FINDING OF NO SIGNIFICANT IMPACT

AND

FINDING OF NO PRACTICABLE ALTERNATIVE

REPAIR OF THE GARRISON SLOUGH RAILROAD TRESTLE BRIDGE AT EIELSON AIR FORCE BASE, ALASKA

Pursuant to provisions of the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA), 42 United States Code §4321-4347; Council on Environmental Quality Regulations, 40 Code of Federal Regulations (CFR) §1500-1508; and Environmental Impact Analysis Process (32 CFR §989), the U. S. Air Force (Air Force) prepared the attached Environmental Assessment (EA) to assess the potential environmental consequences associated with the Proposed Action to repair the Garrison Slough railroad trestle bridge at Eielson Air Force Base (AFB), Alaska.

Purpose and Need for the Proposed Action

The purpose of the Proposed Action is to maintain a reliable method to convey coal supply to the Central Heat and Power Plant (CHPP) and a secondary delivery system for jet propellant. The Proposed Action would address deficiencies of the aging railroad trestle bridge to maintain a reliable method of providing coal to the CHPP and jet propellant 8 (JP-8) fuel to the bulk fuel storage facility. Objectives in repairing the bridge include uninterrupted continuous fuel delivery, simplification of bridge maintenance, and protection and continued operation of an adjacent JP-8 fuel pipeline and communication lines. The need for the Proposed Action is that the Garrison Slough railroad trestle bridge has become unreliable and is degrading.

Description of Proposed Action and Alternatives

The Proposed Action would replace the existing 50-year-old Garrison Slough railroad trestle bridge with a culvert system consisting of concrete headwalls and two 60-inch culverts conveying Garrison Slough under the railroad. In addition, two existing adjacent 48-inch culverts beneath Arctic Avenue would also be replaced with two 60-inch culverts.

No Action Alternative

Under the No Action Alternative, the Garrison Slough railroad trestle bridge would not be repaired or replaced. The trestle bridge would continue to degrade until its ultimate failure presenting a safety risk. The impending failure of the Garrison Slough railroad trestle bridge would disrupt operations at the CHPP and eliminate the secondary method of jet fuel delivery preventing the 354 FW from fulfilling its mission.

Other Alternatives Eliminated from Further Consideration

Repair Existing Bridge: An alternative was considered to repair the trestle bridge as-is by rebuilding retaining walls and abutments and adding wing walls to the retaining walls to prevent the railroad ballast from eroding into the slough. However, this alternative was eliminated from further consideration as repairing the existing bridge would require increased, continual maintenance of a bridge that is approaching the end of its design life, and would not resolve the differential elevation of the bridge and railroad track due to the freeze/thaw cycle.

Construct New Trestle Bridge on Current Location: An alternative to construct a new pile-supported railroad trestle bridge on the current alignment was considered. The existing bridge would be demolished

and new support piles, abutments, and decking would be installed. This alternative would require a longer duration of construction that would necessitate the construction of a temporary rail bypass on Arctic Avenue to allow for continual delivery of coal to the CHPP. This alternative was eliminated from further consideration as a temporary rail bypass would affect the nearby JP-8 fuel pipeline and communication line, as well as result in additional wetland impacts and higher construction and maintenance costs.

Construct New Trestle Bridge Upstream: An alternative to construct a new pile-supported railroad trestle bridge upstream was considered. However, this alternative was eliminated from further consideration as a new bridge at a new location would involve more extensive impacts to wetlands, due to presence of more wetlands in upstream areas, and contaminated soils when compared to using the same bridge alignment.

Summary Of Environmental Impacts

The EA evaluates the potential environmental consequences of implementing the Proposed Action with regard to land use, acoustic environment, air quality, water resources, safety and occupational health, hazardous materials/wastes and contaminated sites, natural resources, cultural resources, earth resources, infrastructure, and transportation. The Air Force has concluded that the Proposed Action will not meaningfully or measurably affect socioeconomics or environmental justice; thus, these resources have been eliminated from detailed analysis in the EA. Environmental impacts of the resources carried forward for detailed analysis are summarized below.

Land Use: No significant impacts have been identified. The Proposed Action would not result in changes to land use. The repair of Garrison Slough railroad trestle bridge would be consistent with existing and future use of the site for transportation purposes. The existing and future use of the project area would be compatible with airfield Clear Zones and Accident Potential Zones.

Acoustic Environment: No significant impacts have been identified. Construction activities would result in minor, adverse effects on highly localized noise environments during demolition and construction activities. Noise exposures solely resulting from the implementation of the Proposed Action would be unlikely and would not be significant.

Air Quality: No significant impacts have been identified. The air emissions generated by diesel-powered construction equipment operating on-site, trucks removing or delivering materials from the construction areas, and dust created by grading and other bare earth construction activities proposed for this project at Eielson AFB would be minor and not significant.

Water Resources: No significant impacts have been identified. No impacts to groundwater resources are anticipated with compliance requirements that would be incorporated into design and construction of the Proposed Action. Surface water impacts include the interruption to Garrison Slough flow during culvert construction when dewatering dams are in place; flow in the slough would be maintained at all times by the incorporation of a flow bypass. The diversion in water flow would be short in duration and existing flow would be restored upon completion of construction. Potential impacts of temporary increase in surface water turbidity from construction and demolition activities associated would be minimized by adherence to best management practices and permitting requirements addressing stormwater control, spill prevention, and the Storm Water Pollution Prevention Plan. Contaminated soil or groundwater, if found, would be managed in accordance with federal and state regulations to ensure contamination is not released or transported to water resources. Impacts to less than one-half acre of wetlands and waters of the

U.S. would be mitigated by incorporation of impact minimization measures and complying with the terms of a U.S. Army Corps of Engineers Clean Water Act Section 404 Wetlands Permit. Impacts to less than one acre of the 100-year floodplain with a culvert system would maintain existing 100-year storm flood levels and improve hydraulic connectivity.

Safety and Occupational Health: The Proposed Action would result in beneficial impacts to safety conditions of the railroad crossing that would provide a long-term, safer maintenance solution.

Hazardous Materials/Wastes and Contaminated Sites: No significant impacts have been identified. Fuels, oils, and lubricants for equipment during demolition, renovation, and construction would be used in accordance with applicable federal, state, and Air Force regulations. Impact minimization measures and compliance with permits, procedures, and institutional controls for Environmental Restoration Program /Installation Restoration Program sites would be implemented.

Natural Resources: No significant impacts have been identified. The Proposed Action would have no effect on federal threatened or endangered species or state listed species, as well as no adverse affects on migratory birds or Birds of Conservation Concern. Limited removal of previously disturbed vegetation would not impact high value vegetation or habitat. Temporary displacement of wildlife would occur during construction activities.

Cultural Resources: No significant impacts have been identified. The Proposed Action would have No effect on historic architectural or archaeological resources. In the event of inadvertent discovery of archaeological or human remains, construction activities would immediately stop and appropriate offices would be notified.

Earth Resources: No significant impacts have been identified. The Proposed Action would result in short-term impacts to soils during construction.

Infrastructure: No significant impacts have been identified. The Proposed Action would result in a temporary impact to rail service, that would be offset through adjustment of coal deliveries prior to work at the railroad trestle bridge. No adverse impact to the fuel pipeline or communications lines is anticipated.

Transportation: No significant impacts have been identified. Minor, temporary impacts to internal base circulation at Arctic Avenue would occur during construction, but detour and signage would minimize impact. The temporary maximum 6-day shutdown of rail service would be offset through adjustment of coal deliveries prior to work. Long-term beneficial impact from new structures would reduce service interruptions due to unscheduled maintenance and continual repairs of current railroad bridge and by replacing the bridge with a new structure that requires less maintenance.

Public Involvement

An Early Public Notice was published in the *Fairbanks Daily News-Miner* newspaper on September 2, and September 4, 2022, announcing the EA detailing that the action would take place within wetlands and floodplains, and seeking advanced public comment. No comments were received. Tribal consultation letters were mailed to federally recognized tribes on January 18, 2023. The Air Force published a Notice of Availability of the Draft EA and Draft FONSI/FONPA in the *Fairbanks Daily News-Miner* newspaper on March 5, 2023. The Draft EA and Draft FONSI/FONPA were also available online at https://www.eielson.af.mil/ and at the Noel Wien Public Library, 1215 Cowles Street, Fairbanks, AK

99701. The Draft EA and Draft FONSI/FONPA were available for public review and comment for 30 days following publication of the *Fairbanks Daily News-Miner* newspaper. Notification letters were mailed or emailed to 27 elected officials, and federal, state, regional and local agencies, tribes, and other stakeholders. One comment from a state agency was received during the comment period from the Alaska Department of Environmental Conservation (ADEC) – Division of Prevention and Response, Contaminated Sites Program. The comment noted that the proposed project footprint will impact a known contaminated site including the Eielson AFB perfluorooctanoic acid (PFOA) and perfluorooctane sulfonate (PFOS) plume area. Contaminated soil and groundwater generated by the construction will need to be characterized and disposed of, as appropriate. There are no notable changes made to the Final EA as a result of comments submitted during the public comment period.

Finding Of No Practicable Alternative (FONPA):

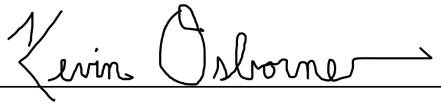
Pursuant to Executive Order 11990, *Protection of Wetlands*, if a federal government agency proposes to conduct an activity in a wetland, it will consider alternatives to the action and modify its actions, to the extent feasible, to avoid adverse effects or potential harm. The attached EA considered the Proposed Action and the No Action Alternative, but found only the Proposed Action to be reasonable, practicable, and meet the Air Force's purpose and need. As a result of the ground disturbance and fill activities, the Proposed Action will impact less than one-half acre, within the context of Eielson AFB's 9,453 acres of wetlands and 792 acres of lakes, ponds, and streams. The implementation of the repair of Garrison Slough railroad trestle bridge avoids and minimizes wetland impacts to the extent practicable.

Executive Order 11988, *Floodplain Management*, requires federal agencies to avoid to the maximum extent possible the short- and long-term adverse impacts associated with the occupancy and modification of floodplains and to avoid direct and indirect support of floodplain development wherever there is a practicable alternative. If it is found that there is no practicable alternative, the agency must minimize potential harm to the floodplain, and circulate a notice explaining why the action is to be located in the floodplain prior to taking action. Most of the project area for replacing the Garrison Slough railroad trestle bridge is within the 100-year floodplain. There are no other practicable alternatives that would meet the purpose and need for the Proposed Action outside of the 100-year floodplain. The design of the culvert system would minimize potential harm to, or within, the floodplain. The 60-inch culvert system under the railroad, along with an upgraded 60-inch culvert system under Arctic Avenue, would maintain existing 100-year storm flood levels, decrease area flood susceptibility, and improve hydrologic connectivity.

Based on my review of the facts and analyses contained in the attached EA, I find that there is no practicable alternative to construction in wetlands and floodplains, and the Proposed Action includes all practicable measures to minimize harm to the wetlands from such use. This finding fulfills both the requirements of Executive Orders 11990 and 11988, and the Environmental Impact Analysis Processes, 32 CFR §989.14 for a Finding of No Practicable Alternative.

Finding Of No Significant Impact:

After review of the EA for the Repair of the Garrison Slough Railroad Trestle Bridge at Eielson AFB, Alaska, prepared in accordance with the requirements of NEPA, Council on Environmental Quality regulations, 32 CFR 989, and 32 CFR 651, and which is hereby incorporated by reference, I have determined that the Proposed Action will not have a significant impact on the quality of the human or natural environment with implementation of the identified regulatory compliance measures. Accordingly, an Environmental Impact Statement is not required. The signing of this FONSI completes the environmental impact analysis process.



10 July 2023

KEVIN J. OSBORNE, Colonel, USAF
Command Civil Engineer
Headquarters, Pacific Air Forces

Date

Attachment: Environmental Assessment for the Repair of the Garrison Slough Railroad Trestle Bridge at Eielson AFB, Alaska