

## RECORD OF DECISION

### *PROGRAMMATIC ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT STATEMENT MASTER PLAN AND INSTALLATION DEVELOPMENT AT NELLIS AIR FORCE BASE, NEVADA*

## INTRODUCTION

The Department of the Air Force (DAF) has issued this Record of Decision (ROD) for the *Final Programmatic Environmental Impact Statement (PEIS) for Master Plan and Installation Development at Nellis AFB, Nevada*, analyzing the alternatives for designation of land for future development of the east side of Nellis Air Force Base (AFB), Nevada.

The DAF is issuing this ROD in accordance with the *National Environmental Policy Act of 1969* (Title 42 *United States Code* Section 4321 et seq.) (NEPA), as amended by the *Fiscal Responsibility Act of 2023* (Public Law 118-5), and the US Department of Defense (DoD) NEPA implementing procedures issued 30 June 2025. The DAF considered all the alternatives, information, analysis, and feedback received from State, Tribal, and local governments, and other public commenters during development of the PEIS.

This ROD documents:

- DAF's decision;
- Alternatives considered;
- Factors considered in the decision;
- Whether the DAF adopted all practicable means to avoid or minimize environmental harm from the selected alternative, and if not, why not; and
- Mitigations.

## DECISION SYNOPSIS

To address current mission constraints and anticipate future mission requirements, the DAF is planning the eventual development of Nellis AFB's east side. This proposed development designates up to 2,000 acres for future facilities and infrastructure construction (*PEIS, Vol 1, § 2.4.2, Fig 2-1*). For planning purposes, the DAF grouped similar mission activities into eight categories based on facility and infrastructure function and conservatively estimated the anticipated area of each functional use category (*PEIS, Vol 1, § 2.4, Table 2-1*). Land use categories were sited based on functional use, such as locating areas adjacent to the flightline with functions generally compatible with aircraft noise and co-locating areas with similar uses and mission functions. No specific near-term construction actions were identified as part of this programmatic analysis (*PEIS, Vol 1, § 1.1*). Subsequent, tiered NEPA analyses will be accomplished to address impacts of future proposals as necessary.

## ALTERNATIVES CONSIDERED

As more fully described in the PEIS (*Vol 1, § 2.2, p 2-2*), selection standards were developed to establish alternatives that meet the purpose of and need for the Proposed Action and will provide sufficient capacity for development within Nellis AFB.

**Alternative 1 (Proposed Action, Complete Development).** Alternative 1 designates functional use categories for the complete development of the east side of Nellis AFB to accommodate current and future mission needs. Alternative 1 will fully utilize this undeveloped area, covering 2,000

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acres, to identify areas for the future construction of facilities and infrastructure required to meet current and future mission needs over the next decade. Alternative 1 identifies areas for airfield operations and light industrial uses, administrative uses, lodging/residential uses, and community service uses to improve mission readiness. Additional areas for transportation and utility infrastructure have been identified to accommodate the eventual development. Alternative 1 also includes areas for dedicated open space used for morale, welfare, recreation, and training by personnel and their families. (*PEIS, Vol 1, § 2.4.2, p 2-3*).

**Alternative 2 (Partial Development).** Alternative 2 designates functional use categories for the partial development of the east side of Nellis AFB to accommodate current and future mission needs within a reduced development footprint (1,486 acres). Alternative 2 allows the Installation to meet mid-term requirements for future growth and provides access to airfield, industrial, and administrative areas for personnel working on the east side of the Installation. This alternative does not include space for new lodging/residential uses or space for outdoor recreation, training, and community services (*PEIS, Vol 1, § 2.4.3, pp 2-3-2-7*).

**No Action Alternative.** The PEIS analyzed the No Action Alternative, providing a baseline for comparing the potential environmental effects of the action alternatives. Under the No Action Alternative, planning for the future development of the east side of Nellis AFB would not occur. The 99 ABW would continue to utilize existing facilities and infrastructure as personnel and missions continue to grow. Demand for current facilities and infrastructure would continue to outpace capacity. Without development of the east side of Nellis AFB, existing facilities and infrastructure at Nellis AFB would be insufficient to meet future DAF and DoD mission requirements and would require current missions to continue to operate in substandard facilities (*PEIS, Vol 1, § 2.4.4, p 2-8*).

### COORDINATION AND CONSULTATION

As described more completely in the PEIS (*PEIS, Vol 1, § 1.3, p 1-4; PEIS Vol 2, Appendix A*), the DAF coordinated and completed consultations with federal agencies during the PEIS process.

#### *Endangered Species Act (ESA) Section 7 Consultation with United States Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS)*

Nellis AFB maintains a Programmatic Biological Opinion (PBO) issued by the USFWS under Section 7 of the ESA that addresses potential impacts of DAF activities on the desert tortoise as discussed in the PEIS (*PEIS, Vol 1, § 3.8.2.2, p 3-66 & 3-67*). USFWS reissued the PBO in September 2023 based on an updated PBA documenting expected future Nellis AFB projects and activities over the next 10 years. The DAF has determined that the adverse effects of the Proposed Action under Alternative 1 on the desert tortoise from development of tortoise habitat and potential translocation of several adult desert tortoises has been fully evaluated through Section 7 consultation with the USFWS in 2023 as documented in the PBA and PBO.

#### *National Historic Preservation Act (NHPA) Section 106 Compliance in Coordination with the Nevada State Historic Preservation Officer (SHPO)*

Section 106 consultation will be conducted on a project-by-project basis as individual projects are

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identified; the Nevada SHPO concurred with this approach to consultation via email dated 22 November 2024.

#### *Coordination with the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) Regarding Existing Public Land Order (PLO) Number 7890*

The DAF coordinated with the BLM on proposed modification to existing BLM lands withdrawn for military use (*PEIS, Vol 1, § 1.3, p 1-5*) and inquired as to BLM's interest in serving as a cooperating agency on this PEIS. BLM indicated that it did not wish to serve as a cooperating agency on this PEIS, noting that further NEPA analysis will occur as part of the proposed modification of the existing PLO Number 7890. No construction will occur under the Proposed Action without approved modification of PLO 7890 by BLM until any additional NEPA requirements are met and following that public review process.

## MITIGATION

Mitigation measures for the Proposed Action are identified in the PEIS (*PEIS, Vol 1, § 2.7, Table 2-5*). Mitigation measures are intended to avoid, rectify, minimize, or compensate for potential impacts on specific resource areas.

To monitor and enforce mitigations, the DAF will develop a Mitigation Plan within 90 days of the signature of this ROD. This plan will clearly identify principal and subordinate organizations responsible for oversight and execution of these specified mitigations. The DAF will not implement an impact-inducing action before the applicable mitigation measures are funded and in place.

The Mitigation Plan will:

- Identify specific mitigative actions;
- Identify the responsible organization for each mitigation; and
- Present the timing for execution of the mitigations.

The DAF will implement the following mitigations:

#### Biological Resources

As site-specific design plans for future construction projects are developed, potential adverse impacts to biological resources will be minimized through the implementation of the conservation measures and adherence to the requirements in the PBO. The PEIS includes a table with conservation measures that may be selected for implementation in future project-specific NEPA (*PEIS, Vol 1, § 3.8.3, Table 3-23*).

#### Earth Resources

- Minimize the total disturbed area during construction and development.
- Cluster construction within the functional use category thresholds.
- Minimize soil compaction.

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- Implement design standards to manage increases in stormwater runoff and to limit opportunities for increased sedimentation and erosion.
- Comply with the *Energy Independence and Security Act* ([Public Law 110-140](#)) and National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System (NPDES) permit requirements related to maintaining or restoring to predevelopment hydrology conditions.
- Future construction projects that exceed 5,000 ft<sup>2</sup> will require, to the maximum extent feasible, the maintenance and restoration of the predevelopment hydrology of the property with respect to the water temperature, rate, volume, and duration of flow. Additionally, in adherence to NPDES regulations, projects disturbing 1 or more acres or projects that are less than 1 acre but are part of a larger common plan of development must develop low-impact development measures that remain in effect after construction is completed.

#### Water Resources

In addition to the mitigation measures for water resources outlined below, the six mitigation measures listed above for earth resources are also applicable to water resources.

- Construct structures above the base-flood elevation, dry- or wet-proof foundations, and use permanent tie-downs of non-structural equipment such as propane tanks or wash racks.
- Establish a proper connection between the stormwater channel to the Clark County Regional Flood Control District retention pond.
- Implement development designs that support the flow of stormwater runoff and containment.
- Conduct ongoing maintenance of existing stormwater channels.

#### Cultural Resources

In accordance with the Nevada State Historic Preservation Officer (SHPO) concurrence received via email on 22 November 2024, consultation efforts will occur on a project-by-project basis as specific construction actions are identified and project details become available. Mitigation measures will be identified as necessary on a project-by-project basis for any historic architectural or archaeological properties. Additional Section 106 consultation efforts will be documented in future project-specific tiered NEPA as applicable.

#### Infrastructure, Including Transportation and Utilities

To prolong the availability and use of potable water at Nellis AFB, the following measures are considered mitigation measures for the Proposed Action area to decrease potable water demand:

- Ensure future landscaping design is water efficient.
- Ensure low-flow plumbing fixtures are integrated into the design of the new facilities.
- Eliminate potable water for outdoor use/irrigation.
- Curtail waste by minimizing unrecoverable potable water losses:

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- termination of the Area II flushing system with a future looped system that will connect the existing water supply lines from Areas I and II;
- implementation of hardening strategies for the water distribution system, including a deeper burial of distribution pipes; and
- improving the overall management of the distribution system by future installation of a Supervisory Control and Data Acquisition system.

Prior to future construction of the proposed reopening of Hollywood Gate, a future comprehensive transportation study will be performed to identify potential impacts to the surrounding community and transportation system. Hollywood Gate will operate with two or three guards at a time to accommodate the potential future demand.

### **DECISION**

The DAF has decided to implement the Proposed Action (Alternative 1) to designate 2,000 acres on the east side of Nellis AFB for future development to support broad decision-making and provide the foundation for the efficient review of project-specific, tiered implementing actions.

Selection of Alternative 1 would allow for maximum mission flexibility and provide Nellis AFB with maximum capacity for additional facilities and infrastructure that may be required in the future. Additionally, Alternative 1 designates space for facilities designed to improve quality of life for personnel and dependents assigned to Nellis AFB, as it would provide additional housing; community services; and moral, wellness, and recreation facilities; which would reduce lengthy commutes across the installation. No near-term future construction actions will be implemented under Alternative 1. NEPA analyses tiering off the PEIS, including any applicable consultation and coordination, will be completed prior to implementation of any future development projects. Additionally, future development will require the modification of the existing Public Land Order 7890 by the Bureau of Land Management to include development of withdrawn military lands within the scope of allowed uses.

The DAF has considered the potential environmental consequences of the Proposed Action and Alternatives, comments received, and concerns of the public and other key stakeholders analyzed in the PEIS. The DAF also considered other factors related to national defense, including mission and capacity criteria, environmental criteria, cost factors, military plans and guidance, total force, force structure, training requirements and efficiencies, logistic supportability, and resources and budgeting.

This decision adopts all practicable mitigations. The DAF proponent will ensure that no impact inducing actions will take place until mitigations are in place and is responsible for ensuring all identified mitigations associated with this and future decisions are implemented with strict adherence to the Mitigation Plan.

The DAF, by this decision, designates 2,000 acres on the east side of Nellis AFB for future development as required to support mission objectives. I certify that DoD has considered all relevant information raised in the NEPA process and that the NEPA process has closed.

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MICHAEL E. SAUNDERS, P.E., SES, DAF  
Acting Assistant Secretary of the Air Force  
(Energy, Installations, & Environment)

Date