

Draft Finding of No Significant Impact (FONSI)
and
Draft Finding of No Practicable Alternative (FONPA)
for
Facilities Master Plan Projects at
Transportation Safeguards Training Site at
Fort Chaffee, Arkansas

AGENCY: U.S. Department of Energy; National Nuclear Security Administration

ACTION: Draft Finding of No Significant Impact/Finding of No Practicable Alternative

FINAL ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT:

The United States (U.S.) Department of Energy (DOE), National Nuclear Security Administration (NNSA) Office of Secure Transportation (OST) prepared an Environmental Assessment (EA) (DOE/EA-2085) to evaluate the potential environmental impacts of implementing the Proposed Action of construction and operation of 12 new projects identified within the 2017 Facilities Master Plan at the Transportation Safeguards Training Site at Fort Chaffee, Arkansas. The NNSA prepared the EA in accordance with the National Environmental Policy Act of 1969 (NEPA) (42 United States Code [USC] 4321 *et seq.*), Council on Environmental Quality (CEQ) Regulations (40 Code of Federal Regulations [CFR] 1500-1508), DOE's implementing procedures (10 CFR 1021), 32 CFR 651, *Environmental Analysis of Army Actions*, and the 2011 Army National Guard (ARNG) NEPA Handbook. The EA identifies, documents, and evaluates the potential environmental effects of implementing the 2017 Facilities Master Plan for the Transportation Safeguards Training Site at Fort Chaffee, Arkansas, herein referred to as the "Facilities Master Plan." The EA also contains a floodplain assessment (in Appendix B of the EA) in accordance with 10 CFR 1022, *Compliance with Floodplain and Wetland Environmental Review Requirements*. All discussions and findings related to the Proposed Action and the No Action Alternative are presented in the Final EA and Appendices. The EA is hereby incorporated by reference.

OST completed a Facilities Master Plan in 2017 outlining projected construction projects for the next 5 years to consolidate and modernize facilities within the Transportation Safeguards Training Site at Fort Chaffee, Arkansas. NNSA OST is the action proponent and must comply with NEPA through preparation of an EA for this potential future construction. As set forth in 10 USC §10501 and Department of Defense (DoD) Directive 5105.77, the NGB is a joint activity of the DoD, and as such must comply with the NEPA. At Fort Chaffee, where the U.S. Army is landowner and Arkansas Army National Guard (ARARNG) is the installation licensee/operator, the NGB must satisfy an independent NEPA requirement related to the NNSA OST proposed Federal action. The National Guard Bureau (NGB) would sign a separate FONSI for this action.

The EA analyzed the potential effects of construction and operation of the Facilities Master Plan projects at the Transportation Safeguards Training Site. Of the 14 future projects listed in the Facilities Master Plan, 2 projects have been funded and the NEPA documentation completed. The Proposed Action evaluates the remaining 12 projects contained within the Facilities Master Plan, which consist of the following: Live-Fire Shoot House, Range 13 Improvements, Physical Training/Intermediate Use of Force Expansion, Range 11 Classroom, Carpentry Shop Consolidation, Multi-Purpose Dye Marking Cartridge Facility, Multi-Use Administration and Classroom Building, Multi-Use Elevated Shooting Platform, Range 17A Breaching Pad/Method of Entry House, Range 17 Upgrade, Skid Pad/Drive Track, and OST Dormitory Replacement.

The EA also considered a No Action Alternative, where construction and operation of the proposed projects would not occur. Under the No Action Alternative, there would be no construction or operation of Projects 3 through 14 as listed in the 2017 Facilities Master Plan and in the Final EA. The No Action Alternative would include continued use of existing facilities at Fort Chaffee and off-site facilities, which would not meet the current training needs of NNSA OST. The No Action Alternative is considered in the environmental consequences analysis to provide a baseline for environmental conditions.

The EA examined the potential effects of the Proposed Action and No Action Alternative on the following resource areas of environmental and socioeconomic concern: air quality; biological resources; cultural resources; geography and soils; greenhouse gases and climate change; infrastructure and utilities; hazardous materials and waste; land use and aesthetics; noise; socioeconomics, community services, and environmental justice; traffic and transportation; water resources; and cumulative impacts.

NNSA conducted a floodplain assessment in accordance with 10 CFR 1022 (see Appendix B of the EA). The floodplain assessment evaluates the Multi-Use Administration and Classroom Building which would be located within the 100-year floodplain. The Multi-Use Administration and Classroom Building must be located within the OST Training Command (TRACOM) property and in proximity to mission-critical facilities at the Limited Area. The floodplain assessment concludes that placement of project features (e.g., the building, paved surfaces) for the Multi-Use Administration and Classroom Building – South Option or North Option within the 100-year floodplain would not cause a detectable change in base flood elevations, and the facilities would not obstruct the flow of flood water as the floodplain within the area is currently developed. The existing elevations and flow paths of the area within the floodplain are not expected to change with any significance and the nature and extent of the flood hazard caused by the proposed project is not expected to change from the present conditions. No effects to lives and property associated with floodplain disturbance are anticipated.

Based on the analysis contained in the EA, DOE determined that the construction and operation of the proposed Facilities Master Plan projects in the Proposed Action would not have any significant impacts, either individually or cumulatively, on the physical, biological, or human environments. Implementation of the Proposed Action would result in short-term and long-term negligible to minor/moderate adverse impacts, including minor impacts to biological resources, soils, noise, water resources, and cumulative effects; and moderate impacts to noise during construction. Potential impacts are detailed in the EA. Under the No Action Alternative, the Facilities Master Plan projects would not take place at Fort Chaffee, and existing conditions would remain unchanged. As such, implementation of the No Action Alternative would not result in any new impacts to considered resource areas.

FINDING OF NO PRACTICABLE ALTERNATIVE:

Executive Order (EO) 11988, Floodplain Management (1977), requires Federal agencies to avoid to the extent possible the long- and short-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. Appendix B of the EA provides a Floodplain Assessment and demonstrates there is no practicable alternative. Specifically, the Multi-Use Administration and Classroom Building must be located in proximity to mission-critical facilities at the TRACOM Limited Area. Although the site requires minimal construction in the floodplain, it also maximizes use of previously disturbed and nearly flat areas.

PUBLIC PARTICIPATION IN THE EA PROCESS:

NNSA solicited comments on the Draft EA and Floodplains Assessment during a 30-day comment period, which occurred from March 22, 2019 to April 21, 2019. NNSA published a Notice of Availability in the *Fort Smith Times Record* newspaper regarding the availability of the Draft EA and Floodplains Assessment and made the Draft EA available to the public on the NNSA NEPA website at <https://www.energy.gov/nnsa/nnsa-nepa-reading-room>. NNSA provided the Draft EA to relevant agencies and Native American tribes for review and comment. NNSA received comments on the Draft EA from the Arkansas Historic Preservation Program (AHPP), the Arkansas State Clearinghouse, the Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma, and the Osage Nation. No comments were received from the public. Comments received during the 30-day public comment period were considered in preparation of the Final EA. Revisions to the EA were made to address all comments received during the public comment period. The Arkansas State Clearinghouse provided responses from the Arkansas Natural Resources Commission, Arkansas Department of Parks and Tourism, Arkansas Department of Transportation, and Arkansas Geological Survey. The responses primarily indicated support of the project or no comments. The Arkansas Department of Parks and Tourism identified a nearby recreational area that is outside of the proposed project areas which would not be affected by the Proposed Action. Copies of the comments are included in Appendix A of the EA.

NNSA is soliciting comments on the Final EA and Draft FONSI/FONPA for a 15-day review period. NNSA published a Notice of Availability in the *Fort Smith Times Record* newspaper regarding the availability of the Final EA and the Draft FONSI/FONPA. NNSA provided the Final EA and Draft FONSI/FONPA to relevant agencies and Native American tribes for review and comment. The Final EA and Draft FONSI/FONPA are available on the NNSA NEPA website at <https://www.energy.gov/nnsa/nnsa-nepa-reading-room>. Comments received during the 15-day comment period will be considered in preparation of the Final FONSI/FONPA and EA. For further information on the DOE project, please contact Ms. Lisa Swift, U.S. Department of Energy, National Nuclear Security Administration, Office of Secure Transport, P.O. Box 5400, Kirtland AFB East, Albuquerque, New Mexico 87185-5400, Lisa.Swift@nnsa.doe.gov, (505) 845-4738.

DETERMINATION:

Based on the information presented in the Final EA (DOE/EA-2085), including the analysis presented in Appendix B Floodplain Assessment, and considering the public comments received on the Draft EA, DOE finds that implementing the Proposed Action at Fort Chaffee would not constitute a major Federal action that would significantly affect the quality of the physical, biological, or human environment. After careful review of Appendix B, DOE also concludes that there is no practicable alternative to the proposed action located outside the floodplain. All practicable measures would be taken to minimize impacts associated with the proposed action to or within the floodplain. DOE makes this FONSI/FONPA pursuant to NEPA, 42 USC 4321, *et seq.*, the CEQ implementing regulations (40 CFR 1500), EO 11988, and DOE NEPA regulations (10 CFR 1021). Therefore, issuance of a FONSI/FONPA is warranted, and preparation of an Environmental Impact Statement is not required.

Issued in Albuquerque, New Mexico on this ____ day of _____, 2019.

Vincent R. Fisher, Assistant Deputy Administrator
Office of Secure Transport
National Nuclear Security Administration