

FINDING OF NO SIGNIFICANT IMPACT (FONSI)
IMPLEMENTATION OF THE INTEGRATED NATURAL RESOURCES MANAGEMENT
PLAN
HANSCOM AIR FORCE BASE, MASSACHUSETTS

Pursuant to provisions of the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA), Title 42 United States Code (USC) Sections 4321 to 4347, implemented by Council on Environmental Quality (CEQ) Regulations, Title 40, Code of Federal Regulations (CFR) § 1500-1508, and 32 CFR § 989, Environmental Impact Analysis Process (EIAP), the Department of the Air Force (DAF) has prepared an Environmental Assessment (EA) to identify and assess the potential environmental consequences associated with implementing the Integrated Natural Resources Management Plan (INRMP) for Hanscom Air Force Base (AFB) and the following three geographically separate units (GSU): the Patriot Golf Course located in Bedford, MA; the Sagamore Hill Observatory located in Hamilton, MA; and the Fourth Cliff Recreational Area located in Scituate, MA.

PURPOSE AND NEED FOR ACTION (p. 1-3) The purpose of the EA is for Hanscom AFB to implement a Sikes Act-compliant INRMP (2023), which is a legally binding tri-party agreement between Hanscom AFB, the US Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS), and the Massachusetts Division of Fisheries and Wildlife (MassWILDLIFE) through their Natural Heritage and Endangered Species Program (NHESP).

The need of the Proposed Action is to implement the goals and objectives identified in the INRMP. The agreement between the parties will require implementation of specific goals and objectives that have been translated into a slate of projects intended to preserve and enhance the natural resources at Hanscom AFB, the Patriot Golf Course, Fourth Cliff Recreational Area, and Sagamore Hill Observatory. The implementation of the INRMP will also prohibit the USFWS from designating any Hanscom AFB properties as critical habitat for Threatened and Endangered (T&E) species, limiting what is allowed within such habitats, subsequently impeding the installation's ability to execute its mission.

DESCRIPTION OF THE PROPOSED ACTION AND ALTERNATIVES (pp. 2-1 to 2-2)

The Proposed Action includes conducting baseline surveys to identify and quantify key natural resources on Hanscom AFB, Patriot Golf Course, Fourth Cliff Recreational Area, and Sagamore Hill Observatory and implementing appropriate management of habitats and species identified during the surveys to aid in their healthy maintenance and recovery.

Following the surveys, seven undertakings (labeled A-G), identified by Hanscom AFB Natural Resources Program, will be implemented and together comprise the Proposed Action. Six of the undertakings are based on a review of known existing conditions that need management activities and are identified in the INRMP. These six undertakings (A-F) are not anticipated to change based on the results of the surveys. The Proposed Action undertakings identified in the INRMP include the following:

- A - Golf course wetland rehabilitation;
- B - Predation control at Fourth Cliff to protect Endangered Species Act listed shorebird species;
- C - Fourth Cliff Blue Mussel restoration demonstration project;
- D - Annual invasive species control and eradication;

E - Establish initial pollinator habitats at Hanscom AFB properties; and

F - Annual sediment monitoring at Fourth Cliff

Based on the survey results, additional undertakings relative to habitat and species management may be required (identified as Undertaking G), which include the following efforts:

G - Habitat and Species Management:

- ◆ Monarch butterfly habitat enhancement;
- ◆ Turtle habitat protection and enhancement (Blanding's, wood, and eastern box turtles);
- ◆ Blue spotted salamander habitat protection and enhancement;
- ◆ Intricate fairy shrimp and other invertebrate habitat protection and enhancement;
- ◆ Bridle shiner habitat protection and enhancement;
- ◆ Protected Avian species habitat protection and enhancement; and/or
- ◆ Protected Bat species habitat protection and enhancement.

SELECTION STANDARDS (p. 2-2) NEPA and CEQ regulations require consideration of reasonable alternatives for the Proposed Action. "Reasonable alternatives" are those that could also effectively meet the purpose and need for the Proposed Action. Per the requirements of 32 CFR Part 989, and the DAF Environmental Impact Analysis Process regulations, selection standards are used to identify alternatives for meeting the purpose and need for the Proposed Action. Alternatives for the Proposed Action must meet the following selection standards to fulfill the purpose and need:

1. The action(s) must be conducted on Hanscom property;
2. The action(s) must be compliant with the Sikes Act;
3. The action(s) must address basic mission needs; and
4. The action(s) must address the natural resource management goals outlined in the Hanscom INRMP.

All reasonable alternatives were considered during the development of the Proposed Action.

Alternative 1 was determined to be the only reasonable alternative that meets the selection standards presented in Table 2-1 on page 2-3 and described in EA § 2.2.

DETAILED DESCRIPTION OF ALTERNATIVE(S) (pp. 2-2 to 2-7) Four alternatives were identified based upon the selection standards identified above for Hanscom AFB and GSUs. The EA also considers cumulative environmental impacts with other proposed projects in the Region of Influence (ROI).

No Action Alternative The No Action Alternative would not complete the Proposed Action, listed as undertakings A to G. The Natural Resources program would continue without compliance with the Sikes Act. Per the CEQ, the No Action Alternative will be used as a baseline to determine impacts the Proposed Action, and/or any other alternative carried forward for further analysis, would have on the environment.

Alternative 1 (Preferred Alternative) The Preferred Alternative is proposed to include the implementation of all undertakings, identified as A through G, noted above.

Alternative 2 Alternative 2 includes the implementation of only the undertakings that have either a known mission-impact or are current obligations under the Endangered Species Act. These measures include undertakings B, D, and F.

Alternative 3 Alternative 3 includes the implementation of undertakings that have either a known mission-impact, are current obligations under the Endangered Species Act, and habitat and species management for species identified in future surveys. These would include undertakings B, D, F, and G.

ALTERNATIVES ELIMINATED FROM FURTHER CONSIDERATION (p. 2-7) Alternative 2 and Alternative 3 considered during the environmental impact analysis process were eliminated from further consideration because they did not meet all the criteria for the selection standards presented in Section 2.2.

SCOPE OF ANALYSIS (pp. 3-9, 3-21, 3-29, 3-40) The following resources would not be affected by the Proposed Action for all locations in the INRMP and are not discussed in detail in the EA:

- ◆ Air Installations Compatible Use Zone (AICUZ)
- ◆ Air Quality
- ◆ Noise
- ◆ Infrastructure, Utilities, and Transportation
- ◆ Occupational Health and Safety
- ◆ Socioeconomics and Environmental Justice
- ◆ Environmental Restoration

AFFECTED ENVIRONMENT AND ENVIRONMENTAL CONSEQUENCES (p. 3-1)

The Environmental Assessment, incorporated by reference into this finding, analyzes the potential environmental consequences of activities associated with implementing the Preferred Alternative (Alternative 1). The EA considers all potential impacts of the Preferred Alternative and the No Action Alternative. The EA also considers cumulative environmental impacts with other projects in the Region of Influence. The analyses of the affected environment and environmental consequences of implementing the Preferred Alternative presented in the EA concluded that by implementing environmental protection measures, the DAF would be in compliance with all terms and conditions and reporting requirements stipulated by the United States Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS).

The DAF has concluded that implementation of the Preferred Alternative would have no adverse impacts on the following resources:

WATER RESOURCES (pp. 3-1, 3-10, 3-22, 3-32) Water resources associated with Hanscom AFB and its GSUs include the Shawsheen River, coastal resources at Fourth Cliff, and the wetland resources associated with the Patriot Golf Course. The Proposed Action is anticipated to result in positive

enhancements to these water resources. Therefore, the water resources are not anticipated to be negatively impacted by the Proposed Action and instead will benefit from the undertakings.

LAND USE (pp. 3-3, 3-13, 3-24, 3-35) The Proposed Action would be compatible with current and future Hanscom AFB land use plans. The Proposed Action is anticipated to provide resiliency to the installation through the undertaking of the biological and natural resource enhancement projects, including the Fourth Cliff sediment monitoring project and the Patriot Golf Course wetland rehabilitation. These undertakings will allow for the installations to function as intended and therefore, all short-term or long-term land use impacts are anticipated to result in a benefit with the implementation of the Proposed Action.

SOIL AND GEOLOGICAL RESOURCES (pp. 3-18, 3-39) The Proposed Action is not anticipated to result in grading and topography changes at Fourth Cliff due to the annual sediment monitoring undertaking. No short-term or long-term adverse impacts on the geology of the areas are anticipated with the implementation of the Proposed Action.

CULTURAL RESOURCES (pp. 3-7, 3-20, 3-29, 3-38) Due to the extensive land area covered by Hanscom AFB and its GSU's, portions are located within and include cultural resources. Based on the Proposed Action, no impacts are anticipated to cultural resources located within any of the GSUs.

BIOLOGICAL/NATURAL RESOURCES (pp. 3-4, 3-25, 3-36) The Proposed Action is anticipated to result in enhancements to the natural vegetation and animal species from all undertakings listed above. The primary purpose of the Proposed Action is to further support the biological and natural resources that enhance Hanscom AFB and associated GSUs. Portions of the Preferred Alternative sites are previously disturbed and improved with landscaped areas, parking lots, and paved sidewalks. The INRMP will result in enhanced habitats for species and therefore no short-term or long-term adverse impacts on the biological/natural resources are anticipated with the implementation of the Proposed Action.

PUBLIC REVIEW / INTERAGENCY COORDINATION (p. 1-6) A notice of availability was published in the Bedford Citizen (Bedford, MA), Wicked Local (Scituate, MA), and The Patch (Hamilton, MA) on **DATE**, inviting the public to review the Draft EA and draft Finding of No Significant Impact (FONSI) for a 30-day comment period. In addition, DAF issued a press release on **DATE** announcing the availability of the Draft EA and FONSI. Copies were posted to the HAFB public facing website (<https://www.hanscom.af.mil/About-Us/Fact-Sheets/Display/Article/379486/civil-engineering>) for download and review. The public comment period closed on **DATE and XX** comments were received.

FINDING OF NO SIGNIFICANT IMPACT (FONSI)

Based on my review of the facts and analyses contained in the *Integrated Natural Resources Management Plan EA* conducted under the provisions of NEPA, CEQ Regulations, and 32 CFR § 989, I conclude that the Proposed Action would not have a significant environmental impact, either by itself or cumulatively with other known projects. Accordingly, an Environmental Impact Statement is not required. The signing of this Finding of No Significant Impact completes the environmental impact analysis process.

JORGE I. JIMENEZ, Colonel, USAF
Commander

Date