

**Department of Transportation  
Federal Aviation Administration  
Finding of No Significant Impact**

**LOCATION**

South Jersey Regional Airport (VAY)  
Lumberton, Burlington County, NJ 08048

**PROPOSED FEDERAL ACTION**

Allow for approval of Federal funding for airport planning and development projects, specifically the modification of Runway 8-26 to meet Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) standards for the current design aircraft (B-I) and to relocate parallel Taxiway A to meet current and future runway to taxiway separation standards. The Airport Layout Plan (ALP) will also be updated to reflect the runway and taxiway modifications.

In accordance with FAA policies and procedures for implementing the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA), including FAA Order 5050.4B, *NEPA Implementing Instructions for Airport Actions*, and FAA Order 1050.1E, Change 1, *Environmental Impacts: Policies and Procedures*, an Environmental Assessment (EA) was prepared to analyze the potential effects of the, "Widening of Runway 08-26 and Ancillary Improvements Project," at the South Jersey Regional Airport.

**PROJECT DESCRIPTION (Refer to Section 2 of the EA)**

In order to maintain safe and efficient airport operations, the New Jersey Department of Transportation (NJDOT) proposes to modify Runway 08-26 to meet FAA standards for the current design aircraft (B-I) and to relocate parallel Taxiway A to meet current and future runway to taxiway separation standards. The proposed project would not increase the capacity of the airport or change the operational environment when compared to existing conditions. The proposed improvements are intended to correct non-standard conditions associated with the existing runway and taxiways design.

The major elements of the project include:

- Widen Runway 8-26 from 50 feet to 60 feet;
- Regrade Runway 8-26 and the surrounding Runway Safety Area (RSA);
- Provide 10-foot turf shoulders along the runway;
- Provide 15-foot turf shoulders along the taxiway;
- Clear the Runway Object Free Area (OFA), including tree removal to the degree practicable;
- Widen parallel Taxiway A from approximately 20 feet to 35 feet;
- Relocate Taxiway A centerline 240 feet off the runway centerline and extend the connecting taxiways; and
- Relocate the segmented circle and wind cone.

Ancillary elements of the project include:

- Site preparation, grading, drainage, and stormwater management facilities;
- Replacement of the existing (five, 48-inch corrugated metal pipes [CMPs]) culvert crossing of Masons Creek with a three-sided rigid frame structure;
- Demolition/removal of existing Taxiway A pavement;
- Runway/taxiway lighting and markings; and
- Trenching for buried utilities.

**BACKGROUND (Refer to Section 1 of the EA)**

VAY is located 21 miles southeast of the City of Philadelphia and 20 miles northeast of the Philadelphia International Airport. The airport encompasses approximately 658 acres. It is owned by the State of New Jersey, managed by the NJDOT Division of Aeronautics, and operated by Flight 114, LLC. It is a public-use airport, classified by the FAA as a general aviation airport and designated as a reliever airport by the FAA. The airport has one paved runway, designated Runway 08-26 (east-west), and a partial parallel taxiway, designated Taxiway A. The terminal area is located on the south side of the runway and includes aircraft tie-down aprons, two rows of T-hangars, two fixed base operator (FBO) hangars for aircraft storage and maintenance, a transient aircraft parking apron, and the Air Victory Museum. A second, smaller FBO is located on the east side of the airport near the approach to Runway 26.

Aircraft activity at VAY is dominated by single engine and small twin-engine piston powered airplanes, with occasional operations by larger turboprops, including transient air taxi and military types. Helicopter operations include Philadelphia television stations and hospital medivac flights. There are approximately 100 based aircraft and 23,000 operations annually.

**PURPOSE AND NEED (Refer to Section 2 of the EA)**

The purpose of the project is to maintain safe and efficient airport operations. The project is needed to correct non-standard conditions associated with the existing runway and taxiway system.

The *Airport Master Plan/Airport Layout Plan* identifies numerous non-standard design conditions associated with the existing runway and taxiway system at VAY. In general, the runway and taxiway pavements are not wide enough, the runway and parallel taxiway are spaced too close together; and the runway has a variable gradient that needs to be corrected. In addition, several areas surrounding the runway are not adequately cleared or graded to meet airfield safety standards

**ALTERNATIVES (Refer to Section 3 of the EA)**

In addition to the purposed action, the following alternatives were considered.

No-Build/No-Action Alternative. Under the No-Action Alternative, the proposed project would not be implemented, no construction activities would be permitted to occur, and the existing runway and parallel taxiway system would remain unchanged for the foreseeable future. The existing runway and parallel taxiway would not be meet FAA standards. This alternative does not meet the Purpose and Need.

Build a New Airport to FAA Standards. Under this alternative, an airport site selection study would be undertaken to close VAY and relocate to a new location that would allow the runway/taxiway system to be designed and built to FAA standards and with a reasonable allowance for future growth. This alternative was not considered by a detailed evaluation because the costs and environmental impacts associated with building a new airport would be far greater than those of the proposed project.

Relocate to an Existing Nearby Airport. Under this alternative, aircraft and airport operations would be relocated to a nearby airport, and VAY would be closed. The nearest airport is the Flying “W” Airport (N14), privately owned, public use, general aviation facility. The 170-acre airport does not have facilities available to accept a sudden and substantial influx of based aircraft or operations. Therefore, N14 would have to be expanded, new airside and landside facilities would have to be developed, and the airport’s activity would increase dramatically. This alternative was eliminated from consideration because the costs and environmental impacts associated with relocating to N14 would be far greater than those of the proposed project. No other airports within 20 miles of VAY were identified as potential candidates for relocation.

Relocate the Existing Runway. Under this alternative, the existing runway and associated taxiway would be relocated to another area on the airport and build to FAA standards. Fourteen scenarios ranging from shifting the runway east or west, to relocating the runway north or south, to realigning the runway in a different orientation were evaluated. Alternatives that involve relocating or shifting the runway to a different location were dismissed due to excessive costs and environmental impacts.

No reasonable alternative was identified that would result in fewer environmental impacts than the proposed project and still achieve the project objective.

#### **DISCUSSION OF ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACTS (Refer to Section 4 of the EA)**

The attached EA addresses the effect the proposed project would have on the human and natural environment. The following impact categories highlight the analysis provided in the EA. It is the FAA’s finding that the proposed project will not have any significant environmental impacts.

#### **Air Quality**

VAY is located within Burlington County, New Jersey, and falls within the Metropolitan Philadelphia Interstate Air Quality Control Region (AQCR) (40 CFR Part 81.15). Air quality condition in Burlington County is considered good since the ACQ falls into has been designated as in “attainment” with the National Ambient Air Quality Standards (NAAQS) for all criteria pollutants with an exception of O<sub>3</sub>. Aircraft operations and/or vehicle traffic volumes are not expected to change as the result of the proposed project. Therefore, no long-term changes to air quality are associated with the proposed project. A construction emissions inventory was conducted to determine if there would be significant increases in direct and indirect emissions related to temporary construction activities. The results of this study indicated that emissions would be below applicable *de minimis* thresholds.

## Biological Resources

*Terrestrial Vegetation and Wildlife.* The study area includes predominantly maintained lawn areas along the existing runway and taxiway, and along the proposed relocated taxiway. Wetlands associated with Masons Creek, its unnamed tributaries, and associated ponds exist within the study area. Small areas of adjacent forested uplands also occur around the pond and along the upper edges of the Masons Creek floodplain. The area is habitat to common wildlife species. Wildlife inhabiting areas adjacent to the project disturbance areas may be temporarily disturbed or displaced due to the proximity of construction activities. However, undisturbed habitat outside the limits of disturbance is expected to be re-inhabited by wildlife following construction. The project is not expected to result in any long-term or permanent loss of plants or wildlife species, nor will the project result in substantial loss, reduction, degradation, disturbance, or fragmentation of native species habitats or populations. Furthermore, the project will not have adverse impacts on any species reproduction rates, mortality rate or ability to sustain population levels.

*Aquatic Biota and Fishery Resources.* There is an unnamed tributary to Masons Creek, located northwest of the airport at Ark Road near Fennimore Road. This tributary flows easterly and skirts the airport property, immediately adjacent to the project area. Assessment results indicated that the Pinelands Macroinvertebrate Index (PMI) for this tributary is poor and the habitat analysis was found to be marginal. The project will involve limited in-water construction associated with replacement of the culvert and removal of near watercourse vegetation; however, with the use of Best Management Practices (BMPs), no long-term or short-term impacts to aquatic biota and fishery resources are expected.

*Threatened, Endangered, and Special Status Species.* The NJDEP's Natural Heritage Program (NHP) and the NJ Landscape Project habitat mapping were used to determine the presence of threatened/endangered species within or near the study area. The following threatened, endangered, and special concern species were identified as potentially being within the project area:

- Upland Sandpiper (*Bartramia longicuada*), (State Endangered)
- Great Blue Heron (*Ardea Herodias*), (State Special Concern)
- Swamp Pink (*Helonias bullata*) (Federally Threatened, State Endangered)
- Bog Turtle (*Clemmys muhlenbergii*) (Federally Threatened, State Endangered)
- Northern Long-Eared Bat (*Myotis septentrionalis*) (Federally Threatened)

These species are potentially within one mile of the project site:

- American Kestrel (*Falco sparverius*) (State Threatened)
- Upland Sandpiper (*Bartramia longicuada*), (State Endangered)

The NJ Department of Fish and Wildlife (NJDFW), and the US Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) were consulted to determine potential impacts and how potential impacts could be avoided, minimized or mitigated. After additional surveys and studies were conducted, the USFWS concurred that the project is not likely to adversely affect the Swamp Pink and Bog Turtle, as these species are believed to absent in the project area.

Since there is suitable habitat on the airport, the Upland Sandpiper and the American Kestrel were presumed to be present at the airport. Seasonal restrictions on disturbance to grassland habitat are expected to effectively protect the Upland Sandpiper from impact. Based on coordination with the NJDFW, a timing restriction is required on any impact to taller grassland areas, which could be considered nesting habitat between April 1 and August 15. Impacts to the American Kestrel are not anticipated due to the relatively minor amount of existing grassland that will be converted due to the widening of the runway and taxiway pavements.

Summer roosting Northern Long-Eared Bats are expected to inhabit forested areas within the project area, portions of which will be impacted by the work. In order to limit any potential impact, tree clearing will be limited to the fullest extent possible, and will not take place within 1/4 mile of a known hibernaculum. The proposed tree removal will also not cut or destroy a known occupied maternity roost tree or any other trees within a 150-foot radius of a known maternity roost tree during the pup season (June 1 through July 31).

The Great Blue Heron, if in the project area, may be temporarily disturbed by construction; however, this species is highly mobile and individuals would be able to relocate to suitable habitat in the surrounding vicinity. Adverse impacts to this species are not anticipated. Lastly, in order avoid impacts to any other nesting birds, tree clearing will be seasonally restricted from April 1 to August 31, as recommended by NJDFW.

#### Climate

Although there may be temporary construction related Green House Gas emissions, they will be minimal and will not increase risks.

#### Coastal Resources

VAY is not located within an area designated as either Coastal Barriers or Coastal Zone Management Areas.

#### Department of Transportation Act, Section 4(f)

The project will not impact public parks, recreation areas, wildlife or waterfowl refuges or historic sites.

#### Farmlands

The project does not involve acquisition of farmland, or use of farmland, that would be converted to non-agricultural use and is protected by the Farmland Protection Policy Act (FPPA). The completed FPPA site assessment score is less than 60 points; therefore, the site does not qualify for protection under the FPPA.

#### Hazardous Materials, Solid Waste, and Pollution Prevention

No long-term operational impacts related to hazardous materials or solid waste is anticipated. Short-term construction impacts are not anticipated either. In order to minimize any potential impacts, public access will be restricted during construction; dust control measure will be put in place; a Site-Specific Health and Safety Program will be developed; and all materials handling plans and pollution prevention and control plans will be adhered to during the construction.

### Historic, Archaeological, Architectural and Cultural Resources

Studies indicated there were no historic districts, historic structures, or intact archaeological deposits within the Area of Potential Effect (APE), or limits of disturbance. A potential archeological site was identified within the APE, but will be avoided by clearly marking and fencing off the area to prevent accidentally impacting the site during construction. The NJ State Historic Preservation Officer (NJSHPO) concurred with protection measures and that no archaeological sites or historic properties will be affected by the project.

### Noise and Compatible Land Use

Since VAY is located in a rural area and is surrounded by hundreds of acres of farmland in all directions, it is unlikely that the proposed project would cause or contribute to an appreciable change in land use in the vicinity of the airport. No wildlife hazards will be created or enhanced as a result of the propose project. Any noise related to the construction will be temporary.

### Construction Impacts

Construction impacts are caused by and confined to the construction period. Consequently, they would be short-term in nature, terminating with the completion of obstruction removal and restoration of the project site. Construction-induced effects are likely to include temporary increases in air, noise, and water pollution, and displacement of wildlife.

### Energy Supply, Natural Resources, and Sustainable Design

The proposed project will have minimal consumption of energy and other natural resources. It will not affect local public utility supplies. The use of high efficiency LED lighting will consume less energy than the existing airfield lighting system.

### Socioeconomics, Environmental Justice and Children's Health and Safety Risks

The proposed project would not require the displacement or relocation of residents, homes or businesses. No right-of-way acquisition would occur; therefore, there will be no loss in the community tax base. All of the improvements will occur on the airport property; therefore, surface traffic patterns would not be affected. The proposed project will not allow the airport to accept larger aircraft, or change operations in any way; therefore, the project is not expected to cause induced or secondary socioeconomic impacts to the surrounding community. There are no minority and/or low-income populations present in the vicinity of the project. The project will not attract new growth to the airport, impact public service demands, or create a shift or growth in population.

### Lighting Emissions and Visual Effects

This project will have no effect on lighting or change the visual landscape.

### Water Resources

*Surface Waters and Water Quality.* The project area is located within the Lower Delaware water region and within the Rancocas Creek Watershed Management Area (WMA). The Rancocas WMA is a large watershed in New Jersey that covers 360 square miles through approximately 33 municipalities. WMAs are comprised of drainage basins and watersheds which encompass multiple smaller watersheds. The project area falls within the South Branch Rancocas Creek (Below Route 38) subwatershed, which predominantly includes lands draining to Masons Creek,

as well as areas draining to the tidal South Branch Rancocas Creek. The proposed project would also increase impervious surfaces by approximately 1.9 acres, which has the potential to increase the amount of surface runoff during precipitation events and increase the amount and type of contaminants entering area waterways, such as heavy metals, salts, organics, and nutrients. To prevent or minimize any impacts, the project will be designed in accordance with the NJDEP Stormwater Management Rules and will meet all applicable design and performance standards to control erosion, encourage infiltration and groundwater recharge; and control stormwater runoff quantity impacts. No significant impacts are anticipated.

*Ground Water.* The approximate 1.9 acres of impervious surfaces associated with the proposed project would decrease the amount of pervious ground surface available for localized aquifer recharge. Although portions of the study area are considered important groundwater recharge areas, the increase in impervious surface is not considered adverse as the stormwater management design for the project would meet applicable groundwater recharge requirements.

*Wetlands.* The project will impact approximately 3.5 acres of wetlands, over 90 percent of which (+/- 3.3 acres) will involve filling, grading and/or paving of modified agricultural wetlands (presently maintained lawn areas) to meet the RSA grading requirements, improve the runway width and profile, and relocate the taxiway and segmented circle. Permanent impacts to State open waters, forested areas, and scrub shrub vegetation are primarily related to the proposed culvert crossing modifications. Temporary impacts are primarily related to constructability for the culvert installations; and for drainage system installation and conduit trenching related to the proposed runway and taxiway lighting systems. To offset or mitigate for these impacts, the project will comply with Executive Order 11990, Protection of Wetlands, via the issuance of a NJDEP freshwater wetlands permit. With mitigation, no significant impacts are anticipated.

*Floodplains.* The proposed project will require work in a delineated floodway and NJ Flood Hazard Area. It will result in approximately 0.15 acres of permanent impacts to woody riparian zone vegetation associated with Masons Creek as a result of the culvert replacement and improving the runway profile. To address impacts to floodplains and riparian zones, the sponsor must obtain an NJDEP Flood Hazard Area Individual Permit prior to construction. Adherence to permit conditions will negate or minimize the impacts.

*Wild and Scenic Rivers.* There are no Wild and Scenic Rivers located on the airport property or project area.

#### Cumulative Impacts

The airport has remained essentially the same over the years. In 2004, VAY was purchased by the State of New Jersey. Since then, there has been some minor airport projects, to include the demolition of hangars and the removal of obstructions off the Runway 26 and 8 ends. Locally, land use has shifted from agricultural and forested land to a more urban setting. It is reasonable to expect that the surrounding area would experience additional development and redevelopment. This growth would be driven by local and regional economic and development trends and will depend on future comprehensive land use plans and zoning designations. Future development at the airport could indirectly influence this development, but to a relatively minor extent. Overall, the cumulative impacts of the proposed project on the built environment (including neighborhoods and community facilities, parks and recreational facilities, and cultural

resources), in the context of other past, present and reasonably foreseeable projects, would be geographically and temporally limited; and would not be considered adverse or significant.

**PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT (Refer to Section 6 of the EA)**

The Draft EA was made available for public review and comment for 30 days from April 24, 2018 to May 23, 2018, with notice of availability being published in the Courier Post, the primary local newspaper in the vicinity of the airport (See Appendix F). In addition, the following agencies were sent letters notifying them of the availability of the Draft EA document for review and comment:

- USEPA, Clean Air and Sustainability Division, Sustainability and Multimedia Programs Branch, Environmental Review Section;
- US Fish and Wildlife Service;
- DVRPC, Office of Freight and Aviation Planning;
- NJDEP, Office of Permit Coordination and Environmental Review;
- Lumberton Township Mayor and Township Clerk;
- Burlington County Planning Board; and
- Burlington County Engineer.

No public comments were received. Comment letters were received from USEPA and NJDEP. Comments received by these agencies were related to permit conditions or mitigation requirements; and were satisfactorily addressed by the sponsor.

Since the proposed project does not involve a new airport location, a new runway, or a major runway extension, the requirement for “the opportunity for public hearing” of paragraph 49, “Public Hearing”, of FAA Order 5050.4B, does not apply. FAA has determined that a public hearing is not appropriate for this action since the proposal does not have substantial environmental controversy. This environmental finding and the Environmental Assessment document will be made available for public review and comment for a period of 30 days. A public notice will be placed in the local newspaper of general circulation.

**MITIGATION and PERMITS (Refer to Section 7 of the EA)**

The following permits or certifications will be required:

- NJDEP Freshwater Wetlands Individual Permit
- Water Quality Certificate
- NJDEP Flood Hazard Area Individual Permit
- Soil Erosion and Sediment Control Plan Certification
- NJDEP Construction Activity Stormwater General Permit


Mitigation requirements associated with the above permits and certifications will be adhered to in order to minimize or offset potential environmental impacts.

**CONCLUSION AND APPROVAL:**

I have carefully and thoroughly considered the facts contained in the attached EA. Based on that information, I find the proposed Federal action is consistent with existing national environmental policies and objectives of Section 101 (a) of the National Environmental Policy Act of 1969



(NEPA) and other applicable environmental requirements. I also find the proposed Federal action will not significantly affect the quality of the human environment or include any condition requiring any consultation pursuant to section 102(2) (C) of NEPA. As a result, FAA will not prepare an Environmental Impact Statement for this action.

Recommended:  \_\_\_\_\_ Date 11/15/18  
Susan L. McDonald  
Environmental Protection Specialist  
Harrisburg ADO

Approved:  \_\_\_\_\_ Date 11/19/2018  
Lori K. Pagnanelli  
Manager, Harrisburg ADO

Disapproved: \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_  
Lori K. Pagnanelli  
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