

1 **DRAFT**

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3 **FINDING OF NO SIGNIFICANT IMPACT (FONSI)/**
4 **FINDING OF NO PRACTICABLE ALTERNATIVE (FONPA)**

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6 **Name of the Proposed Action**

7 Environmental Assessment (EA) Addressing Installation Improvements and Maintenance at Bellows Air
8 Force Station (AFS), Waimanalo, O‘ahu, Hawai‘i.

9 **Purpose of and Need for the Proposed Action**

10 The purpose of the Proposed Action is to implement installation improvements and maintenance projects
11 on Bellows AFS as identified by Bellows AFS in the *Bellows AFS Recreation Area 2010 Master Plan* and
12 a wetland restoration project set forth in a 2009 Biological Opinion issued by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife
13 Service (USFWS). The collective analysis of all appropriate projects in a single EA eliminates project
14 fractionation and segmentation; facilitates coordination of land use planning; expedites project execution
15 by using early planning; reduces installation, reviewing agency, and major command workloads; provides
16 cost savings; helps better evaluate potential cumulative environmental impacts; assists in maintaining a
17 baseline for future analysis; supports strategic decisionmaking; encourages agency coordination;
18 streamlines the NEPA review process; and meets the U.S. Air Force (USAF) environmental impact
19 assessment process goals. Bellows AFS has identified a suite of projects from the *Bellows AFS*
20 *Recreation Area 2010 Master Plan* to implement that would support mission requirements. The purpose
21 of each individual project included in the Proposed Action can be found in the *Environmental Assessment*
22 *Addressing Installation Improvements and Maintenance at Bellows Air Force Station, O‘ahu, Hawai‘i*,
23 which is hereby incorporated by reference. Project-specific purpose and need statements are included in
24 the EA, and incorporated herein by reference.

25 The need for the Proposed Action is to meet current and future improvements and maintenance
26 requirements for Bellows AFS to sustain mission functions. In order to meet ongoing installation and
27 Department of Defense mission requirements, Bellows AFS would implement capital improvement
28 projects, morale and welfare projects, and a wetland restoration project that was set forth as a condition of
29 a USFWS 2009 Biological Opinion associated with Joint Base Pearl Harbor Hickam (formerly Hickam
30 Air Force Base). Capital improvement projects include upgrading installation utilities and facilities;
31 demolishing older, substandard facilities; making site improvements; and making necessary utility
32 infrastructure upgrades. Morale and welfare projects include constructing a community activity center,
33 updating facilities that support recreational activities, and installing a shrub recreational maze. The need
34 for each individual project included in the Proposed Action can be found in the *Environmental*
35 *Assessment Addressing Installation Improvements and Maintenance at Bellows Air Force Station, O‘ahu,*
36 *Hawai‘i*, which is hereby incorporated by reference. To support these various projects, Bellows AFS
37 must take into account future facility construction, demolition, renovation, systems improvements,
38 utilities improvements, land use planning, and development constraints and opportunities. To ensure
39 complete readiness at the installation for any tasks assigned, infrastructure projects must take into
40 account—and be capable of supporting—all functions inherent to a USAF installation. These include
41 security, administration, training, communications, billeting, supply and storage, transportation, and
42 community quality of life.

1 **Description of the Proposed Action and Alternatives**

2 **Proposed Action.** The Proposed Action is to implement the continuing installation improvements and
3 maintenance actions as found in the *Bellows AFS Recreation Area 2010 Master Plan* and to implement a
4 wetland restoration project identified as a mitigation action in a 2009 USFWS Biological Opinion. The
5 Proposed Action consists of numerous projects related to installation improvements and maintenance. It
6 is intended that the projects contained in this EA will be reviewed on a 5-year rotational basis and this
7 document might be updated to accommodate changes.

8 Bellows AFS proposes seven construction, renovation, and demolition projects over the next 4+ years to
9 support future mission requirements. Projects within this category include new facility construction,
10 additions to existing gate infrastructure, facility reconfiguration, and facility demolition. Bellows AFS
11 proposes seven utility infrastructure upgrades, natural resources enhancement, and recreational
12 improvement projects over the next 5+ years to support future mission requirements.

13 As a result of full implementation of the Proposed Action, there would be approximately 34,000 square
14 feet (ft²) of new facilities and new pavements constructed and 12,700 ft² of demolition, resulting in an
15 anticipated increase of 21,300 ft² of impervious surface. Additionally, there would be utility
16 infrastructure upgrades, natural resources enhancement, and recreational improvements resulting in
17 disturbance for as much as 380,888 ft² of area.

18 **Alternatives Considered to the Proposed Action.** Project siting for the locations of proposed projects was
19 selected based on numerous criteria (e.g., functional requirements, collocation of like services,
20 environmental constraints, and availability of sites). Based on this evaluation, the proposed locations for
21 each of the proposed projects were determined to be the best available based on constraints and facility
22 organization at Bellows AFS.

23 During the development of this EA, Bellows AFS considered which projects from the *Bellows AFS*
24 *Recreation Area 2010 Master Plan* were required to support future functions and mission requirements
25 for the installation; and which of those projects have the greatest potential for being implemented in the
26 next 5+ years. Projects in the *Bellows AFS Recreation Area 2010 Master Plan* that are unlikely to be
27 implemented in the next 5+ years were not included for analysis in this EA. Separate NEPA
28 documentation would be completed for any other projects from the *Bellows AFS Recreation Area 2010*
29 *Master Plan* that are not assessed in the EA.

30 All of the proposed projects were evaluated individually and cumulatively in the EA to determine if the
31 consequences of implementation would cause significant impacts on the human and natural environments
32 of Bellows AFS and surrounding areas. Key selection criteria include economic feasibility, level of
33 anticipated environmental and socioeconomic impacts, functional organization of facilities, availability of
34 adequate space to carry out the specified projects, and the ability to meet the purpose of and need for the
35 action.

36 The individual projects would be prioritized and implemented as funding becomes available. The
37 Proposed Action encompasses all the currently identified priority projects and the analysis describes the
38 specific and cumulative consequences of implementing the proposed projects. Since project phasing is
39 expected to occur, based on the availability of funding, no phasing alternatives were carried forward for
40 independent analysis.

41 **Alternatives Considered but Eliminated from Detailed Analysis.** Alternatives for each individual project
42 under the Proposed Action were initially considered but eliminated from further detailed analysis. A
43 discussion of the alternatives considered but eliminated from detailed analysis and the reasoning for doing

1 so can be found in the *Environmental Assessment Addressing Installation Improvements and*
2 *Maintenance at Bellows Air Force Station, O’ahu, Hawai’i*, which is hereby incorporated by reference.

3 **No Action Alternative.** CEQ regulations require consideration of the No Action Alternative for all
4 proposed actions. The No Action Alternative serves as a baseline against which the impacts of the
5 Proposed Action and other potential alternatives can be compared and consequently it is carried forward
6 for further evaluation in the EA.

7 Under the No Action Alternative, Bellows AFS would not implement the proposed projects in the
8 installation’s *Bellows AFS Recreation Area 2010 Master Plan* and a wetland restoration project set forth
9 in a 2009 Biological Opinion issued by the USFWS. In general, the necessary construction, renovation,
10 and demolition projects and the utility infrastructure upgrades, natural resources enhancement, and
11 recreational improvement projects to support mission functions might not be accomplished. Through
12 implementation of the No Action Alternative, future installation improvements and maintenance projects
13 would continue to be evaluated for potential effects on an individual project basis. The preparation of
14 separate NEPA documents would be required for each project to evaluate potential environmental
15 consequences.

16 **Summary of Environmental Effects**

17 The public and regulatory agency scoping process focused the analysis on the following environmental
18 resources: noise, land use, air quality, safety, geology and soils, water resources, biological resources,
19 cultural resources, socioeconomic resources and environmental justice, infrastructure, and hazardous
20 materials and wastes. Details of the environmental consequences can be found in the *Environmental*
21 *Assessment Addressing Installation Improvements and Maintenance at Bellows Air Force Station, O’ahu,*
22 *Hawai’i*, which is hereby incorporated by reference.

23 **Notice of Wetland Involvement**

24 As guided by Executive Order (EO) 11990, *Protection of Wetlands*, and Air Force Instruction (AFI)
25 32-7064, *Integrated Natural Resources Management*, the USAF hereby provides notice of the potential
26 for wetland impacts. The proposed wetland restoration project under the Proposed Action would involve
27 the removal of mangroves from the oxbow wetland at Waimanalo Stream to allow growth of native wetland
28 species; and excavation of fill and regrading of the channel bottom and banks to enhance storm water
29 storage capacity. The lower Waimanalo Stream oxbow wetland was determined to be jurisdictional by
30 the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE) in 2002. This wetland is 7.845 acres (0.338 acres of which
31 are within the U.S. Marine Corps property). Jurisdictional determinations are only valid for 5 years;
32 therefore, a new delineation and jurisdictional determination would be required in areas where the
33 proposed project might affect wetlands or other waters of the United States.

34 This wetland, an old oxbow that is now a mangrove swamp, is on the north side of Waimanalo Stream.
35 Most of this wetland is covered by a dense growth of red mangroves (*Rhizophora mangle*), ranging in
36 height from 40 to 50 feet. Two large patches of pickleweed (*Batis maritime*) are within the center of the
37 swamp and along the northeast edge of the wetland. The wetland receives water from Waimanalo Stream
38 and also surface runoff from higher elevations. Since the mangroves almost completely cover this
39 wetland, removal of mangroves would greatly disturb the soils within the wetland and would lead to
40 temporary increases in turbidity within the water column. Additionally, the movement of equipment
41 necessary to remove the mangroves to and from the wetland would create ground disturbances along the
42 banks of the wetland. Ground disturbances would expose soils and increase soil erosion potential and
43 sedimentation within the wetland. Excavation of fill and regrading of the channel bottom and banks
44 would result in dredging within this jurisdictional wetland. In addition, removal of the mangroves and

1 revegetation of the wetland could result in dredging and placement of fill within this wetland. The
2 removal of the mangroves within the oxbow would also be expected to alter hydrology within the
3 wetland.

4 The proposed Waimanalo Stream wetland restoration project would require Clean Water Act Sections
5 404 and 401 permits prior to conducting restoration activities if the actions would or could result in any
6 dredging, placement of fill, or modification of existing hydrology. A current jurisdictional determination
7 of the extent of existing wetlands would also be necessary to determine any gain in wetland acreage and
8 habitat applicable to any required mitigation.

9 Because the purpose of the wetland restoration project is to restore the habitat value of the oxbow wetland at
10 Waimanalo Stream to allow growth of native wetland plant species for the benefit of wildlife, particularly
11 native bird species, temporarily impacting this wetland through invasive plant species removal and minor
12 ground work is unavoidable. However, the USAF believes there is a net benefit to the wetland. The wetland
13 restoration project was set forth as a conservation measure in a 2009 USFWS Biological Opinion issued in
14 response to formal ESA Section 7 consultation for a wildlife control operation at Joint Base Pearl Harbor
15 Hickam. This project was proposed as a mitigation action for Joint Base Pearl Harbor Hickman's Bird/wildlife
16 Aircraft Strike Hazard (BASH) program, which included lethal and nonlethal methods of controlling birds and
17 wildlife near the runway, to minimize overall effects on endangered Hawaiian waterbirds. Because this
18 project was set forth by USFWS as a mitigation action for another USAF program, there is no practicable
19 alternative to the Proposed Action.

20 **Notice of Floodplain Involvement**

21 EO 11988, *Floodplain Management*, directs Federal agencies to avoid siting within floodplains unless the
22 agency determines that there is no practicable alternative. As guided by EO 11988, the USAF hereby
23 provides notice of the potential for floodplain impacts. The area along the coastline within the northern
24 and southern portions of Bellows AFS is within the 100-year floodplain. In addition, lands surrounding
25 Waimanalo and Inoa'ole streams are also within the 100-year floodplain.

26 Other alternatives were reviewed during the EA development process under the requirements of NEPA,
27 but were eliminated from further detailed analysis in the EA because they did not meet the stated purpose
28 of and need for the action, were not practicable, or would have led to greater potential overall
29 environmental impacts. The only practicable alternative is the Proposed Action, as previously described.
30 For the reasons stated in the EA, the dismissed alternatives are not practicable to avoid the potential
31 floodplain impacts. Any renovation or earth disturbing work in floodplains would be carried out to
32 minimize any potential impacts. No new development would take place within floodplains.

33 **Conclusion**

34 Based on the description of the Proposed Action as set forth in the EA, all activities were found to comply
35 with the criteria or standards of environmental quality and coordinated with the appropriate Federal, state,
36 and local agencies. The attached EA and this FONSI/FONPA were made available to the public for a 30-
37 day review period. Agencies were coordinated with throughout the EA development process and their
38 comments were incorporated into the analysis of potential environmental impacts performed as part of the
39 EA.

40 **Finding of No Significant Impact/Finding of No Practicable Alternatives**

41 Based on the information and analysis presented in the EA conducted in accordance with the
42 requirements of the National Environmental Policy Act, the Council on Environmental Quality

1 regulations, implementing regulations set forth in 32 Code of Federal Regulations 989 (*Environmental*
2 *Impact Analysis Process*), as amended, and review of the public and agency comments submitted during
3 the 30-day public comment period, I conclude that the environmental effects of activities contributing to
4 installation improvements and maintenance at Bellows AFS are not significant, that preparation of an
5 Environmental Impact Statement is unnecessary, and that a FONSI/FONPA is appropriate. Pursuant to
6 EO 11990, *Protection of Wetlands*; EO 11988, *Floodplain Management*, AFI 32-7064, *Integrated*
7 *Natural Resources Management*; and the authority delegated by Secretary of the Air Force Order 791.1,
8 and taking the above information into account, I find that there is no better practicable alternative to this
9 action and that the Proposed Action includes all practicable measures to minimize harm to the wetland
10 and floodplain environments.

KENNETH S. WILSBACH
Brigadier General, USAF
Commander, 18th Wing

Date

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