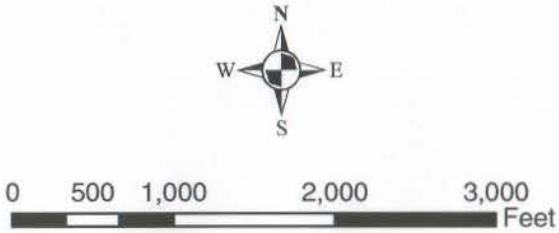


Proximity of RCW Trees to H34

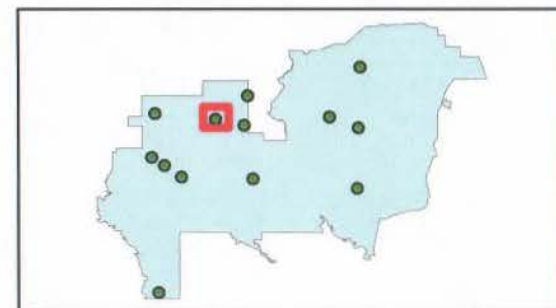
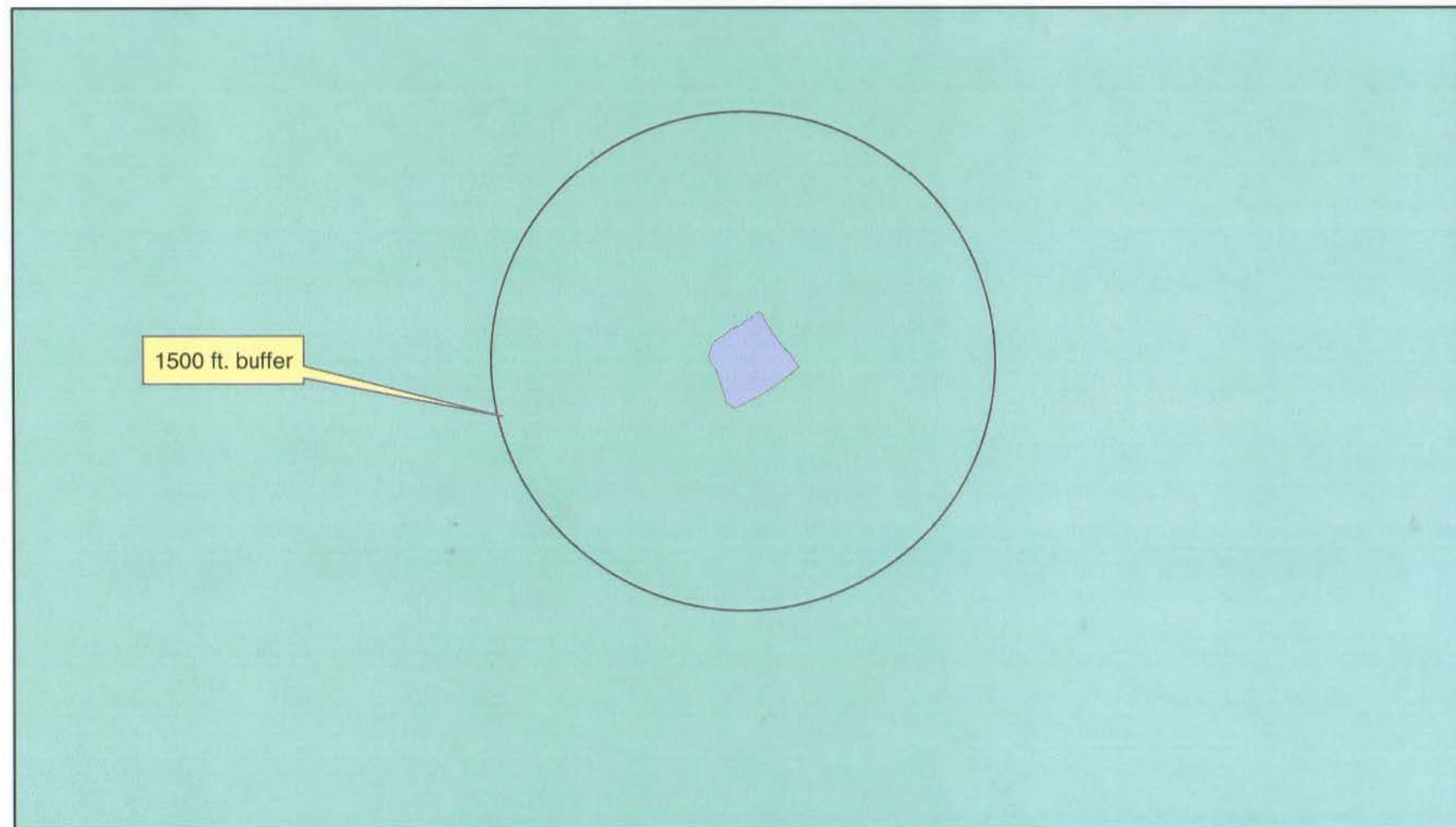


Legend

- RCW Trees
- Helispot Boundary



Proximity of RCW Trees to H35



APPENDIX D

AGENCY CORRESPONDENCE

U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service



IN REPLY REFER TO:

United States Department of the Interior

FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE

Field Office

1601 Balboa Avenue

Panama City, FL 32405-3721

Tel: (850) 769-0552

Fax: (850) 763-2177

September 26, 2003

CEV
OCT 06 2003

Mr. Lowell D. Klepper, P.E.
Deputy Base Civil Engineer
Department of the Air Force
347th Civil Engineer Squadron (ACC)
3485 Georgia Street
Moody AFB, Georgia 31699-1707

Re: FWS No. 4-P-03-285
Use of Existing Helispots in the ANF
for Military Training
Apalachicola National Forest

Dear Mr. Klepper:

Thank you for your letter that we received on August 5, 2003, requesting our review of the project referenced above. Your letter was accompanied by a Draft Finding of No significant Impact (DFONSI) and Draft Environmental Assessment (DEA) for this project. This response is provided in accordance with provisions of the Fish and Wildlife Coordination Act (48 Stat. 401, as amended; 16 U.S.C. 661 et seq.) and Section 7 of the Endangered Species Act (Act) of 1973, as amended (16 U.S.C. 1531 et seq.).

Moody Air Force Base (AFB) proposes to obtain a U.S. Forest Service (USFS) Special Use Permit to use 13 helicopter landing sites (referred to as Helispots) in the Apalachicola National Forest (ANF) as helicopter landing zones (for combat search and rescue aircrew training. The 41st Rescue Squadron would use one or two Helispots approximately one hour, twice a week for helicopter approaches, landing, take-offs, and hovering operations during day or night training exercises. Personnel insertions and extraction on the Helispots would be practiced via rope, rappel, and ladders. On-the-ground time at a site would be less than 10 minutes per landing. The Helispots are located on cleared undeveloped land that is already designated and used by the USFS as Helispots during wildfire operations. The proposed activities would require no site alteration. We understand that operations would be confined to the boundaries of the Helispots.

On August 21, 2003, Mr. Stan Simpkins of our office contacted Mr. Gregory W. Lee of Moody AFB (via phone) requesting clarification in regard to your letter which stated that three federally listed species could be potentially impacted by proposed activities, but only identified the bald

eagle and red-cockaded woodpecker. Mr. Lee indicated that the third species that could potentially be impacted was the wood stork. All three of the above species were addressed in the DEA for this proposed project.

Since activities are proposed on land owned by the USFS, which also has responsibilities under Section 7 of the Act, we have coordinated our projected review with that agency. On August 21, 2003, we received a response from the Forest Service (via e-mail from Mr. Greg Titus, Fire Planner/Wildlife Biologist, ANF) concurring with the analysis of impacts to federally listed species disclosed in the DEA.

The information you have provided supports a conclusion that the use of existing Helispots on the ANF for military helicopter training is not likely to adversely affect species protected under the Act. In view of this statement, we believe that the requirements of Section 7 of the Act have been satisfied. Reinitiation of consultation may be required if modifications are made in the project, avoidance and minimization procedures that you identified in the DEA are not implemented, impacts to listed species occur beyond what has been considered, or if other pertinent information becomes available on listed species.

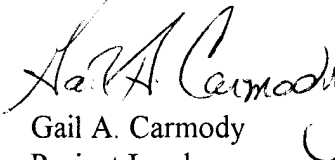
We wish to offer the following conservation recommendations for this project:

To reduce the duration of disturbance to wildlife at any one particular Helispot – training activities at the 13 Helispots should be rotated.

Populations of RCW occurring on the Apalachicola and Wakulla Ranger Districts in the ANF where activities are proposed have been designated by the Second Revision RCW Recovery Plan (2003) as primary core populations. Primary core populations are essential to the recovery of the species. Furthermore, the ANF is an active participant in the Southern Range RCW Translocation Cooperative. As a partner in this cooperative involving federal, state and private landowners in Georgia, Florida, Mississippi, and Alabama, the ANF makes RCWs available for translocation to populations in danger of being extirpated. Because of the above, the USFS is required to monitor the RCW populations on the ANF. We urge the Air Force to support RCW recovery by assisting the ANF in helping to meet their monitoring responsibilities. The Air Force could consider helping to fund monitoring activities and/or explore other ways to partner with the ANF to assist in recovery efforts.

If you have any questions or concerns about this consultation, or for further coordination, please contact Mr. Stan Simpkins at ext. 234.

Sincerely yours,


Gail A. Carmody
Project Leader

cc:

Sandy Tucker, FWS, Athens, GA

Nancy Jordan, FWS, Fort Benning, GA

Marcus Beard, District Ranger, ANF, Bristol, FL

Ralph Costa, FWS, Clemson, SC

PCFO:S.Simpkins:sks:kh:09-23-03:850-769-0552:[c:\stan\4p03285.wpd]



DEPARTMENT OF THE AIR FORCE

347th CIVIL ENGINEER SQUADRON (ACC)
MOODY AIR FORCE BASE, GEORGIA

30 JUL 2003

MEMORANDUM FOR Dr. Gail Carmody
Field Supervisor
U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
1601 Balboa Avenue
Panama City FL 32405

FROM: 347 CES/CC
3485 Georgia Street
Moody AFB GA 31699-1707

SUBJECT: Request for Informal Consultation, Use of Existing Helispots at Apalachicola National Forest for Military Helicopter Training

1. Moody Air Force Base (AFB) proposes to use thirteen existing helispots in the Apalachicola National Forest as HH-60G helicopter landing zones for combat search and rescue aircrew training. Helispots would be used approximately twice a week for various combat search and rescue training activities, including personnel insertions and extractions.
2. During the preparation of a draft Environmental Assessment (EA) and Finding of No Significant Impact (FONSI) for this project, it was determined that the proposed action had the potential to impact three federally listed species: bald eagle, red-cockaded woodpecker, and bald eagle. However, based on the environmental analysis conducted during the preparation of the draft EA and FONSI, Moody AFB believes that the proposed action will not jeopardize the continued existence of either of the three species.
3. In accordance with Section 7 of the Endangered Species Act, Moody AFB requests an informal consultation and review of the proposed action. To facilitate your review, a copy of the draft EA and FONSI is attached (Attachment).
4. If you need any further information or have any questions, please contact Mr. Gregory W. Lee at (229) 257-5881 or by e-mail at: gregory.lee@moody.af.mil


LOWELL D. KLEPPER, P.E.
Deputy Base Civil Engineer

Attachment:
Draft EA and FONSI

Global Power For America

Florida State Historic Preservation Office

DIVISIONS OF FLORIDA DEPARTMENT OF STATE

Office of the Secretary
Office of International Relations
Division of Elections
Division of Corporations
Division of Cultural Affairs
Division of Historical Resources
Division of Library and Information Services
Division of Licensing
Division of Administrative Services



FLORIDA DEPARTMENT OF STATE

Jim Smith

Secretary of State

DIVISION OF HISTORICAL RESOURCES

MEMBER OF THE FLORIDA CABINET

State Board of Education
Trustees of the Internal Improvement Trust Fund
Administration Commission
Florida Land and Water Adjudicatory Commission
Siting Board
Division of Bond Finance
Department of Revenue
Department of Law Enforcement
Department of Highway Safety and Motor Vehicles
Department of Veterans' Affairs

Mr. Lowell D. Klepper
Department of the Air Force
347th Civil Engineer Squadron (ACC)
3485 Georgia Street
Moody Air Force Base, Florida 31699-1707

January 6, 2003

RE: DHR Project File No. 2002-12043
Received by DHR December 27, 2002
347 CES/CD
Proposed Use of Apalachicola National Forest Helispots by United States Air Force 41st Rescue Squadron HH-60G Helicopters in Leon, Wakulla, Liberty and Franklin Counties, Florida

Dear Mr. Klepper:

Our office received and reviewed the above referenced project in accordance with Section 106 of the *National Historic Preservation Act of 1966*, as amended and *36 CFR Part 800: Protection of Historic Properties* and the *National Environmental Policy Act of 1969*, as amended. The State Historic Preservation Officer is to advise Federal agencies as they identify historic properties (listed or eligible for listing, in the *National Register of Historic Places*), assess effects upon them, and consider alternatives to avoid or minimize adverse effects.

Based on the information provided, this office concurs with your finding that the proposed undertaking will have no effect on historic properties.

If you have any questions concerning our comments, please contact Scott Edwards, Historic Preservation Planner, by electronic mail sedwards@mail.dos.state.fl.us, or at 850-245-6333 or 800-847-7278.

Sincerely,

Janet Snyder Matthews, Ph.D., Director, and
State Historic Preservation Officer

500 S. Bronough Street • Tallahassee, FL 32399-0250 • <http://www.flheritage.com>

☐ Director's Office
(850) 245-6300 • FAX: 245-6435

☐ Archaeological Research
(850) 245-6444 • FAX: 245-6436

☒ Historic Preservation
(850) 245-6333 • FAX: 245-6437

☐ Historical Museums
(850) 245-6400 • FAX: 245-6433

☐ Palm Beach Regional Office
(561) 279-1475 • FAX: 279-1476

☐ St. Augustine Regional Office
(904) 825-5045 • FAX: 825-5044

☐ Tampa Regional Office
(813) 272-3843 • FAX: 272-2340



DEPARTMENT OF THE AIR FORCE

347th CIVIL ENGINEER SQUADRON (ACC)
MOODY AIR FORCE BASE, GEORGIA

CEVA *9ml 12/23*
CEV *B*
CD *Klepper*
23 DEC 2002

MEMORANDUM FOR Laura A. Kammerer
Historic Compliance Review Section
Bureau of Historical Resources
R.A. Gray Building, 4th Floor
500 South Bronough Street
Tallahassee, FL 32399-0250

23 DEC 2002

FROM: 347 CES/CD
3485 Georgia St
Moody AFB GA 31699-1707

SUBJECT: Proposed Use of Apalachicola National Forest Helispots by United States Air Force, 41st Rescue Squadron HH-60G Helicopters in Leon, Wakulla, Liberty, and Franklin Counties, Florida

1. Moody Air Force Base (Moody), Georgia (GA), requests consultation regarding the proposed use by the Air Force of thirteen helispots located in the Apalachicola National Forest for use by HH-60G helicopters. Moody is home to the 41st Rescue Squadron (41 RQS), whose primary mission is to provide worldwide, deployable long-range combat search and rescue of downed aircrews. The 41 RQS uses the HH-60G helicopter in day and night personnel recovery operations, often in hostile environments, during both military conflicts and local civilian emergency situations. The 41 RQS needs remote Landing Zones (LZs) for training in order to maintain operational proficiency. To enhance the training of the 41 RQS, the Air Force proposes to use thirteen existing United States Forest Service helispots located in the Apalachicola National Forest (ANF). One of these helispots is in Leon County, three are in Wakulla County, eight are in Liberty County, and one is in Franklin County, Florida. All thirteen helispots were developed and are currently used by United States Forest Service (USFS) helicopters, typically for law enforcement and fire fighting requirements. For the 41 RQS, these additional LZs would provide navigational diversity and fresh physical training sites necessary for maximizing aircrew flexibility. The attached report details the locations of these helispots, the proposed activities, and the findings of the cultural resources investigation.

2. The 41 RQS proposes training in the ANF twice per week. Flying would be between 10:00 a.m. and 10:00 p.m. central time, typically Tuesday through Thursday, with permission granted and cleared through USFS initial attack dispatcher. The helispots would be used for helicopter approaches, landings, take-offs, and hovering operations during both day and night. Actual time on ANF land would average one hour. Exercises would consist of flying to one or more helispots, and using rappel ropes, rope ladders and rescue hoists. The helicopters would operate at 500 feet above ground level or less. During sustained hover operations the maximum altitude would be 100' above the helispot. Anyone put on the ground would be picked up within 10 minutes. The helispots would be marked with green chemical light sticks during night operations, which would be removed from the helispots at the completion of each operation.

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All helicopter fueling and maintenance operations would occur at Moody AFB. No refueling would occur at the helispots or in-flight. No construction, soil disturbance, or site alteration of any kind would take place as a result of the 41 RQS's use of these helispots. The types of activities the 41 RQS proposes mirror the activities currently conducted by the USFS, and it is anticipated that no adverse impacts to significant cultural resources would occur as a result of the 41 RQS's proposed activities.

3. It is the opinion of our staff that this proposed action will not affect any significant cultural resources. We request your review and concurrence with the proposed use of these helispots by 41 RQS HH-60G aircraft.

4. If you have any questions or need any additional information, please feel free to contact Ms. Johnna L. Thackston at (229) 257-2396, e-mail: johnna.thackston@moody.af.mil.


LOWELL D. KLEPPER, P.E.
Deputy Base Civil Engineer

Attachment

Letter Report:
Cultural Resources Record Search Conducted on United States Forest Service Helispots
in Apalachicola National Forest
Proposed For Use by 41st Rescue Squadron, Moody Air Force Base, Georgia
In
Leon, Wakulla, Liberty, and Franklin Counties, Florida

By
Johnna L. Thackston
23 December 2002

Introduction:

Moody Air Force Base, Georgia (Moody) is home to the 41st Rescue Squadron (41 RQS), whose primary mission is to provide worldwide, deployable long-range combat search and rescue of downed aircrews. The 41 RQS uses the HH-60G helicopter in day and night personnel recovery operations, often in hostile environments, during both military conflicts and local civilian emergency situations. The 41 RQS uses remote Landing Zones (LZs) in order to maintain operational proficiency, however currently only four LZs in Echols County, GA, are available for simulating combat search and rescue operations on undeveloped land. These have been used since 1997, resulting in diminished training value to the 41 RQS due to familiarity. To enhance the training of the 41 RQS, the Air Force proposes using thirteen existing United States Forest Service (USFS) helispots located in the Apalachicola National Forest (ANF) for remote LZ training. One of these helispots is in Leon County, three are in Wakulla County, eight are in Liberty County, and one is in Franklin County, Florida. These additional LZs would provide navigational diversity and fresh physical training sites necessary for maximizing aircrew flexibility.

Description of the USFS Helispots:

The Air Force originally considered twenty-three ANF helispots for use as remote LZs, but ten of these were eliminated as inadequate because of training and safety requirements. Most of these were too small to fit the landing footprint of the HH-60G. The Air Force does not wish to expand any of the helispots, and prefers to use only those helispots that meet their requirements as-is. The thirteen proposed helispots are currently used by USFS helicopters, primarily as landing zones or borrow pit dip sites in conjunction with USFS law enforcement or fire fighting activities. Table 1-1 lists the helispots the Air Force proposes to use, as well as the results of the cultural resources records search. The sources for this records search include the Florida Master Site File (FMSF) and personnel at ANF. Photographs and maps of each helispot are included in this report.

Table 1-1: Apalachicola NF Helispots Proposed for Use by the Air Force

Helispot	UTM Coordinates	USGS Quadrangle	Borrow Pit	Size in Acres	County	Cultural Resources Results* - FMSF	Cultural Resources Results* – ANF	Maps and Photos
H2	737108 E 3360532 N	Lake Talquin	Yes	1.6	Leon	No sites identified. No surveys identified.	No documentation provided by Forest Service (FS) personnel.	Figure 1-2, Photo 1
H4	737088 E 3334370 N	Sanborn	Yes	0.6	Wakulla	No sites identified. No surveys identified.	FS personnel declared No Cultural Resources (NCR) at the borrow pit (Repp 1998).	Figure 1-3, Photo 3 & 4
H5	737199 E 3347232 N	Bradwell Bay	Yes	3.6	Wakulla	Three unevaluated sites identified within the vicinity: WA-203, WA-653, WA-374. Recommendation for WA-374 was avoidance. Unable to locate site form-referenced documentation.	FS personnel declared no impact to site WA-374 with its use as a temporary helipad (Repp 1998).	Figure 1-4, Photo 5 & 6
H9	730921 E 3349600 N	Lake Talquin	No	0.8	Wakulla	Two potentially eligible sites identified within the vicinity: WA-447, WA-193 Unable to locate site form-referenced documentation	No documentation provided by FS personnel.	Figure 1-5, Photo 7 & 8
H22	693501 E 3349539 N	Woods	No	17	Liberty	No sites identified. No surveys identified.	No documentation provided by FS personnel.	Figure 1-6, Photo 2
H23	713374 E 3353958 N	Telogia	No	0.9	Liberty	No sites identified. No surveys identified.	No documentation provided by FS personnel.	Figure 1-7, Photo 9
H24	712714 E	Queens Bay	Yes	0.8	Liberty	No sites identified.	No documentation	Figure 1-8,

	3347441 N					No surveys identified.	provided by FS personnel.	Photo 10
H27	714807 E 3335894 N	Queens Bay	No	6.4	Liberty	One not-eligible site identified: LI-255. Surveys: <i>Cultural Resources Assessment of Forest Highway 13</i> (1986), and <i>Staging Area Survey – No Cultural Resources</i> (Sept 2000).	No documentation provided by FS personnel.	Figure 1-9, Photo 11 & 12
H28	698500 E 3336371 N	Wilma	Yes	2.9	Liberty	No sites identified. No surveys identified.	FS personnel declared NCR at this borrow pit and recommended proceeding with proposed activity (Repp 2001).	Figure 1-10, Photo 13
H29	695564 E 3338322 N	Wilma	No	0.8	Liberty	Three resources identified – all structures: LI-280, LI-281, LI-304. No surveys identified.	FS personnel provided a copy of structure documentation (Adams 1986).	Figure 1-11, Photo 15 & 16
H34	694944 E 3310920 N	Ft. Gadsden	Yes	3.4	Franklin	Three resources identified: FR-737, not eligible; FR-784, needs further testing; FR-841, no data. Unable to locate the documentation referenced on the site forms.	No documentation provided by FS personnel.	Figure 1-12, Photo 17
H35	706598 E 3348533 N	Telogia	Yes	4.2	Liberty	No cultural resources, according to survey located.	No documentation provided by FS personnel.	Figure 1-13, Photo 14
H36	692973 E 3339988 N	Wilma	No	8	Liberty	No sites identified. No surveys identified.	No documentation provided by FS personnel.	Figure 1-14, Photo 18

*Results from record search of Florida Master Site File, and information obtained from Forest Service Personnel

Description of Proposed Land Use:

The 41 RQS proposes training in the ANF twice per week. Flying would be between 10:00 a.m. and 10:00 p.m. central time, typically Tuesday through Thursday, with permission granted and cleared through Forest Service initial attack dispatcher. The helispots would be used for helicopter approaches, landings, take-offs, and hovering operations during both day and night. Actual time on ANF land would average one hour. Exercises would consist of flying to one or more helispots, and using rappel ropes, rope ladders and rescue hoists. The helicopters would operate at 500 feet above ground level or less. During sustained hover operations the maximum altitude would be 100' above the helispot. Anyone put on the ground would be picked up within 10 minutes.

The helispots would be marked with green chemical light sticks during night operations. The light sticks would be removed from the helispots at the completion of each operation. All helicopter fueling and maintenance operations would occur at Moody AFB. No refueling would occur at the helispots or in-flight.

Use of these helispots by the Air Force would require no construction, soil disturbance, or site alteration of any kind. The locations and acreages of the helispots are listed in Table 1-1. The sites range in size from 0.6 acres to 17 acres. Figure 1-1 shows the locations of the helispots proposed for use. Each helispot is detailed in Figures 1-2 through 1-14.

Results/Recommendations:

The Air Force proposes to use existing helispots, currently used by the USFS, for helicopter rescue operations training. No construction, soil disturbance, or site alteration of any kind would take place as a result of the Air Force's use of these helispots. As the types of activities the Air Force proposes mirror the activities currently conducted by the USFS, it is anticipated that no adverse impacts to significant cultural resources would occur as a result of the Air Force's proposed activities.

REFERENCES:

Adams, William R.

1986 *An Historical and Architectural Assessment of the Helen Work Center, Leon County and the Wilma Work Center, Liberty County, Apalachicola National Forest, Florida.* Historic Property Associates, St. Augustine, Florida.

Repp, Andrea C.

1998 Management Summary: Holiday Fire Dip Sites/Borrow Pits and Fireline Rehabilitation – FY98, Wakulla District, Apalachicola National Forest, Florida, Wakulla County, July 17, 1998.

Repp, Andrea C.

2001 Management Summary: Miscellaneous Survey Areas – FY01, Apalachicola National Forest, Apalach District, Liberty County.

Federally Recognized Native American Tribes



DEPARTMENT OF THE AIR FORCE

347th CIVIL ENGINEER SQUADRON (ACC)
MOODY AIR FORCE BASE, GEORGIA

MEMORANDUM FOR Ms. Grace Bunner
Town King
Thlopthlocco Tribal Town
Box 706
Okemah OK 74859

FROM: 347 CES/CD
3485 Georgia St
Moody AFB GA 31699-1707

SUBJECT: Environmental Assessment on the Proposed Use of Apalachicola National Forest Helispots by United States Air Force, 41st Rescue Squadron HH-60G Helicopters in Leon, Wakulla, Liberty, and Franklin Counties, Florida

1. Moody Air Force Base (Moody), Georgia (GA), requests consultation and comment on the enclosed Environmental Assessment of the proposed use by the Air Force of thirteen helispots located in the Apalachicola National Forest by HH-60G helicopters. Moody is home to the 41st Rescue Squadron (41 RQS), whose primary mission is to provide worldwide, deployable long-range combat search and rescue of downed aircrews. The 41 RQS uses the HH-60G helicopter in day and night personnel recovery operations, often in hostile environments, during both military conflicts and local civilian emergency situations. The 41 RQS needs remote Landing Zones (LZs) for training in order to maintain operational proficiency. To enhance the training of the 41 RQS, the Air Force proposes to use thirteen existing United States Forest Service helispots located in the Apalachicola National Forest (ANF). One of these helispots is in Leon County, three are in Wakulla County, eight are in Liberty County, and one is in Franklin County, Florida. All thirteen helispots were developed and are currently used by United States Forest Service (USFS) helicopters, typically for law enforcement and fire fighting requirements. For the 41 RQS, these additional LZs would provide navigational diversity and fresh physical training sites necessary for maximizing aircrew flexibility. The attached report details the locations of these helispots and the proposed activities.

2. The 41 RQS proposes training in the ANF twice per week. Flying would be between 10:00 a.m. and 10:00 p.m. central time, typically Tuesday through Thursday, with permission granted and cleared through USFS initial attack dispatcher. The helispots would be used for helicopter approaches, landings, take-offs, and hovering operations during both day and night. Actual time on ANF land would average one hour. Exercises would consist of flying to one or more helispots, and using rappel ropes, rope ladders and rescue hoists. The helicopters would operate at 500 feet above ground level or less. During sustained hover operations the maximum altitude would be 100' above the helispot. Anyone put on the ground would be picked up within 10 minutes. The helispots would be marked with green chemical light sticks during night operations, which would be removed from the helispots at the completion of each operation. All helicopter fueling and maintenance operations would occur at Moody AFB. No refueling would occur at the helispots or in-flight. No construction, soil disturbance, or site alteration of

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any kind would take place as a result of the 41 RQS's use of these helispots. The types of activities the 41 RQS proposes mirror the activities currently conducted by the USFS.

3. We request your review and comments on the proposal to use these helispots by 41 RQS HH-60G aircraft, and on the enclosed Environmental Assessment.

4. If you have any questions or need any additional information, please feel free to contact Ms. Johnna L. Thackston at (229) 257-2396, e-mail: johnna.thackston@moody.af.mil.

LOWELL D. KLEPPER, P.E.
Deputy Base Civil Engineer

Enclosure: *Environmental Assessment: Apalachicola National Forest Helicopter Landing Zones, Florida*



DEPARTMENT OF THE AIR FORCE

347th CIVIL ENGINEER SQUADRON (ACC)
MOODY AIR FORCE BASE, GEORGIA

MEMORANDUM FOR Mr. Tarpie Yargee
Chief
Alabama-Quassarte Tribal Town
117 N Main Street
Wetumka OK 74883

FROM: 347 CES/CD
3485 Georgia St
Moody AFB GA 31699-1707

SUBJECT: Environmental Assessment on the Proposed Use of Apalachicola National Forest Helispots by United States Air Force, 41st Rescue Squadron HH-60G Helicopters in Leon, Wakulla, Liberty, and Franklin Counties, Florida

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any kind would take place as a result of the 41 RQS's use of these helispots. The types of activities the 41 RQS proposes mirror the activities currently conducted by the USFS.

3. We request your review and comments on the proposal to use these helispots by 41 RQS HH-60G aircraft, and on the enclosed Environmental Assessment.

4. If you have any questions or need any additional information, please feel free to contact Ms. Johnna L. Thackston at (229) 257-2396, e-mail: johnna.thackston@moody.af.mil.

LOWELL D. KLEPPER, P.E.
Deputy Base Civil Engineer

Enclosure: *Environmental Assessment: Apalachicola National Forest Helicopter Landing Zones, Florida*



DEPARTMENT OF THE AIR FORCE

347th CIVIL ENGINEER SQUADRON (ACC)
MOODY AIR FORCE BASE, GEORGIA

MEMORANDUM FOR Mrs. Gale Thrower
Tribal Historian
Poarch Band of Creek Indians
5811 Jack Springs Road
Atmore AL 36502-5025

FROM: 347 CES/CD
3485 Georgia St
Moody AFB GA 31699-1707

SUBJECT: Environmental Assessment on the Proposed Use of Apalachicola National Forest Helispots by United States Air Force, 41st Rescue Squadron HH-60G Helicopters in Leon, Wakulla, Liberty, and Franklin Counties, Florida

1. Moody Air Force Base (Moody), Georgia (GA), requests consultation and comment on the enclosed Environmental Assessment of the proposed use by the Air Force of thirteen helispots located in the Apalachicola National Forest by HH-60G helicopters. Moody is home to the 41st Rescue Squadron (41 RQS), whose primary mission is to provide worldwide, deployable long-range combat search and rescue of downed aircrews. The 41 RQS uses the HH-60G helicopter in day and night personnel recovery operations, often in hostile environments, during both military conflicts and local civilian emergency situations. The 41 RQS needs remote Landing Zones (LZs) for training in order to maintain operational proficiency. To enhance the training of the 41 RQS, the Air Force proposes to use thirteen existing United States Forest Service helispots located in the Apalachicola National Forest (ANF). One of these helispots is in Leon County, three are in Wakulla County, eight are in Liberty County, and one is in Franklin County, Florida. All thirteen helispots were developed and are currently used by United States Forest Service (USFS) helicopters, typically for law enforcement and fire fighting requirements. For the 41 RQS, these additional LZs would provide navigational diversity and fresh physical training sites necessary for maximizing aircrew flexibility. The attached report details the locations of these helispots and the proposed activities.

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any kind would take place as a result of the 41 RQS's use of these helispots. The types of activities the 41 RQS proposes mirror the activities currently conducted by the USFS.

3. We request your review and comments on the proposal to use these helispots by 41 RQS HH-60G aircraft, and on the enclosed Environmental Assessment.

4. If you have any questions or need any additional information, please feel free to contact Ms. Johnna L. Thackston at (229) 257-2396, e-mail: johnna.thackston@moody.af.mil.

LOWELL D. KLEPPER, P.E.
Deputy Base Civil Engineer

Enclosure: *Environmental Assessment: Apalachicola National Forest Helicopter Landing Zones, Florida*



DEPARTMENT OF THE AIR FORCE

347th CIVIL ENGINEER SQUADRON (ACC)
MOODY AIR FORCE BASE, GEORGIA

MEMORANDUM FOR Tribal HPO
Miccosukee Business Committee
P O Box 440021 – Tamiami Station
Miami FL 33144

FROM: 347 CES/CD
3485 Georgia St
Moody AFB GA 31699-1707

SUBJECT: Environmental Assessment on the Proposed Use of Apalachicola National Forest Helispots by United States Air Force, 41st Rescue Squadron HH-60G Helicopters in Leon, Wakulla, Liberty, and Franklin Counties, Florida

1. Moody Air Force Base (Moody), Georgia (GA), requests consultation and comment on the enclosed Environmental Assessment of the proposed use by the Air Force of thirteen helispots located in the Apalachicola National Forest by HH-60G helicopters. Moody is home to the 41st Rescue Squadron (41 RQS), whose primary mission is to provide worldwide, deployable long-range combat search and rescue of downed aircrews. The 41 RQS uses the HH-60G helicopter in day and night personnel recovery operations, often in hostile environments, during both military conflicts and local civilian emergency situations. The 41 RQS needs remote Landing Zones (LZs) for training in order to maintain operational proficiency. To enhance the training of the 41 RQS, the Air Force proposes to use thirteen existing United States Forest Service helispots located in the Apalachicola National Forest (ANF). One of these helispots is in Leon County, three are in Wakulla County, eight are in Liberty County, and one is in Franklin County, Florida. All thirteen helispots were developed and are currently used by United States Forest Service (USFS) helicopters, typically for law enforcement and fire fighting requirements. For the 41 RQS, these additional LZs would provide navigational diversity and fresh physical training sites necessary for maximizing aircrew flexibility. The attached report details the locations of these helispots and the proposed activities.

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any kind would take place as a result of the 41 RQS's use of these helispots. The types of activities the 41 RQS proposes mirror the activities currently conducted by the USFS.

3. We request your review and comments on the proposal to use these helispots by 41 RQS HH-60G aircraft, and on the enclosed Environmental Assessment.

4. If you have any questions or need any additional information, please feel free to contact Ms. Johnna L. Thackston at (229) 257-2396, e-mail: johnna.thackston@moody.af.mil.

LOWELL D. KLEPPER, P.E.
Deputy Base Civil Engineer

Enclosure: *Environmental Assessment: Apalachicola National Forest Helicopter Landing Zones, Florida*



DEPARTMENT OF THE AIR FORCE

347th CIVIL ENGINEER SQUADRON (ACC)
MOODY AIR FORCE BASE, GEORGIA

MEMORANDUM FOR Mr. Roland Poncho
Chairperson
Alabama-Coushatta Tribe of Texas
Route 3 Box 640
Livingston TX 77351

FROM: 347 CES/CD
3485 Georgia St
Moody AFB GA 31699-1707

SUBJECT: Environmental Assessment on the Proposed Use of Apalachicola National Forest Helispots by United States Air Force, 41st Rescue Squadron HH-60G Helicopters in Leon, Wakulla, Liberty, and Franklin Counties, Florida

1. Moody Air Force Base (Moody), Georgia (GA), requests consultation and comment on the enclosed Environmental Assessment of the proposed use by the Air Force of thirteen helispots located in the Apalachicola National Forest for use by HH-60G helicopters. Moody is home to the 41st Rescue Squadron (41 RQS), whose primary mission is to provide worldwide, deployable long-range combat search and rescue of downed aircrews. The 41 RQS uses the HH-60G helicopter in day and night personnel recovery operations, often in hostile environments, during both military conflicts and local civilian emergency situations. The 41 RQS needs remote Landing Zones (LZs) for training in order to maintain operational proficiency. To enhance the training of the 41 RQS, the Air Force proposes to use thirteen existing United States Forest Service helispots located in the Apalachicola National Forest (ANF). One of these helispots is in Leon County, three are in Wakulla County, eight are in Liberty County, and one is in Franklin County, Florida. All thirteen helispots were developed and are currently used by United States Forest Service (USFS) helicopters, typically for law enforcement and fire fighting requirements. For the 41 RQS, these additional LZs would provide navigational diversity and fresh physical training sites necessary for maximizing aircrew flexibility. The attached report details the locations of these helispots, the proposed activities, and the findings of the cultural resources investigation.

2. The 41 RQS proposes training in the ANF twice per week. Flying would be between 10:00 a.m. and 10:00 p.m. central time, typically Tuesday through Thursday, with permission granted and cleared through USFS initial attack dispatcher. The helispots would be used for helicopter approaches, landings, take-offs, and hovering operations during both day and night. Actual time on ANF land would average one hour. Exercises would consist of flying to one or more helispots, and using rappel ropes, rope ladders and rescue hoists. The helicopters would operate at 500 feet above ground level or less. During sustained hover operations the maximum altitude would be 100' above the helispot. Anyone put on the ground would be picked up within 10 minutes. The helispots would be marked with green chemical light sticks during night operations, which would be removed from the helispots at the completion of each operation. All helicopter fueling and maintenance operations would occur at Moody AFB. No refueling

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would occur at the helispots or in-flight. No construction, soil disturbance, or site alteration of any kind would take place as a result of the 41 RQS's use of these helispots. The types of activities the 41 RQS proposes mirror the activities currently conducted by the USFS, and it is anticipated that no adverse impacts to significant cultural resources would occur as a result of the 41 RQS's proposed activities.

3. We request your review and comments on the proposal to use these helispots by 41 RQS HH-60G aircraft, and on the enclosed Environmental Assessment.

4. If you have any questions or need any additional information, please feel free to contact Ms. Johnna L. Thackston at (229) 257-2396, e-mail: johnna.thackston@moody.af.mil.

LOWELL D. KLEPPER, P.E.
Deputy Base Civil Engineer

Enclosure: *Environmental Assessment: Apalachicola National Forest Helicopter Landing Zones, Florida*



DEPARTMENT OF THE AIR FORCE

347th CIVIL ENGINEER SQUADRON (ACC)
MOODY AIR FORCE BASE, GEORGIA

MEMORANDUM FOR Mr. Bobby C. Billie
c/o Shannon Larsen
9041 139 Court
Live Oak FL 32064-6345

FROM: 347 CES/CD
3485 Georgia St
Moody AFB GA 31699-1707

SUBJECT: Environmental Assessment on the Proposed Use of Apalachicola National Forest Helispots by United States Air Force, 41st Rescue Squadron HH-60G Helicopters in Leon, Wakulla, Liberty, and Franklin Counties, Florida

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LOWELL D. KLEPPER, P.E.
Deputy Base Civil Engineer

Enclosure: *Environmental Assessment: Apalachicola National Forest Helicopter Landing Zones, Florida*



DEPARTMENT OF THE AIR FORCE

347th CIVIL ENGINEER SQUADRON (ACC)
MOODY AIR FORCE BASE, GEORGIA

MEMORANDUM FOR Mr. John Thomas
Chairman
Florida Tribe of Eastern Creek Indians
P O Box 3028
Bruce FL 32455

FROM: 347 CES/CD
3485 Georgia St
Moody AFB GA 31699-1707

SUBJECT: Environmental Assessment on the Proposed Use of Apalachicola National Forest Helispots by United States Air Force, 41st Rescue Squadron HH-60G Helicopters in Leon, Wakulla, Liberty, and Franklin Counties, Florida

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LOWELL D. KLEPPER, P.E.
Deputy Base Civil Engineer

Enclosure: *Environmental Assessment: Apalachicola National Forest Helicopter Landing Zones, Florida*



DEPARTMENT OF THE AIR FORCE

347th CIVIL ENGINEER SQUADRON (ACC)
MOODY AIR FORCE BASE, GEORGIA

MEMORANDUM FOR Mr. Perry Beaver
Principal Chief
Muscogee (Creek) Nation
P O Box 580
Okmulgee OK 74447

FROM: 347 CES/CD
3485 Georgia St
Moody AFB GA 31699-1707

SUBJECT: Environmental Assessment on the Proposed Use of Apalachicola National Forest Helispots by United States Air Force, 41st Rescue Squadron HH-60G Helicopters in Leon, Wakulla, Liberty, and Franklin Counties, Florida

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LOWELL D. KLEPPER, P.E.
Deputy Base Civil Engineer

Enclosure: *Environmental Assessment: Apalachicola National Forest Helicopter Landing Zones, Florida*



DEPARTMENT OF THE AIR FORCE

347th CIVIL ENGINEER SQUADRON (ACC)
MOODY AIR FORCE BASE, GEORGIA

MEMORANDUM FOR Ms. Emma Spain
THPO
Seminole Nation of Oklahoma
P O Box 1498
Wewoka OK 74884

FROM: 347 CES/CD
3485 Georgia St
Moody AFB GA 31699-1707

SUBJECT: Environmental Assessment on the Proposed Use of Apalachicola National Forest Helispots by United States Air Force, 41st Rescue Squadron HH-60G Helicopters in Leon, Wakulla, Liberty, and Franklin Counties, Florida

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LOWELL D. KLEPPER, P.E.
Deputy Base Civil Engineer

Enclosure: *Environmental Assessment: Apalachicola National Forest Helicopter Landing Zones, Florida*



DEPARTMENT OF THE AIR FORCE

347th CIVIL ENGINEER SQUADRON (ACC)
MOODY AIR FORCE BASE, GEORGIA

MEMORANDUM FOR Mr. Lowell Wesley, MEKKO
Kialegee Tribal Town of the Muscogee (Creek) Nation
P O Box 332
Wetumka OK 74883

FROM: 347 CES/CD
3485 Georgia St
Moody AFB GA 31699-1707

SUBJECT: Environmental Assessment on the Proposed Use of Apalachicola National Forest Helispots by United States Air Force, 41st Rescue Squadron HH-60G Helicopters in Leon, Wakulla, Liberty, and Franklin Counties, Florida

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LOWELL D. KLEPPER, P.E.
Deputy Base Civil Engineer

Enclosure: *Environmental Assessment: Apalachicola National Forest Helicopter Landing Zones, Florida*

Florida State Clearinghouse



DEPARTMENT OF THE AIR FORCE

347th CIVIL ENGINEER SQUADRON (ACC)
MOODY AIR FORCE BASE, GEORGIA

MEMORANDUM FOR Florida State Clearinghouse
Attn: Ms. Cherie Trainor
2555 Shumard Oak Boulevard
Tallahassee FL 32399-2100

SEP 17 2003

FROM: 347 CES/CEV
3485 Georgia Street
Moody AFB GA 31699-1707

SUBJECT: Environmental Documents for Review and Comment

1. In accordance with 32 Code of Federal Regulations (CFR) 989, *The Environmental Impact Analysis Process*, a copy of the draft Finding of No Significant Impact (FONSI) and Environmental Assessment (EA) for the proposed project, "Apalachicola National Forest Helicopter Landing Zones," is provided for your review and comment.

2. If you need any further information please contact Mr. Gregory Lee, (229) 257-5881, e-mail: gregory.lee@moody.af.mil. Thank you for your assistance.

JOHN B. MITCHELL
Environmental Flight Chief

Attachment:
FONSI and EA

SAI# FL200309244021C

Department of the Air Force - Moody Air Force Base -
Environmental Assessment and FONSI - Apalachicola National
Forest Helicopter Landing Zones - Franklin, Leon, Liberty, and
Wakulla Counties, Florida.

The above-referenced project was received by the Florida State Clearinghouse on 9/22/03, and has been forwarded to the appropriate reviewing agencies. The clearance letter and agency comments will be forwarded to you no later than 11/21/03, unless you are otherwise notified. Please refer to the State Application Identifier (SAI) number in all written correspondence with the Florida State Clearinghouse regarding this project. If you have any questions, please contact the Clearinghouse staff at (850) 245-2161.



DEPARTMENT OF THE AIR FORCE
347TH CIVIL ENGINEER SQUADRON (AFSOC)
MOODY AIR FORCE BASE, GEORGIA

DEC 02 2003

MEMORANDUM FOR RECORD

FROM: 347 CES/CEVA

SUBJECT: Comments from Florida State Clearinghouse Consultation, Apalachicola National Forest (ANF) Helicopter Landing Zones Environmental Assessment (EA)

1. The draft EA and Finding of No Significant Impact was transmitted to the Florida State Clearinghouse on 17 September 2003. A response letter from the Florida State Clearinghouse was received on 26 November 2003 (Attachment 1).
2. Comments were obtained from a search of closed projects on the Florida State Clearinghouse website conducted on 2 December 2003. A printed copy of these unofficial comments is attached (Attachment 1).
3. The Florida Department of Environmental Protection requested verification for the statement in Section 3.3 of the EA that there are no jurisdictional wetlands located on the proposed helispots. Moody AFB Response: This statement was based on digital wetland maps provided by ANF personnel, reviews of National Wetland Inventory maps from the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, and field verification by Moody AFB personnel with experience in wetland delineation. No further verification for this statement is required.
4. The Northwest Florida Water Management District expressed concerns that the proposed action could impact surface waters within the Apalachicola River and Bay watershed. Moody AFB Response: Potential impacts to surface and ground water within the Apalachicola River and Bay watershed were adequately addressed in the EA. Because all helicopter fueling and maintenance operations associated with the proposed action would occur at Moody AFB, the only potential impact would be the accidental leak or spill of petroleum products. Because Moody AFB personnel are trained in spill response measures and because of the extensive vegetated buffer (>650 feet) between the helispots and the nearest bodies of water, this potential impact was deemed to be nonsignificant.

GREGORY W. LEE
Chief, Analysis, Plans, and Programs Element
Moody AFB Environmental Flight

Attachment



Department of Environmental Protection

Jeb Bush
Governor

Marjory Stoneman Douglas Building
3900 Commonwealth Boulevard
Tallahassee, Florida 32399-3000

David B. Struhs
Secretary

November 26, 2003

Mr. Gregory Lee
U.S. Department of the Air Force
347TH Civil Engineer Squadron (ACC)
3485 Georgia Street
Moody Air Force Base, GA 31699-1707

RE: Department of the Air Force – Moody Air Force Base – Environmental
Assessment and FONSI – Apalachicola National Forest Helicopter Landing
Zones – Franklin, Liberty, Leon, and Wakulla Counties, Florida
SAI: FL200309244021C

Dear Mr. Lee:

The Florida State Clearinghouse, pursuant to Presidential Executive Order 12372, Gubernatorial Executive Order 95-359, the Coastal Zone Management Act, 16 U.S.C §1451-1464, as amended, and the National Environmental Policy Act, 42 U.S.C. § 4321, 4331-4335, 4341-4347, as amended, has coordinated the review the above-referenced Environmental Assessment and FONSI.

The Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) notes that Section 3.3 Water Resources states there are no jurisdictional wetlands located on any helispots. However, wetlands classified as palustrine forested wetlands are adjacent to seven helispots. It is advised that a binding wetland jurisdiction declaratory statement be required to confirm this statement. For further information please contact Tom Franklin at 850-488-3704. Further, it appears the landing zones will not require stormwater treatment per Rule 62-25.020(4), F.A.C. Deviations from the proposal may require stormwater permits. For further information please contact Michael Hogan at 850-488-3704.

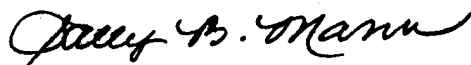
The Northwest Florida Water Management District (NFWFMD) staff has concerns regarding the potential impacts of operations to surface waters within the Apalachicola River and Bay watershed, because the river and bay are the highest ranked SWIM priority waterbodies in the Northwest District area. Given the large area of operations and number of available sites, staff recommends that sensitive areas be avoided. Example: sites H4, H5, H9, H28, and H22 appear to be in close proximity to streams, rivers or lakes, and could be eliminated as potential landing sites without reducing the training opportunities significantly. See enclosed NFWFMD comments for further details.

Mr. Gregory Lee
SAI FL200309244021C
Page 2

The referenced EA provides sufficient information for the state to evaluate the project's consistency with the Florida Coastal Management Program (FCMP), at this stage of project planning. The state has therefore determined that, at this stage, the proposed project is consistent with the FCMP. Because a federal consistency determination that addresses the project's compliance with the FCMP was not provided, the documents provided do not fully address the requirements of the CZMA and 15 CFR 930, Subpart C. Future documents prepared for this project and/or other proposed projects should comply with the CZMA and 15 CFR 930.39. The DEP Office of Intergovernmental Programs is available to assist you with this requirement, if needed.

Thank you for the opportunity to review this project. If you have any questions regarding this letter, please contact Ms. Lindy McDowell at (850) 245-2163.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Sally B. Mann". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first letters of the first and last names being capitalized and prominent.

Sally B. Mann, Director
Office of Intergovernmental Programs

SBM/lbm

Enclosures

CC: Duncan Cairns, NFWFMD



Florida

Department of Environmental Protection

"More Protection, Less Process"



Categories

[DEP Home](#) | [Contact DEP](#) | [Search](#) | [DEP Site Map](#)

Project Information	
Project:	FL200309244021C
Comments Due:	October 22, 2003
Letter Due:	November 21, 2003
Description:	DEPARTMENT OF THE AIR FORCE - MOODY AIR FORCE BASE - ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT AND FONSI - APALACHICOLA NATIONAL FOREST HELICOPTER LANDING ZONES - FRANKLIN, LEON, LIBERTY, AND WAKULLA COUNTIES, FLORIDA.
Keywords:	USAF - MOODY AFB, APALACHICOLA FOREST HELICOPTER LANDING ZONES
CFDA #:	12.200
Agency Comments:	
WAKULLA - WAKULLA COUNTY	
No Comment	
APALACHEE RPC - APALACHEE REGIONAL PLANNING COUNCIL	
No Final Comments Received	
FRANKLIN -	
No Comment	
LEON - LEON COUNTY	
No Comment	
LIBERTY -	
No Comment	
ENVIRONMENTAL POLICY UNIT - OFFICE OF POLICY AND BUDGET, ENVIRONMENTAL POLICY UNIT	
No Comment	
COMMUNITY AFFAIRS - FLORIDA DEPARTMENT OF COMMUNITY AFFAIRS	
Released Without Comment	
FISH and WILDLIFE COMMISSION - FLORIDA FISH AND WILDLIFE CONSERVATION COMMISSION	
No comment by Brian Barnett on 10/27/03.	
STATE - FLORIDA DEPARTMENT OF STATE	
No Final Comments Received	
TRANSPORTATION - FLORIDA DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION	
No Comment/Consistent per FDOT Aviation Office	
ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION - FLORIDA DEPARTMENT OF ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION	
Section 3.3 Water Resources indicates there are no jurisdictional wetlands located on any helispots. A binding wetland jurisdiction declaratory statement should be required to confirm this statement. For further information please contact Tom Franklin at 850-488-3704. It appears the landing zones will not require stormwater treatment per Rule 62-25.020(4), F.A.C. Deviations from the proposal may require stormwater permits. For further information please contact Michael Hogan at 850-488-3704.	
NORTHWEST FLORIDA WMD - NORTHWEST FLORIDA WATER MANAGEMENT DISTRICT	
NWFWM staff has concerns regarding the potential impacts of operations to surface waters within the Apalachicola River	

and Bay watershed - the river and bay are the highest ranked SWIM priority waterbodies in the Northwest District area. Given the large area of operations and number of available sites, staff recommends that sensitive areas be avoided. Example: sites H4, H5, H9, H28, and H22 appear to be in close proximity to streams, rivers or lakes, and could be eliminated as potential landing sites without reducing the training opportunities significantly.

For more information please contact the Clearinghouse Office at:

AGENCY CONTACT AND COORDINATOR (SCH)
3900 COMMONWEALTH BOULEVARD MS-47
TALLAHASSEE, FLORIDA 32399-3000
TELEPHONE: (850) 245-2161
FAX: (850) 245-2190

Visit the [Clearinghouse Home Page](#) to query other projects.

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COUNTY: ALL

DATE: 9/22/2003

COMMENTS DUE DATE: 10/22/2003

CLEARANCE DUE DATE: 11/21/2003

SAI#: FL200309244021C

MESSAGE:

REFERENCE SAI # FL200211263110C

STATE AGENCIES	WATER MNGMNT. DISTRICTS	OPB POLICY UNIT	RPCS & LOC GOVS
COMMUNITY AFFAIRS	NORTHWEST FLORIDA WMD	ENVIRONMENTAL POLICY UNIT	
ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION			
FISH and WILDLIFE COMMISSION			
STATE			
X TRANSPORTATION			

The attached document requires a Coastal Zone Management Act/Florida Coastal Management Program consistency evaluation and is categorized as one of the following:

Federal Assistance to State or Local Government (15 CFR 930, Subpart F).

Agencies are required to evaluate the consistency of the activity.

X Direct Federal Activity (15 CFR 930, Subpart C). Federal Agencies are required to furnish a consistency determination for the State's concurrence or objection.

Outer Continental Shelf Exploration, Development or Production Activities (15 CFR 930, Subpart E). Operators are required to provide a consistency certification for state concurrence/objection.

Federal Licensing or Permitting Activity (15 CFR 930, Subpart D). Such projects will only be evaluated for consistency when there is not an analogous state license or permit.

Project Description:

DEPARTMENT OF THE AIR FORCE - MOODY AIR FORCE BASE - ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT AND FONSI - APALACHICOLA NATIONAL FOREST HELICOPTER LANDING ZONES - FRANKLIN, LEON, LIBERTY, AND WAKULLA COUNTIES, FLORIDA.

To: Florida State Clearinghouse

AGENCY CONTACT AND COORDINATOR (SCH)
3900 COMMONWEALTH BOULEVARD MS-47
TALLAHASSEE, FLORIDA 32399-3000
TELEPHONE: (850) 245-2161
FAX: (850) 245-2190

EO. 12372/NEPA Federal Consistency

☐ No Comment

☐ Comment Attached

☐ Not Applicable

☒ No Comment/Consistent

☐ Consistent/Comments Attached

☐ Inconsistent/Comments Attached

☐ Not Applicable

From:

Division/Bureau:

Reviewer:

Date:

FDOT / AVIATION OFFICE
RICHARD C. NULL
10/28/07

NORTHWEST FLORIDA WATER MANAGEMENT DISTRICT

MEMORANDUM

TO: Duncan Cairns - Chief, Bureau of Environmental Management
and Resource Planning

FROM: Dan Tonsmeire - Apalachicola SWIM Program Coordinator
David Clayton - Environmental Scientist

DATE: October 14, 2003

SUBJECT: Florida State Clearinghouse - SAI #: FL200309244021C - Moody Air Force Base
EA for Helicopter Aircrew Training in Apalachicola National Forest

The proposed project lies within the watershed of Apalachicola River and Bay, the highest ranked SWIM priority waterbodies in the northwest District. In 1987, the Florida Legislature, by passage of the SWIM Act, mandated that the District protect and preserve the water quality and aquatic habitat of the surface waters of the District. In addition, Apalachicola Bay has been recognized as one of the most productive estuarine systems in the state, and as such, has received numerous protective designations (e.g., Class II Water, Outstanding Florida Water, Aquatic Preserve, National Estuarine Research Reserve, and International Biosphere Reserve). Activities that adversely impact aquatic habitat and/or water quality should be avoided.

The proposed project would use thirteen (13) different landing zones in the Apalachicola National Forest (ANF) to train aircrew in search and rescue missions. These sites are in addition to other sites located in the Moody Air Force Base area on private lands. The missions would utilize one or two landing spots approximately one hour, twice a week for helicopter approaches, landings, take-offs, and hovering operations. The proposed landing zones are currently used as landing areas for fire crews by the ANF, hence no additional clearing, construction, soil disturbance, or site alteration is proposed. A special Use Permit would be required from the ANF for the operations. The EA resulted in a Findings of No Significant Impacts.

District staff has concerns regarding the potential impacts to water resources during operations that are proximate to surface waters. While the operations would appear to be benign, accidents or unintended discharges could occur and impact water bodies of a sensitive nature. Given the large area of operations and number of available sites, it seems feasible to use the sites away from the more remote and sensitive areas. For example, Site H4, H5, H9, H28, and H22 appear to be in close proximity to streams, rivers or lakes. These sites and other sites in a similarly close proximity to surface water or wetlands could be eliminated as potential landing sites and provide the remaining landing sites without reducing the training opportunities significantly. A detailed identification (LAT/LONG position) or survey of the surroundings of each site would help reviewers to provide positive input on which sites would be most appropriate. Particularly sensitive areas such as those in or proximate to Wilderness Areas should be avoided.

COUNTY: ALL

DATE: 9/22/2003

COMMENTS DUE DATE: 10/22/2003

CLEARANCE DUE DATE: 11/21/2003

SAI#: FL200309244021C

MESSAGE:

REFERENCE SAI # FL200211263110C

STATE AGENCIES	WATER MNGMNT. DISTRICTS	OPB POLICY UNIT	RPCS & LOC GOVS
COMMUNITY AFFAIRS	X NORTHWEST FLORIDA WMD	ENVIRONMENTAL POLICY UNIT	
ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION			
FISH and WILDLIFE COMMISSION			
STATE			
TRANSPORTATION			

The attached document requires a Coastal Zone Management Act/Florida Coastal Management Program consistency evaluation and is categorized as one of the following:

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- X Direct Federal Activity (15 CFR 930, Subpart C). Federal Agencies are required to furnish a consistency determination for the State's concurrence or objection.
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- Federal Licensing or Permitting Activity (15 CFR 930, Subpart D). Such projects will only be evaluated for consistency when there is not an analogous state license or permit.

Project Description:

DEPARTMENT OF THE AIR FORCE - MOODY AIR FORCE BASE - ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT AND FONSI - APALACHICOLA NATIONAL FOREST HELICOPTER LANDING ZONES - FRANKLIN, LEON, LIBERTY, AND WAKULLA COUNTIES, FLORIDA.

To: Florida State Clearinghouse

AGENCY CONTACT AND COORDINATOR (SCH)
3900 COMMONWEALTH BOULEVARD MS-47
TALLAHASSEE, FLORIDA 32399-3000
TELEPHONE: (850) 245-2161
FAX: (850) 245-2190

EO. 12372/NEPA Federal Consistency

- ☐ No Comment
- ☒ Comment Attached
- ☐ Not Applicable
- ☐ No Comment/Consistent
- ☐ Consistent/Comments Attached
- ☐ Inconsistent/Comments Attached
- ☐ Not Applicable

COMMENTS ATTACHED

From:

NWFWMD
Division/Bureau: Resource Management Div.
Reviewer: Duncan J. Cairns
Date: 15 OCTOBER 03
Date:

**NORTHWEST FLORIDA WATER MANAGEMENT DISTRICT
Project Review Form**

TO: State Clearinghouse
Department of Environmental Protection
3900 Commonwealth Boulevard, MS 47
Tallahassee, FL 32399-3000

RECEIVED

OCT 17 2003

OIP/OLGA

DATE: October 15, 2003

SUBJECT: Project Review: Intergovernmental Coordination
Title: Department of the Air Force-Moody Air Force Base-Environmental
Assessment and Fonsi-Apalachicola National Forest Helicopter
Landing Zones-Franklin, Leon, Liberty, and Wakulla Counties, FL
SAI #: FL200309244021C

The District has reviewed the subject application and attachments in accordance with its responsibilities and authority under the provisions of Chapter 373, Florida Statutes. As a result review, the District has the following responses:

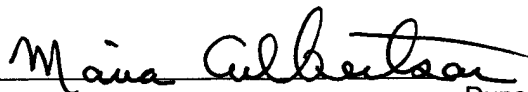
ACTION

- ☐ No Comment.
- ☐ Supports the project.
- ☐ Objects to the project; explanation attached.
- ☐ Has no objection to the project; explanation optional.
- ☐ Cannot evaluate the project; explanation attached.
- ☐ Project requires a permit from the District under_____.

DEGREE OF REVIEW

- ☒ Documentation was reviewed.
- ☐ Field investigation was performed.
- ☐ Discussed and/or contacted appropriate office about project.
- ☐ Additional documentation/research is required.
- ☒ Comments attached.

SIGNED



Duncan Jay Cairns
Chief, Bur. Env. & Res. Plng.

COUNTY: ALL

DATE: 9/22/2003

COMMENTS DUE DATE: 10/22/2003

CLEARANCE DUE DATE: 11/21/2003

SAI#: FL200309244021C

MESSAGE:

REFERENCE SAI # FL200211263110C

STATE AGENCIES	WATER MNGMNT. DISTRICTS	OPB POLICY UNIT	RPCS & LOC GOVS
COMMUNITY AFFAIRS	NORTHWEST FLORIDA WMD	X ENVIRONMENTAL POLICY UNIT	
ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION			
FISH and WILDLIFE COMMISSION			
STATE			
TRANSPORTATION			

The attached document requires a Coastal Zone Management Act/Florida Coastal Management Program consistency evaluation and is categorized as one of the following:

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Project Description:

DEPARTMENT OF THE AIR FORCE - MOODY AIR FORCE BASE - ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT AND FONSI - APALACHICOLA NATIONAL FOREST HELICOPTER LANDING ZONES - FRANKLIN, LEON, LIBERTY, AND WAKULLA COUNTIES, FLORIDA.

To: Florida State Clearinghouse

AGENCY CONTACT AND COORDINATOR (SCH)
3900 COMMONWEALTH BOULEVARD MS-47
TALLAHASSEE, FLORIDA 32399-3000
TELEPHONE: (850) 245-2161
FAX: (850) 245-2190

EO. 12372/NEPA Federal Consistency

- | | |
|--|---|
| ☒ No Comment | ☐ No Comment/Consistent |
| ☐ Comment Attached | ☐ Consistent/Comments Attached |
| ☐ Not Applicable | ☐ Inconsistent/Comments Attached |
| | ☐ Not Applicable |

From:

Division/Bureau: *OPB. Env. Policy*

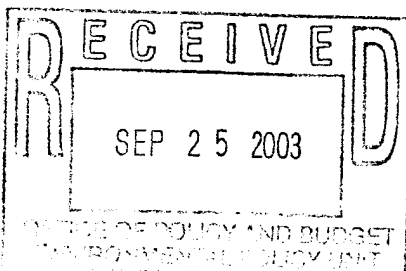
Reviewer: *M. L. Annis*

Date: *10/1/03*

RECEIVED

OCT 03 2003

CIP/OLGA



COUNTY: ALL

DATE: 9/22/2003

COMMENTS DUE DATE: 10/22/2003

CLEARANCE DUE DATE: 11/21/2003

SAI#: FL200309244021C

MESSAGE:

REFERENCE SAI # FL200211263110C

STATE AGENCIES	WATER MNGMNT. DISTRICTS	OPB POLICY UNIT	RPCS & LOC GOVS
COMMUNITY AFFAIRS	NORTHWEST FLORIDA WMD	ENVIRONMENTAL POLICY UNIT	
ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION			
X FISH and WILDLIFE COMMISSION			
STATE			
TRANSPORTATION			

The attached document requires a Coastal Zone Management Act/Florida Coastal Management Program consistency evaluation and is categorized as one of the following:

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- X Direct Federal Activity (15 CFR 930, Subpart C). Federal Agencies are required to furnish a consistency determination for the State's concurrence or objection.
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Project Description:

DEPARTMENT OF THE AIR FORCE - MOODY AIR FORCE BASE - ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT AND FONSI - APALACHICOLA NATIONAL FOREST HELICOPTER LANDING ZONES - FRANKLIN, LEON, LIBERTY, AND WAKULLA COUNTIES, FLORIDA.

To: Florida State Clearinghouse

AGENCY CONTACT AND COORDINATOR (SCH)
3900 COMMONWEALTH BOULEVARD MS-47
TALLAHASSEE, FLORIDA 32399-3000
TELEPHONE: (850) 245-2161
FAX: (850) 245-2190

EO. 12372/NEPA Federal Consistency

- | | |
|--|---|
| ☒ No Comment | ☒ No Comment/Consistent |
| ☐ Comment Attached | ☐ Consistent/Comments Attached |
| ☐ Not Applicable | ☐ Inconsistent/Comments Attached |
| | ☐ Not Applicable |

From:

Division/Bureau: ENVIRONMENTAL SERVICES
Reviewer: BRIAN BARNETT
Date: 10/27/03

RECEIVED BY FWC

SEP 26 2003

RECEIVED

OCT 30 2003

OIP/OLGA

OFFICE OF
ENVIRONMENTAL SERVICES

APPENDIX E

PUBLIC COMMENTS AND RESPONSE TO COMMENTS

Comment from Jane Brewer

9-4-03

Throughout history the Armed Forces have made it possible for Americans to have Freedom.

Our Armed Forces have made it possible for us to:

- Agree or disagree with Moody AFB being allowed to use our National Forest in helicopter rescue missions training.
- practice any religion we choose
- to speak our mind through paper, protest or media.
- vote for the representatives of our country.
- And above all they protect our people and land.

Due to the men & women who
served in the Armed Forces both
past and present we do not:

Live under a King's rule
Speak German, Russian or
Japanese as our native tongue.
Live under a dictatorship or
Communist government.

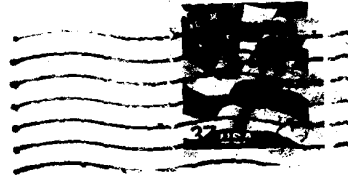
Today AFB are not wanting to destroy
our forest. They need to be able
to train in any and all environments
for rescue missions.

How can we refuse them a special
permit that one day may give them
the skill to save a life or lives.

Sincerely, Jane Brewer
Crawfordville, FL.



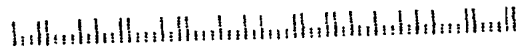
Henry & Jane Brewer
98 Fontaine Cr.
Crawfordville, FL 32327-1041



SEP 08 2003

GARY HEGG
57 TAFF DR.
Crawfordville, FL.
32327

32327+2138



Comment from WildLaw



**DEPARTMENT OF THE AIR FORCE
347TH CIVIL ENGINEER SQUADRON (AFSOC)
MOODY AIR FORCE BASE, GEORGIA**

MEMORANDUM FOR RECORD

DEC 02 2003

FROM: 347 CES/CEVA

SUBJECT: Response to Comments from WildLaw, Apalachicola National Forest (ANF)
Helicopter Landing Zones Environmental Assessment (EA)

1. WildLaw, a non-profit environmental law firm, provided comments on the draft EA via e-mail to Mr. George Hemingway, District Ranger, ANF, on 17 September 2003 (Attachment). These comments were forwarded to Moody AFB by Mr. Gary Hegg, ANF, on 25 September 2003.
2. WildLaw expressed concerns over the range of alternatives evaluated in the draft EA. Moody AFB Response: Moody AFB considered a reasonable range of alternatives during the preparation of the EA. However, since these alternatives were eliminated during application of the minimum screening criteria, they were not documented in the EA. Therefore, the final EA has been revised to document the consideration and rejection of two additional alternatives: the use of all existing helispots on the ANF and the limited use of the 13 suitable helispots.
3. WildLaw expressed concerns that the proposed action would have negative impacts to wilderness areas, specifically the Bradwell Bay Wilderness Area. Moody AFB Response: Moody AFB has revised Section 3.9, Affected Environment: Congressionally Designated Areas, and Section 4.8, Environmental Consequences: Congressionally Designated Areas, to clarify the contention of the Air Force that the proposed action would not have a significant impact on wilderness areas in the ANF.
4. WildLaw expressed concerns that the Forest Service does not have the authority to permit the request by the Air Force to implement the proposed action on the ANF. Moody AFB Response: The question of whether the Forest Service has the authority to permit military activities on National Forests is outside the scope and context of the EA. The purpose of the EA is to document the expected environmental consequences of the proposed action assuming approval by the Forest Service.

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Gregory W. Lee", is positioned above the typed name.

GREGORY W. LEE
Chief, Analysis, Plans, and Programs Element
Moody AFB Environmental Flight

Attachment

Combat Rescue – That Others May Live

September 17, 2003

George Hemingway, District Ranger
Apalachicola National Forest
Apalachicola Ranger District
P.O. Box 579
Highway 20
Bristol, FL 32321

E-mail: comments-southern-florida-apalachicola@fs.fed.us

Via E-mail

Re: Moody Airbase Special Use: Draft Environmental Assessment, Apalachicola National Forest Helicopter Landing Zones

Dear District Ranger Hemingway:

These scoping comments are on your above proposal, and they are submitted on behalf of Wild South, a non-profit organization working on public lands protection issues throughout the South. This Draft EA appears to be well-written and objective. However, Wild South still has some concerns about the EA and this proposal in general.

I. NEPA: RANGE OF ALTERNATIVES

NEPA requires an agency to consider a reasonable range of alternatives. Having a no action alternative (only because you are required to) and then only one action alternative is not NEPA compliance. The Council on Environmental Quality (CEQ) describes the alternatives section is described as "the heart of the environmental impact statement." 40 C.F.R. § 1502.14. The CEQ describes what shall be included in this section:

"(a) rigorously explore and objectively evaluate all reasonable alternatives, and for alternatives which were eliminated from detailed study, briefly discuss the reasons for their having been eliminated.

"(b) devote substantial treatment to each alternative considered in detail including the proposed action so that reviewers may evaluate their comparative merits.

"(c) include reasonable alternatives not within the jurisdiction of the lead agency.

“(d) include the alternative of no action.

“(e) identify the agency’s preferred alternative or alternatives, if one or more exists, in the draft statement and identify such alternative in the final statement unless another law prohibits the expression of such a preference.

“(f) include appropriate mitigation measures not already included in the proposed action or alternatives.”

40 CFR §1502.14.

In cases where a timber sale EA’s range of alternatives have been upheld, the Forest Service had identified four or five alternatives, or for full-blown EISes, as many as 17 alternatives have been used. See *Resources Limited v. Robertson*, 8 F. 3d 1394 (9th Cir. 1993); there the court stated:

“The Forest Service is charged to ‘rigorously explore and objectively evaluate all reasonable alternatives, and for alternatives which were eliminated from detailed study, briefly discuss the reasons for their having been eliminated.’ 40 C.F.R. § 1502.14(a). See also 36 C.F.R. § 219.12(f)(1) (‘Alternatives shall be distributed between the minimum resource potential and the maximum resource potential to reflect to the extent practicable the full range of major commodity and environmental resource uses and values that could be produced from the forest. Alternatives shall reflect a range of resource outputs and expenditure levels.’).

“The ‘existence of a viable but unexamined alternative renders an environmental impact statement inadequate.’ *Mumma*, 956 F. 2d at 1519 (citation omitted). An agency’s consideration of alternatives is adequate ‘if it considers an appropriate range of alternatives, even if it does not consider every available alternative.’ *Headwaters, Inc. v. Bureau of Land Management*, 914 F. 2d 1174, 1180-81 (9th Cir. 1990).

* * *

“‘The Forest Service [i]s entitled to identify some parameters and criteria -- related to Plan standards -- for generating alternatives to which it would devote serious consideration. Without such criteria, an agency could generate countless alternatives.’ *Mumma*, 956 F. 2d at 1522. Here the Forest Service did not, as in *California v. Block*, 690 F. 2d 753, 767 (9th Cir. 1982), ‘consider only those alternatives with [the same] end result.’ Of the 17 alternatives considered, five were based on timber harvest levels more than 18 percent lower than existing levels. One alternative was based on a projected average ASQ of 51 mmbf/year.”

The “range” of alternatives in this proposal flies in the face of these authorities. Unlike in *Resources Limited*, the Navy did not consider a broad range of alternatives with differing results; indeed, you did not consider a “range” of alternatives at all. As stated in *Idaho Conservation*

League v. Mumma, 956 F. 2d 1508 (9th Cir. 1992), the existence of a single viable but unexamined alternative renders an environmental impact analysis inadequate.

The all-or-nothing approach to alternatives in this Draft EA is not NEPA compliance.

In the Final EA, you should analyze other alternatives that do would not utilize H22, H28, H4 and H5, or a combination of these helispots. Although the use of these spots may be infrequent, the close proximity of H22 to Camel Lake Camp Ground, Camel Lake Recreation Area and the Florida National Scenic Trail, the close proximity of H28 to Cliff Lake Hunt Camp, and the close proximity of H4 and H5 to the Bradwell Bay Wilderness Area means these areas will be impacted by noise. Could Moody Air Force Base's training requirements be met with 8 or 10, instead of 12, landing areas?

II. IMPACTS TO WILDERNESS AREAS

Although the EA states that helicopters will remain 2,000 feet above the ground, at least Bradwell Bay Wilderness Area will certainly be impacted by noise. The Wilderness Act of 1964, 16 U.S.C. § 1131 *et seq.*, established the National Wilderness Preservation System, which is composed of congressionally designated "wilderness areas." The purpose of these wilderness areas, among other things, includes "the preservation of their wilderness character." 16 U.S.C. § 1131(a). "An area of wilderness is further defined to mean an area of undeveloped Federal land... which is protected and managed so as to preserve its natural conditions and which... has outstanding opportunities for solitude." 16 U.S.C. § 1131(c).

Within the National Forests, "Wilderness will be made available for human use to the optimum extent consistent with the maintenance of primitive conditions." 36 C.F.R. § 293.2(b). Furthermore, the goal for the Wilderness Areas within the Ocala National Forest is to "provide the opportunity for humans to experience solitude, closeness with nature," self-reliance on wildland skills and/or primitive recreational opportunities. LRMP at 4-5, 4-8.

Permitting the use of H4 and H5 would negatively impact Wilderness Areas is also a violation of Forest Service policy. "Where there are alternatives among management decisions, **wilderness values shall dominate over all other considerations.**" FSM 2300.3,1 (*emphasis added*). Furthermore, one of the Forest Service's main objectives for Wilderness management is to "[p]rotect and perpetuate wilderness character and public values including, but not limited to, opportunities for scientific study, education, solitude, physical and mental challenge and stimulation, inspiration, and primitive recreation experiences." FSM 2300.2,4. Permitting use of the H4 and H5 would negatively impact the ability of the Wilderness Area to provide solitude and primitive recreation experiences. The use of the helispots must be subordinate to protecting these important wilderness values.

Furthermore, the congressionally designated Wilderness Areas in the National Forests in Florida are supposed "[t]o provide an essentially unmodified environment where native species respond to natural forces to which they are adapted and where human influences have minimal impact. To provide **the opportunity for humans to experience solitude, closeness with nature, and self-reliance on wildland skills.**" LRMP at 4-8 (0.2 – Goal) (*emphasis added*). The Desired

Future Condition (“DFC”) for Bradwell Bay Wilderness Area states that visitors “are isolated from the sights *and sounds* of human activity, and only occasionally are other people encountered while passing through the area.” LRMP at 4-8 (0.2 – DFC) (*emphasis added*). Allowing helicopter flights in such close proximity to the Bradwell Bay Wilderness cannot be reconciled with these management requirements for this Wilderness Area.

III. AUTHORITY TO PERMIT MILITARY USE OF NATIONAL FOREST LANDS

Wild South questions whether the Forest Service has the authority to permit this type of use at all. The purposes for which national forests were established and managed are set forth in the Organic Act and the Multiple-Use, Sustained Yield Act. Neither of these statutes mentions the use of National Forest lands for military training. Pursuant to the Multiple-Use, Sustained Yield Act, “the national forests are established and shall be administered for outdoor recreation, range, timber, watershed, and wildlife and fish purposes.” 16 U.S.C. § 528. Military training does not fit into any one of these purposes.

The Master Agreement between the Department of Defense and Department of Agriculture states:

National Forest System lands provide for the use and enjoyment of the public and are managed under multiple use and sustained yield concepts. The use of these lands for military training activities is within the statutory authority of the Act of June 4, 1897 [the Organic Act].

Master Agreement at § I, A (Sept. 1988). Just because two federal agencies say the sky is green does not make it so. The statutory provisions which set forth the purposes for which National Forests were established and are to be managed are found at 16 U.S.C. § 475 (the Organic Act) and 16 U.S.C. § 528 (the MUSYA).

[A]ll public lands that may hereafter be set aside and reserved as public national forests under said Act, shall be as far as practicable controlled and administered in accordance with the following provisions: No public national forest shall be established, except to improve and protect the forest within the national forest or for the purpose of securing favorable conditions of water flows, and to furnish a continuous supply of timber for the use and necessities of citizens of the United States; but it is not the purpose or intent of these provisions, or of the Act providing for such reservations, to authorize the inclusion therein of lands more valuable for the mineral therein, or for agricultural purposes, than for forest purposes.

16 U.S.C. § 475. How does military training fit into improving or protecting forests, securing water flows or furnishing a continuous supply of timber?

Furthermore, the regulations which set out the authorities under which the Forest Service may issue special use permits and the types of uses for which such SUPs may be issued contains no reference to military training activities. The Forest Service “may issue special use

authorizations for National Forest System land under the authorities cited and for the types of use specified in this section as follows..." 36 C.F.R. § 251.53. What follows are 14 categories of actions for which SUPs may be issued, none of which includes military training.

CONCLUSION

Thank you for this opportunity to comment. Please place these comments in the administrative record and provide us with the Draft EA, decision notice or memo for this project as soon as it becomes available.

Sincerely,

Brett M. Paben
Staff Attorney