

# **U.S. Department of Transportation**

Federal Aviation Administration

Alaska Region Office of Airports

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## Finding of No Significant Impact/Record of Decision for the Sitka Seaplane Base Supplemental Environmental Assessment

January 2026

## I. INTRODUCTION

This document serves as the Federal Aviation Administration's (FAA) Finding of No Significant Impact/Record of Decision (FONSI/ROD) and provides the final agency determinations and approvals for the federal actions necessary to implement the proposed construction of a new SPB in Sitka Channel and deactivate the existing SPB. This FONSI/ROD is based on the information and analysis contained in the Final Supplemental Environmental Assessment (FSEA) dated January 2025, which is hereby incorporated by reference. The FSEA has been prepared pursuant to Section 102(2)(c) of the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) and in accordance with FAA Order 1050.1F, *Environmental Impacts: Policies and Procedures*<sup>1</sup> and FAA Order 5050.4B, *National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) Implementing Instructions for Airport Actions*.

## II. BACKGROUND

The proposed actions considered by this Final Supplemental Environmental Assessment (FSEA) will occur within the boundaries of lands currently owned by the City and Borough of Sitka (CBS) for the existing Seaplane Base (SPB) and within the boundaries of lands purchases by CBS to accommodate the proposed location for a new SPB. The new SPB would replace the existing and deteriorating SPB which has been in its current location and operational as a SPB for nearly 65 years. CBS has owned, operated, and received Federal grant funding for this location as a SPB base since the 1970s. It was upgraded with Federal grant funding in 1975-1977. Prior to that, the CBS SPB was located at Katlian and Halibut Point Road, originally built in 1952.

As shown on **Figure 1** of the FSEA, the existing SPB is located across Sitka Channel from the proposed SPB on Baranof Island. The existing SPB has no potential for expansion. The new SPB would be located near 1190 Seward Avenue on the northwest side of Japonski Island, approximately 1.4 miles west of downtown Sitka, Alaska and approximately 600 miles from Anchorage at Latitude: 57.055418 and Longitude: -135.363889 (Sec. 34 and 35, T55S, R63E, Copper River Meridian, United States Geological Survey [USGS] Quadrangle Sitka A5). As the lead agency responsible for this Project, the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) prepared an Environmental Assessment (EA) and issued a Finding of No Significant Impact/Record of Decision (FONSI/ROD) in June 2021 (**Appendix A**). The FONSI/ROD provided a review of the proposed action, mitigation requirements, and the basis for the FAA's finding. This SEA includes updated or new information from the 2021 FONSI ROD. All information from the 2021 FONSI/ROD is included in its entirety in **Appendix A**.

## III. PROPOSED ACTION

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<sup>1</sup> FAA Order 1050.1G, *FAA National Environmental Policy Act Implementing Procedures* was published on June 30, 2025. Projects that commence after June 30, 2025, are required to comply with FAA Order 1050.1G, while those projects already underway by that date may follow FAA Order 1050.1F. This SEA relies upon FAA Order 1050.1F, the Fiscal Responsibility Act of 2023, and current applicable Executive Orders and case law.

Since issuing the 2021 EA FONSI/ROD, changes to project design have led FAA to determine a SEA is needed. The SEA includes the following updates to the proposed action, to construct a new SPB in Sitka Channel (**Figures 3 and 4**) and deactivate the existing SPB (Proposed Action):

- Updates to Proposed Action:
  - Deactivate the existing SPB
  - Minor adjustment of project footprint
- Updating analysis
  - FAA Noise Analysis
  - Section 4(f) Evaluation
  - Climate
- Consultations and permitting
  - Clean Water Act (CWA), Section 404, and Rivers and Harbors Act (RHA) (Section 10)
  - CWA (Section 401 Water Quality Certificate), issued by the Alaska Department of Environmental Conservation (ADEC)
  - National Historic Preservation Act (NHPA, Section 106), State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO, Adverse Effect Mitigation and Memorandum of Agreement [MOA])
  - U.S. Department of Transportation Act (Section 4(f)), FAA (Adverse Effect Mitigation and MOA)
  - Marine Mammal Protection Act (MMPA), National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) and U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) Incidental Harassment Authorization (IHA)
  - Endangered Species Act (ESA, Section 7), NMFS (No Jeopardy Finding)

The Purpose and Need, which can be found in Section 2.0 of **Appendix A**, has not been updated.

#### **IV. AGENCY ACTIONS AND APPROVALS**

Since the 2021 EA FONSI/ROD, the Identification of Federal Action has been updated to “Federal Action Requested” and replaced with the following:

The Federal action requested of the FAA by CBS is to approve the Proposed Action, deactivate the current SPB and fund it under FAA’s Airport Improvement Program (AIP). There are no proposed modifications to FAA Design Standards (AC 150-5300-13B) included in this project.

#### **V. ALTERNATIVES**

##### **No Action**

Since the 2021 EA FONSI/ROD, the No Action Alternative has not been updated, with the exception of Section 4.13, therefore there are no changes to the environmental consequences associated with the No Action Alternative. The No Action Alternative is described in Section 3.5 of **Appendix A**.

Since the 2021 EA FONSI/ROD, the Proposed Action Alternative has been updated to reflect specific project changes but otherwise has not been significantly modified from its original dimensions or location.

### **Proposed Action**

The new Sitka SPB would be located on a 1.8-acre parcel at the end of Seward Street on the northeast end of Japonski Island, which was purchased from the Alaska Department of Education and Early Development (ADEED) and is adjacent to the USCG Air Station Sitka. The Proposed Action is to construct a new SPB in Sitka Channel and deactivate the existing SPB. Details and dimensions of the current Proposed Action considered in this SEA consists of the following:

#### **Marine Components (0.97 acres)**

- Seaplane Ramp Float (417 x 46 ft) to support ten Cessna and four Beaver seaplane berths
- Transient/Loading Dock (175 x 56 ft)
- Drive-Down Float (128 x 68 ft)
- Transfer Bridge (120 x 12 ft)
- Approach Dock (80 x 24 ft) foot approach dock on pile foundation

#### **Upland Base Parking Area and Approach (1.96 acres)**

- Seaplane Haulout Ramp (230 x 30 ft)
- Utilities include electricity, water, and lighting
- Security fencing (934 linear ft)
- 14 Parking spaces
- Vegetative Buffer (0.12 acres)
- Access Driveway (200 x 23 ft)
- Covered Shelter

#### **Other Services (locations to be determined at next design phase)**

- Aircraft tie-downs
- Maneuvering room
- Fire Truck Access
- Restroom

#### **Existing Water Lane**

- Shift approximately 2,000 feet to the north.

#### **Existing Seaplane**

- Deactivate once new SPB is operational
- Remove existing floats and ramps but leave piles in place

#### **Alternatives Dismissed from Further Consideration**

Since the 2021 EA FONSI/ROD, the Alternatives Dismissed from Further Consideration analysis has been updated to address comments from the Sitka Tribe of Alaska to the FAA during government-to-government consultation in November 2021.

To address concerns of alternatives development for the project, the original site selection analysis in the 2002 Sitka Seaplane Base Master Plan was reviewed along with the 2012 Siting Analysis and 2016 Updated Siting Analysis to determine if any of the 13 sites not selected were omitted without cause, if sites other than the preferred site would now be reconsidered based on changing conditions, and if any additional sites could have been evaluated. This analysis was summarized in a 2022 Technical Memorandum which re-evaluated the Safe Harbor site, as well as summarizing all previous siting studies from 2002, 2012, and 2016. The 2022 memo and all siting studies are in **Appendix B**.

The process for alternatives development for the project and site evaluation began in the early 2000's and was documented in the 2002 Master Plan for the SPB. The 2002 analysis originally evaluated 12 different sites based on specific criteria related to sufficient size, safe conditions, access, and proximity to wildlife attractants. The 2012 Master Plan and Siting Analysis included the current preferred alternative and expounded upon two other sites – the existing SPB site (A29) and Eliason Harbor. It evaluated sites using additional criteria including safety and boat conflicts, traffic, facilities, and cost.

The 2016 Updated Siting Analysis further evaluated the three sites analyzed in 2012 and four layout alternatives. The alternatives analysis in both 2012 and 2016 was nearly identical for criteria and results. The only site that was not evaluated in 2012 and 2016 with a detailed explanation is the Safe Harbor Site. Safe Harbor was then re-examined in the 2022 memo, which concluded it would not constitute an improvement over the existing Proposed Action.

The identified Proposed Action was reached with focused criteria consideration given the extensive siting analysis studies and iterative refinement during the past two decades and the lack of other identified or recommended sites.

#### **VI. AFFECTED ENVIRONMENT, ENVIRONMENTAL CONSEQUENCES, and AGENCY FINDINGS**

Environmental impact categories identified in FAA Orders 1050.1F and 5050.4B were evaluated in the

FSEA. The reasonably foreseeable direct and indirect<sup>2</sup> environmental consequences of the No Action Alternative and the Proposed Action are included in Chapter 4 of the FSEA. The FSEA identified several resource categories that were not applicable to the project or were not updated as part of the Supplemental Analysis including Coastal Resources, Farmland, Wild and Scenic Rivers, groundwater, and natural resources and energy supply. Below is a summary of the findings for applicable resource categories.

#### **A. Air Quality**

Sitka does not use the Alaska State implementation plan as it is located outside a nonattainment or maintenance area, and the Ozone Transport Region. An air quality analysis was conducted due to the scope of the new facilities. The new SPB facilities have potential to cause a net-increase in criteria air pollutants from expanded aircraft capacity, Increase passenger vehicle capacity, and construction of new facilities. Screening parameters with Federal action thresholds were used to determine the potential for an adverse impact. Thresholds are defined by an annual budget, e.g., the threshold for construction equipment is 125 pieces of equipment in a year which equates to 125 pieces of equipment operating at 16 hours a day, for 356 working days. Construction of the SPB is estimated to require 27 pieces of equipment operating 10 hours a day for 96 working days. Guidance suggests that project emission estimates should be relative to the threshold; the SPB will use 3.7% of the construction emissions budget (threshold). The Proposed Action does not meet the FAA threshold for conducting an emissions inventory. Accordingly, the three screening parameters that could indicate the potential for project effects to air quality were not applied. The Proposed Action is not anticipated to contribute to or worsen violations of NAAQS because the low total impact of facility construction and new operations is so minimal that FAA does not require further analysis or inventory of emissions. The geographical setting and characteristics of the area make it unlikely that an inventory would be required in the future.

#### **B. Biological Resources**

Categories of biological resources relevant to the FSEA include fish and essential fish habitat, endangered species, critical habitat, and marine mammals.

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<sup>2</sup> Historically CEQ regulations required consideration of cumulative impacts. In 2023, Congress passed the Fiscal Responsibility Act directed agencies to consider “the reasonably foreseeable environmental effects of proposed agency actions” (42 USC 4332(2)(C)). Since the publication of the draft EA, the CEQ revoked its regulations (40 CFR parts 1500-1508) implementing NEPA, 42 USC 4321 et seq., as amended, in response to Executive Order (E.O.) 14154, Unleashing American Energy. In addition, the Supreme Court issued the *Seven County Infrastructure Coalition v. Eagle County*, 605 U.S. 168 (2025) ruling on May 29, 2025. As a result of these actions, it is no longer a legal requirement or the policy of the federal government to conduct cumulative impact analyses. In addition, the *Seven Counties* ruling reinforced the limited scope of NEPA reviews, holding that NEPA does not require an agency to consider environmental effects of other activities and projects “separate in time or place” from the proposed action. Therefore, this Final EA has removed the prior discussion of, and/analysis related to, cumulative impacts.

## **Fish and Essential Fish Habitat**

Since the 2021 EA FONSI/ROD, the Environmental Consequences of Fish and Essential Fish Habitat (EFH) has been updated. Approximately 2.39 acres of EFH below the high tide line would be permanently filled for upland parking and staging associated with the Project. While eelgrass beds, Peterson Creek, and important fish rearing habitat have been largely avoided by the Project footprint, the SPB's overwater structures will shade approximately 0.97 acres of EFH which could permanently reduce habitat or cause fragmentation of algae beds and inhibit eelgrass development in the area. Construction of the new SPB may temporarily adversely impact EFH due to elevated noise from impact pile-driving activities, increased turbidity, increased vessel traffic, risk of invasive species introduction, and increased risk of accidental spills. The mouth of Peterson Creek (AWC: 113-41-10185) may be directly impacted by propagated noise during construction. Impacts are described in detail in the Project's EFH assessment (Appendix B to the 2021 Final EA [**Appendix A**]).

Development of the SPB's upland surfaces into more impervious surfaces (e.g., paved areas, shelter structures, haul out ramp.) could exacerbate local stormwater runoff leading to sedimentation, siltation, and an increase in contaminants and debris in EFH. A decrease in aquatic vegetation and phytoplankton as a result of reduced ambient light from the SPB's overwater structures could indirectly impact fish by reducing prey abundance and habitat complexity (NOAA 2017).

Further, construction activities, such as discharge of fill and noise from pile-driving could injure fish. Injured fish, particularly prey species, may be more susceptible to predation resulting in indirect impacts on other EFH species and disruptions to the local marine system. The proposed floats could change the wave and current regime in the area by disrupting and redirecting or slowing circulation, which may alter localized substrate and detrital materials and impact the nearshore detrital food web. Disruptions to sediment transport from the new SPB's marine structures could act as barriers to natural processes required for algal propagation and fish settlement, foraging, rearing, and spawning (NOAA 2017).

During the February 2025 public notice period for the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE) Section 404 permit, NMFS staff provided a letter that reiterated the need for conservation recommendations (**Appendix C**). Conservation recommendations were agreed to and incorporated, and can be found in Final EA Section 5.2.3.1 of **Appendix A**.

The proposed action incorporates previous mitigations and minimizations and conservation recommendations that reduce impacts to essential fish habitat, and therefore no significant adverse impacts are anticipated. These measures are described in the 2021 FONSI (**Appendix A**).

## **Endangered Species, Critical Habitat, and Marine Mammals**

Impacts to ESA-listed species expected in the action area, Mexico distinct population segment of

humpback whales and Western distinct population segment of Steller sea lions and the proposed threatened sunflower sea star, are discussed and addressed in detail in the Biological Assessment (**Appendix C**) submitted to NMFS as part of Section 7 formal consultation under the ESA. There is no ESA critical habitat in the Project area. The ESA Section 7 consultation was completed on May 1, 2024, with NMFS's issuance of a Biological Opinion (BO) (AKRO-2023-02513) and No Jeopardy Finding. After consultation was completed, the Project construction phasing was updated; therefore, consultation was reinitiated, and on December 31, 2024, NMFS agreed that the results of their previous consultation continue to apply. ESA consultation materials, including the BO, are found in **Appendix C**. The BO asserts that with implementation of mitigation measures, the Project is not likely to appreciably reduce the likelihood of survival or recovery of ESA-listed species, therefore no significant adverse impacts are anticipated. Mitigation measures are described in the BO and in the 2021 FONSI (**Appendix A**).

Under the Marine Mammal Protection Act, and prior to construction, an Incidental Harassment Authorization (IHA) would be required from the NMFS for the take of marine mammals under their jurisdiction. Further, a separate IHA would be required for the take of northern sea otters under the jurisdiction of U.S. Fish and Wildlife.

### **Migratory Birds and Eagles**

The Project is not anticipated to have an effect on bald or golden eagles.

#### ***C. Historical, Architectural, Archeological and Cultural Resources***

To avoid visual effects to historic properties, CBS has modified site design by lowering the elevation of the apron and developing an interpretive panel to be placed at the boundary between the NHL and the new SPB. Prior to the award of Federal funds, CBS will coordinate with the FAA and NPS to develop a scope of services and execution plan. SHPO and STA will be invited to review the plan. The panel will be developed to industry standards by or under the supervision of a Secretary of the Interior-qualified historian. Panels will include a discussion of seaplane history and continuing use in Southeast Alaska, Sitka, focusing on the region's long history of reliance on seaplanes including the importance of military seaplanes in WWII at the NOB, the demarcation between the Officer's Housing and the new Sitka Seaplane Base, and the role of U.S. Army Coastal Defense Network structures. Panel content will be developed with signatory and concurring party input.

Impacts to previously undocumented WWII artifacts will be addressed by implementing an inadvertent discovery plan (IDP). Under the IDP, if cultural resources are found during construction, work would be halted and the SHPO, Tribe, and consulting parties notified. Work on the site would not restart until appropriate agency consultation occurred.

Consultation with Sitka Tribe of Alaska is underway to address archaeological and tribal monitoring



during ground disturbance on the site and IDP protocols in case of discovery of Tribally sensitive cultural resources. FAA has agreed to engage archaeological and tribal monitors during ground disturbing construction activities.

Section 106 consultation has determined appropriate mitigation to address the adverse effect to SIT-01115, contained in the MOA included in **Appendix E**.

The proposed actions avoidance, minimization and mitigations measured included and incorporated in the design and outlined in the MOA reduce impacts to historical, architectural, archeological, and cultural resources and therefore no significant adverse impacts are anticipated.

#### ***D. Hazardous Materials, Pollution Prevention, and Solid Waste***

Since the 2021 EA FONSI/ROD, the environmental consequences have been updated to reflect the deactivation of the current SPB and information and analysis specific to potential hazardous materials at the proposed SPB.

Deactivation of the current SPB site does not impact any contaminated sites in the area nor will it cause impacts as no hazardous materials are stored on site. Coordination with the USACE for the FUDS site was conducted in 2021 and concluded there is no known FUDS contamination at the proposed SPB site (**Appendix H**).

The risk of encountering hazardous materials on the 1.8-acre parcel acquired to accommodate the new SPB is low due to site conditions and historic use. Construction of the Proposed Action would result in temporary increases in storing hazardous materials at the Airport. All construction waste would be managed and disposed of in accordance with state and Federal solid-waste-management laws and regulations. If contaminated soil or groundwater is encountered during construction, the contractor shall immediately notify CBS and stop work until coordination on the appropriate response occurs with ADEC.

The Proposed Action, including deactivation of the current site, would have no significant effect on hazardous materials and significance thresholds would not be exceeded.

#### ***E. Land Use***

Since the 2021 EA FONSI/ROD, the Environmental Consequences of Land Use has been updated to reflect analysis related to acquisition of the Alaska Department of Education and Early Development (ADEED) parcel. The 1.8 acre parcel purchased from ADEED in 2022 was originally part of a larger property with USCG restrictions and a drainage easement. However, prior to acquisition, the parcel was re-platted to re-align the USCG ROW parcel to encompass all of the existing USCG encroachments inside of the original lot. There are therefore no encroachments on the parcel now. The findings from the 2021 EA FONSI/ROD remain the same. Undeveloped land would change to aviation use at the

seaplane base. This would increase the use intensity of the land but is consistent with the adjacent U.S. Coast Guard air base and historic military aviation use of the area.

Deactivation of the existing seaplane base will include removing existing floats and ramps. CBS will determine future use of the facility.

***F. Department of Transportation Act: Section 4(f)***

The Section 4(f) Evaluation memo and analysis was updated from the 2020 EA FONSI/ROD, and consulted, to add additional site design alternatives to determine if avoidance of the observation post was feasible. Several alternatives to either avoid or minimize impacts to the observation post and gun emplacement were evaluated, including options to retain the observation post through apron reconfiguration or moving the observation post to a different location. Avoidance and minimization measures are not feasible or prudent and the demolition of the observation post and gun emplacement constitute a Section 4(f) use.

Mitigation measures, contained in the MOA, and consulted with SHPO, the agency with jurisdiction, will be implemented and therefore no significant impacts are anticipated to the observation post, a historic and 4f property.

***G. Noise and Noise-Compatible Land Use***

The 2024 Noise Study included new sensitive receptors, including Eliason Harbor 1 and 2 - sites used by Sitka Tribe of Alaska for education purposes during culture camps which involve school age children. The 2024 Noise Study concluded that there would be a decrease, or shift, in sensitive noise receptor DNL exposure between the proposed water lane (general route seaplanes use to access the area) and the future no action/existing alternatives for all but two sensitive receptors. This decrease is mainly attributed to the movement of the water lane further north into the Western Anchorage (which lies immediately to the east of the proposed SPB breakwaters and north of Sitka Channel) and which puts a larger amount of space between the operations area and the receptors. The waterlane moved because in 2002, the Sitka Seaplane Base Master Plan identified risks associated with the existing waterlane and the need for relocation. This waterlane has been in existence since the 1930s and noise associated with seaplanes has been a sustained impact associated with that current and historical waterlane use. Despite the increased noise level at Receptor 8, all receptors remain well below the 65 dB DNL, even with consideration of future air traffic, putting the new Sitka SPB within the compatible land use guidelines from Table 1, Appendix A of Title 14 CFR Part 150 (**Appendix G**).

Although vehicles accessing the SPB would slightly increase traffic on Seward Avenue, overall noise levels are not expected to increase substantially as traffic would be spread throughout the week and cars would be traveling at a slow speed on Seward Avenue. Therefore, the Proposed Action would not substantially increase traffic noise.

Per FAA Order 1050.1F, mitigation is required when the 65 DNL impacts sensitive noise receptors. Because no sensitive noise receptors are within the 65 DNL, no noise mitigation is required. However, in recognition that changes in noise patterns are a community concern, the 2002 Airport Master Plan proposed to minimize noise impact to what became the Proposed Action in the analysis. Specifically, the seaplane base layout was modified and designed to minimize noise by rotating and orienting the layout away from nearby SEARCH buildings, using natural terrain as screening.

In addition, although not required, CBS has committed to developing a Fly Friendly program for the new SPB. CBS would work with adjacent landowners and pilots to develop measures to minimize impacts to the facilities located along Seward Avenue. This would include public education provided to pilots to request certain behaviors to reduce aircraft noise level. This program could include, but is not limited to, observed quiet hours, and encourages practices such as utilizing lowest RPM while maintaining safe operation of aircraft. A Fly Friendly Program “Checklist” may be found at <https://www.cityofsitka.com/departments/PublicWorks/FlyFriendlyProgram>.

The noise from construction equipment would dissipate at a rate of 6 dB per doubling of the distance from the source to the receptor (50 feet). SEARHC is approximately 2,000 feet from blasting source to the north. At the distance of 2,000 feet, the construction noise would be reduced by 30 dB. Therefore, construction noise from blasting would not exceed 60 dB. In addition, construction-related noise impacts are addressed through development of a blast plan and coordination with CBS through construction permitting which would incorporate measures to reduce the potential for adverse noise impacts. The blast plan would be developed and coordinated with NPS, SEARHC, and Mount Edgecumbe High School to incorporate measures to monitor and minimize the potential for blasting effects on the structures on Seward Avenue. CBS intends to coordinate with NPS, SEARHC, and the Alaska Department of Education and Early Development (ADEED) on the Fly Friendly program and the blast plan.

Because no sensitive noise receptors, including 4f considerations, were found to be inside the 65 DNL no noise mitigation is required and no significant noise impacts are anticipated from the proposed action.

#### ***H. Socioeconomic Impacts and Children’s Environmental Health and Safety Risks<sup>3</sup>***

Since the 2021 EA FONSI/ROD, the Environmental Consequences subsection of the Children’s Environmental Health & Safety Risk section has been updated to include a discussion about local traffic patterns and the potential for effects on emergency vehicle access along Tongass Avenue and Seward

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<sup>3</sup> Since the publication of the draft EA, Executive Orders 12898, 13985, 14091, and 14096 were revoked on January 20, 2025. On January 21, 2025, President Trump issued E.O. 14173, Ending Illegal Discrimination and Restoring Merit-Based Opportunity. In addition, CEQ revoked its regulations (40 CFR parts 1500-1508) implementing NEPA, 42 U.S.C. 4321 et seq., as amended, in response to E.O. 14154. Consequently, it is no longer a legal requirement or the policy of the federal government to conduct environmental justice analyses. As a result, the Final EA has removed the prior discussion of, and data/analysis related to, environmental justice.

Avenue. A note responsive to SEARHC's concern about lead exposure was also added.

DOWL conducted a traffic analysis in 2021 to determine if the anticipated increase in traffic to the new SPB would require a Traffic Impact Analysis (TIA) and concluded the increase would be 21 one-way trips daily (Appendix E to the 2021 Final EA [**Appendix A**]).

That conclusion was made after due consideration of the size of the new proposed SPB (14 tiedowns and 4 transient slips) and likelihood of associated daily traffic. Some pilots have indicated that they would only use the SPB seasonally (see Section 4.9.1, for example). Some road travel to or from the SPB would be by passenger van. More SPB travel would likely be on weekends. More vehicular traffic is likely in the summer tourist months. With consideration of all these factors, the conclusion of a daily average of 21 one-way trips does not raise any obvious or concerning traffic interference or traffic congestion concerns for either Tongass Drive or Seward Avenue.

Some concern has been raised about interference with emergency vehicles if aircraft were to be transported on public roads. The transport of oversize or overweight vehicles is heavily regulated. The State of Alaska has established regulations in 17 AAC 25.300 through 17 AAC 25.380 and CBS addresses oversize or overweight vehicles in CBS 11.45.190. Permit terms and conditions are done as a regulatory matter depending on the factors of a particular transport. Safety is an explicit part of state permitting. A permit will not issue unless "each of the following requirements is met:"

1. the state's best interests are served by the permit;
2. the usefulness of the highways traveled is not diminished;
3. the safety of other users is not compromised;
4. the traveling public will not be unreasonably inconvenienced

Various specific conditions can be added as required for a given transport, including "requirements for towing vehicles, pilot cars, warning signs and lights, hours of darkness, and other safety considerations specified in the department's Administrative Permit Manual: Oversize and Overweight Permits , revised as of April 2023, and adopted by reference."<sup>4</sup> Such requirements apply to any public road .

Safety is also a relevant consideration under CBS 11.45.190. Vehicles may only operate "along such routes as will least interfere with or endanger other users, highways or roadways." Similar to state permits, the City of Sitka may require potential police escort, pilot cars, and other safety measures as appropriate to the circumstances.

The amount of roadway at issue is limited and therefore unlikely to be blocked for a lengthy period. To contextualize, from the Sitka Behavioral Health Clinic on the northern part of Japonski Island (1209

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<sup>4</sup> 17 AAC 25.320(b).

Seward Avenue) to the Alaska Seaplanes Sitka Outstation (551 Airport Road) on the Sitka Rocky Gutierrez Airport is only 1.0 mile (using Tongass Drive) and it is about .5 miles from 1209 Seward Avenue to the intersection of Tongass Drive with Airport Road. As a general matter, a slow-moving vehicle moving at a constant speed of 10 mph will take about 6 minutes to cover 1 mile, and even less time would be spent on transport on the short stretch of Tongass Drive required to access the hospital.

Particular time restrictions, meanwhile, are a matter for permitting. It could be that relatively high volume times during summer might be treated differently than winter season transport, for example. The long Alaska summer nights might lead to different transport windows than the darker winter conditions. Regulators will ultimately determine permit time restrictions as appropriate and those potential time restrictions cannot be known, for sure, much less analyzed with accuracy in advance.

Aircraft are not required to be maintained on Japonski Island or moved by road, on Japonski Island. A haulout is located at the Sitka Airport, and therefore transport by road is not required if an on-airport repair facility is the target. Transport of aircraft along Tongass Drive or Seward Avenue would ultimately be an unusual or atypical event. If such transport were to occur, it would have to be planned in advance and permitted as described above. The exact means or methods of transport area also speculative—aircraft wings might be removed at the discretion of the aircraft owner or permitting authorities. Permits may require that other safety measures be utilized including, but not limited to, a police escort, a pilot car, or flags. In the unusual event that an aircraft is being transported by road, the time on the road is likely measured in minutes along the small stretches of Japonski Island roadway at issue (northern part of Seward Avenue and Tongass Drive, for example).

With consideration of the existing regulatory environment, the layout of Japonski Island, the size of the SPB, the 2021 traffic analysis, and comments received from the public and pilots, we cannot find that disruption to traffic patterns or interference with emergency vehicles are likely or would result in substantial interference.

### ***I. Visual Effects***

Since the 2021 EA FONSI/ROD, the Minimization and Mitigation subsection of the Visual Impacts section has been updated. A blast plan for construction would be developed and coordinated with NPS, SEARHC, and Mount Edgecumbe High School to incorporate measures to monitor and minimize the potential for blasting effects on the structures on Seward Avenue. The proposed vegetative buffer has been reduced from 0.3 to 0.12 acres. In addition, moving marine components farther north and lowering the upland area in elevation to mitigate the change in the nature of the view from development to the south do not affect impacts to the observation post.

The view from adjacent uses would change however, lowering the site elevation, buffering landscape at the cul-de-sac, and reorientation of floats to the north reduces visual impacts to adjacent uses. Findings remain consistent with the 2021 EA FONSI/ROD, no significant impacts are expected.

## **J. Water Resources**

### **Wetlands**

Of the approximately 3.86-acre gravel pad constructed to support the Base Parking Area and Approach, 2.45 acres would impact jurisdictional resources, and 1.35 acres of gravel would be placed in terrestrial uplands. In addition, material would be excavated from the side slopes above Sitka Channel to level the proposed fill pad.

A USACE CWA/RHA Section 404/10 individual permit application was submitted and a compensatory mitigation plan (CMP) is required. The public comment period for the Section 404/10 application closed on March 12, 2025, resulting in four comments, which are summarized in **Appendix H**. A CMP for wetland and marine impacts has been developed calling for purchase of 24.4 credits from the Natzuhini Bay Mitigation Bank. Once the CMP is approved and the MOA is signed, the final signed permit would be issued. All permit applications and correspondence related to Section 404/401 permits are in **Appendix H**. A final signed permit would be obtained prior to any disturbance of or fill in WOUS.

A Section 401 Water Quality certification was issued in December 2023, but subsequently rescinded. A new Section 401 Water Quality certification was requested through the ADEC on December 5, 2024, and issued on March 21, 2025.

### **Floodplains**

The Project would result in 3.38 acres of fill within the Coastal High Hazard Area but not result in impeded flows. Consultation with CBS and a CBS Development Permit would be required to ensure compliance with the National Flood Insurance Program. The action would not result in a significant encroachment<sup>5</sup>. Therefore, the Proposed Action would result in no significant impact on floodplains.

### **Surface Waters**

Approximately 3.34 acres of Sitka Channel and adjacent intertidal areas would be affected by the Project. Of these 3.34 acres, 2.39 acres are from fill placed in Sitka Channel and 0.06 acres are from fill placed in intertidal areas and approximately 0.97 acres are from construction of floating/anchored elements (wave attenuator(s), floats) and pile-supported trestles.

Impacts to water resources are mitigated through USACE 404 individual permits and purchase of

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<sup>5</sup> (1) considerable probability of loss of human life, (2) likely future damage associated with the encroachment that could be substantial in cost or extent, including interruption of service on or loss of a vital transportation facility, and (3) a notable adverse impact on "natural and beneficial floodplain values"

credits through the mitigation bank are consistent with state wetland and floodplain strategies and therefore no significant impacts are expected.

### **K. Climate**

The main source of greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions<sup>6</sup> related to the Proposed Action would be carbon dioxide (CO<sub>2</sub>) emissions generated by combustion connected with construction equipment vehicles. Construction is a temporary activity and would not result in a new emissions source past the 24-month construction period. The Proposed Action would not change the number of aircraft operations or accommodate larger aircraft or aircraft that can fly further distances and therefore would not increase emissions. Given the design of the proposed improvements, the taxi-in and taxi-out time of aircraft is anticipated to have a minor increase after implementation of the Proposed Action. No significant or sustained increase in construction, vehicular, or aircraft traffic is anticipated because of the Proposed Action. The increase in emissions is expected to be negligible. Therefore, the Proposed Action will have no significant effect on climate.

The Proposed Action would result in no significant impacts to other resource categories discussed in the FEA.

## **VII. MITIGATION/MINIMIZATION**

Since the 2021 EA FONSI/ROD, the following Minimization and Mitigations have been added or updated. All other mitigations included in the 2021 FONSI/ROD (**Appendix A**) are unchanged and applicable to the project.

- Since the 2021 EA FONSI/ROD, the Minimization and Mitigation subsection of Endangered Species, Critical Habitat, and Marine Mammals Habitat has changed to include new mitigation measures.
  - If active bald or golden eagle nests are found within the Project area, a primary zone of a minimum 330 ft would be maintained as an undisturbed habitat buffer around nesting eagles. If bald eagle nests are documented within 0.5 mile during the pre-construction survey, CBS would consult with USFWS prior to the start of construction for any nests within 660 ft of the cut and fill limits or 0.5 mile of pile-driving.
  - An MMPA IHA was issued by NMFS May 3, 2024, for takes of marine mammal under NMFS's jurisdiction (gray whale, humpback whales, minke whale, killer whales, harbor porpoise, harbor seal, and Steller sea lions) (**Appendix C**). The IHA will expire in 2026, therefore another IHA will be obtained prior to construction.

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<sup>6</sup> Executive Order 13990, which was relied upon for the January 2023 CEQ draft GHG guidance, was revoked. In addition, CEQ revoked its regulations (40 CFR parts 1500-1508) implementing NEPA in response to Executive Order 14154. As a result of these changes, the qualitative climate evaluation that discussed the level of preparedness with respect to the impacts of climate change, the extent to which the alternatives could be affected by future climate conditions, and if the alternatives are consistent with national, state, and local climate goals has been removed from the 2025 Final EA. GHG emissions are provided for disclosure purposes only.

- Since the 2021 EA FONSI/ROD, the Minimization and Mitigation of Historical, Architectural, Archaeological and Cultural Resources has been updated to reflect new information and re-written for clarity.
  - To avoid visual effects to SIT-00079, CBS has modified site design by lowering the elevation of the apron and developing an interpretive panel to be placed at the boundary between the NHL and the new SPB. Prior to the award of Federal funds, CBS will coordinate with the FAA and NPS to develop a scope of services and execution plan. SHPO and STA will be invited to review the plan. The panel will be developed to industry standards by or under the supervision of a Secretary of the Interior-qualified historian. Panels will include a discussion of seaplane history and continuing use in Southeast Alaska, Sitka, focusing on the region's long history of reliance on seaplanes including the importance of military seaplanes in WWII at the NOB, the demarcation between the Officer's Housing and the new Sitka Seaplane Base, and the role of U.S. Army Coastal Defense Network structures. Panel content will be developed with signatory and concurring party input.
  - Impacts to previously undocumented WWII artifacts will be addressed by implementing an inadvertent discovery plan (IDP). Under the IDP, if cultural resources are found during construction, work would be halted and the SHPO, Tribe, and consulting parties notified. Work on the site would not restart until appropriate agency consultation occurred.
  - Section 106 consultation was reinitiated to determine appropriate mitigation to address the adverse effect to SIT-01115, which consists of rehabilitation of a similar structure on Japonski Island and creation of a replica of the observation post. The Section 106 process concluded on January 28, 2026 when the MOA was signed and the copy filed with Advisory Council on Historic Preservation. Mitigation measures are detailed in the signed MOA (**Appendix E**).
  - Consultation with Sitka Tribe of Alaska has concluded that addresses archaeological and tribal monitoring during ground disturbance on the site and IDP protocols in case of discovery of Tribally sensitive cultural resources. FAA has agreed to engage archaeological and tribal monitors during ground disturbing construction activities.
- Since the 2021 EA FONSI/ROD, the Minimization and Mitigation of Hazardous Materials, Solid Waste, and Pollution Prevention has been updated as the Proposed Action no longer includes bulk fuel storage.
  - All construction waste would be managed and disposed of in accordance with all state and Federal solid-waste-management laws and regulations. If contaminated soil or groundwater is encountered during construction, the contractor shall immediately notify CBS and stop work until coordination on the appropriate response occurs with ADEC.



- The Section 4(f) Evaluation memo was updated to reflect additional alternatives analysis and sent separately to the Department of the Interior, in compliance with FAA guidance, on January 3, 2025, for consultation on site alternatives selection.
  - Avoidance and minimization measures are not feasible or prudent and the demolition of the observation post and gun emplacement constitute a Section 4(f) use.
  - Analysis under Section 4(f) has concluded as Section 106 consultation is completed as continued consultation for mitigation measures are directly with SHPO and the agency with jurisdiction because the 4(f) property is considered a historic property. The final draft of the Section 4(f) memo is included in **Appendix F**.
- Since the 2021 EA FONSI/ROD, the Minimization and Mitigation subsection of the Noise and Noise-Compatible Land Use section has been updated.
  - Per FAA Order 1050.1F, mitigation is required when the 65 DNL impacts sensitive noise receptors. Because no sensitive noise receptors are within the 65 DNL, no noise mitigation is required. However, in recognition that changes in noise patterns are a community concern, the 2002 Airport Master Plan proposed to minimize noise impact to what became the Proposed Action in the analysis. Specifically, the layout was modified and designed to minimize noise by rotating and orienting the layout away from nearby SEARCH buildings, using natural terrain as screening.
  - In addition, although not required, CBS has committed to developing a Fly Friendly program for the new SPB. CBS would work with adjacent landowners and pilots to develop measures to minimize impacts to the facilities located along Seward Avenue. This would include public education provided to pilots to request certain behaviors to reduce aircraft noise level. This program could include, but is not limited to, observed quiet hours, and encourages practices such as utilizing lowest RPM while maintaining safe operation of aircraft.
  - Construction-related noise impacts are addressed through development of a blast plan and coordination with CBS through construction permitting which would incorporate measures to reduce the potential for adverse noise impacts. The blast plan would be developed and coordinated with NPS, SEARHC, and Mount Edgecumbe High School to incorporate measures to monitor and minimize the potential for blasting effects on the structures on Seward Avenue. CBS intends to coordinate with NPS, SEARHC, and the Alaska Department of Education and Early Development (ADEED) on the Fly Friendly program and the blast plan.
- Since the 2021 EA FONSI/ROD, the Minimization and Mitigation subsection of the Visual Impacts section has been updated.
- A blast plan for construction would be developed and coordinated with NPS, SEARHC, and Mount Edgecumbe High School to incorporate measures to monitor and minimize the potential for blasting effects on the structures on Seward Avenue. The proposed vegetative buffer has

been reduced from 0.3 to 0.12 acres. In addition, moving marine components farther north and lowering the upland area in elevation to mitigate the change in the nature of the view from development to the south do not affect impacts to the observation post.

### **Required Permits, Licenses, and Other Approvals**

As discussed in Chapter 3 of the Final EA, there are several permits, licenses, and/or other approvals the Airport Sponsor would obtain or would continue operating under existing permits to comply with County, state, and federal regulations. See below for a summary of required permits, licenses, and/or other approvals for implementation of the Proposed Action. Since the 2021 EA FONSI/ROD, the Permits and Approvals Required has been updated to correct an error – reference to the USFWS ESA is removed as there are no USFWS ESA consultation requirements for the Proposed Action.

The following permits would be required:

- DNR (Tideland conveyance)
- United States Army Corps of Engineers (USACE) (Section 404 Clean Water Act [CWA] and Section 10 of the Rivers and Harbors Act Permit)
- Alaska Department of Environmental Conservation (ADEC) (Section 401 CWA; Alaska Pollutant Discharge Elimination System [APDES] General Permit for Discharges from Large and Small Construction Activities/National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System Section 402 Permit)
- CBS (Floodplain Regulation Development Permit)

Additional required consultations and approvals include:

- Alaska State Historic Preservation Officer (SHPO) and Local Indian Tribes, Alaskan Native Villages and Native Hawaiian organizations (National Historic Preservation Act [NHPA] and US Department of Transportation Act Section 4(f))
- NMFS (Endangered Species Act [ESA], Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation & Management Act, Marine Mammal Protection Act [MMPA]) -*Biological Opinion, Incidental Harassment Authorization, EFH Assessment*
- USFWS (MMPA, Fish & Wildlife Coordination Act)

### **VIII. PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT**

- Since the 2021 EA FONSI/ROD, the Section 106 Consultation section has been updated to include updated information from 2024 fieldwork.
  - Reinitiation of the Section 106 process began October 2022, with new initiation letters. Additional consultation updates were submitted in April 2024 and February 2025. Completion of the Section 106 process is anticipated in Fall 2025 once a public comment period is completed and signatories execute the MOA and is filed with Advisory Council on Historic Preservation.
  - In response to requests for monitoring from the Sitka Tribe of Alaska, DOWL completed

an archaeological field investigation in March 2022 and May 2024 which resulted in the identification of additional features attributed to SIT-01124. One feature initially attributed to SIT-01124 was reassigned to SIT-01115. The remaining features assigned to SIT-01124 were evaluated for a recommendation of eligibility. DOWL's recommendation is that SIT-01124 is not eligible for listing in the NRHP. Consultations regarding SIT-01124 are ongoing.

- Since the 2021 EA FONSI/ROD, consultation under Endangered Species Act has been updated to reflect recent consultation.
  - After previous consultation was completed, the Proposed Action changed, as described in Chapter 1.1, and therefore consultation was reinitiated and on December 31, 2024, NMFS agreed that the results of their previous consultation prevailed. Section 7 consultation with NMFS was completed on May 1, 2024, with the issuance of a BO (AKRO-2023-02513). ESA consultation materials, including the BO, are found in **Appendix C**.
- Since the 2021 EA FONSI/ROD, the Public Input on Draft EA has been updated to reflect comments received between September 9 and October 13, 2025, during the public comment period.
  - The Draft SEA was released on September 9, 2025, with a Notice of Availability (NOA) published in the Sitka Sentinel (**Appendix K**). The Draft SEA was available for review or download on a CBS website: <https://www.cityofsitka.com/sitka-seaplane-base-siting-study>.
  - Additionally, an email was sent to all agencies previously engaged during project scoping or engaged during consultations. A total of 155 recipients were emailed the NOA, listed in **Appendix A**.
  - The Open House was held October 9, 2025, from 5-7 pm and this information was included on the project website, in the NOA and shared in the email. Hardcopies of the November 22nd public meeting agenda were mailed ahead of time. The meeting was attended by two interested parties. The open house provided copies of the Draft SEA for review, information boards displaying project details, and comment forms. Comment forms requested that feedback be emailed or written and postmarked to the Federal Aviation Administration Alaska Region Office of Airports by 5:00 PM Alaska Time on October 13, 2025. No written comments were received during the open house. A summary of the Open House and graphics used is in **Appendix K**.
  - Comments on the Draft EA were received via email on October 8, 2025, from SEARHC. In addition, a pilot stakeholder meeting was held during the comment period on September 16, 2025, and comments were received during that meeting. A summary of comments received during the public comment period, responses, and a description of how the Draft EA was updated in response is included in **Appendix K**. Public input resulted in minor updates to the SEA.

## IX. FINDINGS, DECISION, AND ORDER

After careful and thorough consideration of the facts contained herein, the undersigned finds that the proposed Federal action, namely the Proposed Action, is consistent with existing national environmental policies and objectives as set forth in Section 101 (a) of NEPA and other applicable environmental requirements and is not a major federal action significantly affecting the quality of the human environment or otherwise, including any condition requiring consultation pursuant to Section 102(2)(c) of NEPA. As a result, FAA will not prepare an Environmental Impact Statement.

This decision does not constitute a commitment of funds under the Airport Improvement Program (AIP); however, it does fulfill the environmental prerequisites to approve applications for grants of AIP funds for the proposed project in the future. (49 USC § 47101)

Accordingly, under the authority delegated to me by the Administrator of the FAA, I approve and direct that agency action be taken to carry out implementation of the Proposed Action.

**LAURIE J SUTTMEIER** Digitally signed by LAURIE J SUTTMEIER  
Date: 2026.01.28 13:25:43 -09'00'

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Laurie Suttmeier

Director

Airports Division, ARP-600

### **Right of Appeal**

This FONSI/ROD constitutes a final order of the FAA Administrator and is subject to the exclusive judicial review under 49 USC § 46110 by the US Circuit Court of Appeals for the District of Columbia or the US Circuit Court of Appeals for the circuit in which the person contesting the decision resides or has its principal place of business. Any party having substantial interest in this order may apply for review of the decision by filing a petition for review in the appropriate US Court of Appeals no later than 60 days after the order is issued in accordance with the provisions of 49 USC § 46110.