

DRAFT FINDING OF NO SIGNIFICANT IMPACT PROPOSED BRIDGE TO BRIDGE MULTI-USE PATHWAY ON SANTA ROSA ISLAND, FLORIDA

Pursuant to the Council on Environmental Quality regulations for implementing the procedural provisions of the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) (40 Code of Federal Regulations [CFR] §§ 1500–1508) and the United States Air Force (USAF) Environmental Impact Analysis Process (EIAP) regulations at 32 CFR § 989, Okaloosa County, as the proponent, has prepared an Environmental Assessment (EA) to identify and evaluate potential effects of constructing and operating a paved multi-use pathway within the Florida Department of Transportation (FDOT) right-of-way (on Okaloosa Island) and easement (on Eglin Air Force Base [AFB]) along a portion of U.S. 98 on Santa Rosa Island, Florida. As a federal landowner, Eglin AFB is a responsible agency on this action, ensuring analysis complies with USAF NEPA implementing regulations at 32 CFR § 989.

Purpose and Need (EA § 1.3, pages 1-5 to 1-6): The purpose of the Proposed Action is to enable safe, two-way, multi-use travel along a portion of U.S. 98 (project area) in a way that promotes quality of life and economic development, improves community connectivity, and adds to the Florida Greenways and Trails System. The Proposed Action is needed for the following reasons:

- The existing sidewalks are narrow, offer limited to no protection from vehicle traffic, and have no connectivity between Fort Walton Beach and Destin.
- The existing bicycle lanes are intermittently marked and do not extend the length of the project area, and the existing bicycle lanes and paved shoulders offer cyclists limited to no protection from vehicle traffic.
- Twenty-four (seven fatal) vehicle/pedestrian and vehicle/cyclist accidents have occurred in this portion of U.S. 98 between 2012 and 2018. The project area has a vehicle/pedestrian and vehicle/cyclist accident rate that is approximately 5.5 times higher than that of the state.
- The project area is a gap in the Great Northwest Coastal Trail Corridor, which is a Florida Greenways and Trails System Land Trail Priority. The Florida Department of Environmental Protection, Office of Greenways and Trails has identified the project area as a location that should have a multi-use trail to support the Florida Greenways and Trails System.

DESCRIPTION OF THE PROPOSED ACTION AND ALTERNATIVES

Proposed Action (EA § 2.1, pages 2-1 to 2-5): The Proposed Action is to construct and operate a paved multi-use pathway within the FDOT right-of-way (Okaloosa Island) and easement (Eglin AFB) along U.S. 98 from Pier Road to Marler Bridge. The pathway would be 12 feet wide (enabling movement in both directions) and 4.3 miles long. The Proposed Action includes construction of the pathway, safety barriers where necessary, fencing to protect Eglin AFB protective buffers and areas, and upgraded parking areas at three Eglin AFB-designated beach access points adjacent to the pathway. The Proposed Action also includes general maintenance and repair of the pathway, safety barriers, environmental fencing, upgraded parking areas, and Eglin AFB property fencing adjacent to the pathway; installation of signage and enforcement of parking restrictions on the pathway; sand removal and erosion control for the pathway and upgraded parking areas; and adhering to the *Florida Greenways and Trails System Plan* requirements for management and long-term maintenance of priority trails.

Selection Standards for the Alternatives (EA § 2.2, pages 2-5 to 2-6): Okaloosa County used the following selection standards to determine whether alternatives for the Proposed Action were reasonable:

- Improve safety for pedestrians and cyclists.
- Encourage pathway users to cross U.S. 98 only at signalized crosswalks.
- Exclude the pathway from crossing U.S. 98 at grade.
- Include logical termini (end points) for the pathway.
- Improve community connectivity.
- Allow pathway users to travel east and west along U.S. 98.
- Minimize impacts on utilities, wetlands, 100-year floodplain, and Eglin AFB protective buffers and areas.
- Meet standards for shared use paths in the *FDOT Design Manual* (e.g., minimum separation from roadway, width, longitudinal grade, clearance distances).
- Be compatible with U.S. Coast Guard (USCG) Station Destin's mission.
- Be compatible with Eglin AFB's mission (e.g., ranges and Eglin Beach Park).
- Must not prevent access to Eglin AFB-designated beach access points.

Okaloosa County considered four alternatives (i.e., North Alternative, South Alternative, North and South Alternative, and Lengthen Existing Pathways) for the Proposed Action. The North Alternative and South Alternative were the only alternatives that did not conflict with one or more of the selection standards; therefore, they were carried forward for detailed analysis.

North Alternative (EA § 2.3.1, pages 2-6 to 2-11): The North Alternative is located along the north side of U.S. 98 from Pier Road to Marler Bridge. It would add approximately 18 acres of impervious surface and 8,400 linear feet of environmental fencing; require relocation of utility poles with overhead electricity; require removal of several trees; and affect up to 0.42 acre of wetlands, 6.34 acres of Eglin AFB protective buffers and areas, and 18 acres of 100-year floodplain.

South Alternative (EA § 2.3.2, pages 2-11 to 2-12): The South Alternative is located along the south side of U.S. 98 from Pier Road to Marler Bridge. It includes the upgrade of parking areas at three Eglin AFB-designated beach access points adjacent to the pathway and an upgraded ingress/egress (i.e., improved driveway) and associated safety features (e.g., safety barrier), if needed, for West Jetties Parking (currently closed). The South Alternative would add approximately 16 acres of impervious surface, 7,700 linear feet of environmental fencing, and three upgraded parking areas; require removal of several trees; and affect up to 0.64 acre of wetlands, 3.47 acres of Eglin AFB protective buffers and areas, and 16 acres of 100-year floodplain. The South Alternative fully complies with the greatest number of selection standards. Therefore, the Preferred Alternative is to implement the South Alternative.

No Action Alternative (EA § 2.4, page 2-12): Under the No Action Alternative, Okaloosa County would not construct or operate a paved multi-use pathway along U.S. 98 from Pier Road to Marler Bridge. Pedestrians would continue to use narrow sidewalks that offer limited to no protection from vehicle traffic and no connectivity between Fort Walton Beach and Destin. Cyclists would continue to use existing bicycle lanes (intermittently marked and not present throughout the entire length of the project area) and paved shoulders that offer limited to no protection from vehicle traffic.

ENVIRONMENTAL CONSEQUENCES

The environmental analysis focused on the following resource areas: air quality, biological resources, cultural resources, geological resources, hazardous materials and wastes, infrastructure and transportation, land use, noise, safety, socioeconomics, environmental justice, and water resources. The potential

environmental impacts would be similar for each alternative unless otherwise noted. A summary of each resource area is described in the EA and presented below.

The following resource areas were not analyzed in detail because the Proposed Action would result in insignificant or no impacts on these resource areas. Airspace and airfield safety was not analyzed in detail because the Proposed Action does not include aircraft operations or airspace changes and the project area is not with airfield safety zones. Special hazards were not analyzed in detail because the Proposed Action does not include activities that would disturb or use toxic substances. Radon was not analyzed in detail because the Proposed Action does not include construction on interior space or activities that would be impacted by radon. Visual and aesthetic resources were not analyzed in detail because the Proposed Action would not affect the visual or aesthetic resources of Santa Rosa Island. Further rationale for the dismissal of these resources areas is provided in Section 3 of the EA.

Air Quality (EA § 3.1, pages 3-2 to 3-6): The Proposed Action would occur in Okaloosa County, which is in attainment for all criteria pollutants. Consequently, the General Conformity Rule does not apply. Construction of the Proposed Action would result in a short-term, minor, adverse impact on air quality (see Tables 3-1 and 3-2 of the EA). Construction would produce emissions of criteria pollutants and greenhouse gases from operation of heavy equipment, workers commuting to and from the project area in their personal vehicles, heavy-duty diesel vehicles hauling materials and debris to and from the project area, and ground disturbance. However, these emissions would be temporary and produced only when such activities are occurring.

Everyday use of the pathway would not produce air emissions. Long-term, negligible, adverse air emissions would be produced from general maintenance and repair of the pathway. Best management practices (BMPs) and management actions (e.g., water sprays, revegetation of disturbed areas) would be implemented to minimize air emissions (see Section 4.3 of the EA). Based on this analysis, there are no significant impacts associated with air quality.

Biological Resources (EA § 3.2, pages 3-6 to 3-24): Vegetation within the project area is within developed or previously disturbed areas (e.g., U.S. 98, buried utilities, routine vegetation maintenance). Multiple federally and state-protected species have the potential to occur within or near the project area, but only four state-protected species (i.e., great egret, eastern least tern, little blue heron, and tricolored heron) and the bald eagle (protected under the Bald and Golden Eagle Protection Act) are likely to occur within the project area (see Tables 3-3 and 3-4 of the EA).

Short- and long-term, negligible to minor, adverse, direct impacts on native vegetation would be expected. Short-term impacts include temporary vegetation removal, trampling and crushing of non-target vegetation, soil compaction, and disturbing soil structure. Long-term impacts include permanent removal of vegetation and periodic vegetation disturbance from pathway users and general maintenance and repair. The North Alternative would affect up to 6.34 acres of Eglin AFB protective buffers and areas, and permanently remove approximately 18 acres of vegetation. The South Alternative would affect up to 3.47 acres of Eglin AFB protective buffers and areas, and permanently remove approximately 16 acres of vegetation. Vegetation would reestablish after construction and maintenance and repair activities, and BMPs and management actions (e.g., washing vehicles and equipment before transport onto Santa Rosa Island) would be implemented to reduce impacts (see Section 4.3 of the EA).

Short- and long-term, negligible to minor, adverse, direct impacts on wildlife would be expected. During construction, mortality of less mobile individuals could occur from collisions with heavy equipment or construction-related vehicles. Short-term, minor, adverse impacts also could occur because of temporary, intermittent noise disturbances associated with construction. Operation of the pathway could have long-term, negligible, direct impacts on wildlife when construction vehicles and equipment access, park at, and

maneuver around areas requiring maintenance and repair. Wildlife that occur in and near the project area are habituated to human activity and presence, which would limit the impacts.

Short- and long-term, negligible to minor, direct impacts on protected terrestrial species are expected. Although unlikely, terrestrial protected species could be harmed or injured during construction and general maintenance and repair from accidental strikes with construction equipment and vehicles. Short- and long-term, direct effects on protected bird species include temporary disruption or modification of their behavior (including nesting and foraging) from noise or other disturbances during construction and operation of the pathway. To minimize impacts on nesting protected birds, construction should occur outside of the nesting season (October 1 through May 15 for Migratory Bird Treaty Act species and March 1 to August 31 for shorebirds). Surveys for protected species would be conducted prior to construction, as necessary. Environmental fencing would be installed to keep pathway users out of the Eglin AFB protective buffers and areas. Additionally, BMPs and management actions (e.g., surveys before and after construction activities that may affect protected species or sensitive habitat) would be implemented to avoid or minimize impacts on protected species that have the potential to occur in the project area (see Section 4.3 of the EA). Furthermore, applicable conservation measures from the *Biological Opinion for Santa Rosa Island Testing and Training Activities Amendment 2* would be implemented to avoid impacts on federally listed and candidate terrestrial species. The Proposed Action would have no effect on federally listed and candidate terrestrial species under Sections 7 and 10 of the Endangered Species Act.

No impacts on marine biological resources, including protected marine species and designated critical habitat, are expected due to distance of the project area from the marine environment and implementation of BMPs and management actions (e.g., no nighttime construction or maintenance during sea turtle nesting season [May 1 through October 31])(see Section 4.3 of the EA). Furthermore, applicable conservation measures from the *Biological Opinion for Santa Rosa Island Testing and Training Activities Amendment 2* would be implemented to avoid impacts on federally listed and candidate marine species. The Proposed Action would have no effect on federally listed or candidate marine species under Sections 7 and 10 of the Endangered Species Act. Based on this analysis, there are no significant impacts associated with biological resources.

Cultural Resources (EA § 3.3, pages 3-25 to 3-28): A cultural resources assessment survey of the Area of Potential Effect (APE) was completed in September 2019. The survey included a pedestrian (visual surface) survey and limited archaeological subsurface testing within the undertaking's APE. The cultural resources assessment survey identified three previously recorded archaeological sites within or near the APE. One site (8OK0031) partially overlaps the APE, while two sites (8OK00406 and 8OK02239) are outside the APE. Because no evidence of Site 8OK0031 was found during the archaeological survey, no determination of National Register of Historic Places eligibility was made for the site. Additionally, shovel tests were negative for cultural material at sites 8OK00406 and 8OK02239. Therefore, the cultural resources assessment survey concluded that the Proposed Action would have no effect on cultural resources listed or eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places and recommended no additional work within the APE. On March 31, 2020, the Florida State Historic Preservation Office concurred with the survey results and recommendations and found the cultural resources assessment survey to be complete and sufficient.

Eglin AFB currently has arrangements with the five federally recognized tribes with a historic or cultural affiliation with Eglin AFB lands whereby the tribes do not wish to be contacted for work in areas that have already been surveyed and have no sites significant to them. Based on the survey results and because Okaloosa County is not required to conduct tribal consultation on the portion of the project area that is outside of Eglin AFB, no tribal consultation is expected for this project. Based on this analysis, there are no significant impacts associated with cultural resources.

Geological Resources (EA § 3.4, pages 3-28 to 3-31): The geology of Santa Rosa Island is characterized by marine terraces. The topography is relatively flat and the project area sits slightly above mean sea level. The soils within the project area are not prime farmland, unique farmland, or farmland of statewide or local importance. No impacts on geology are anticipated because no geologic formations or stratigraphy would be altered. Short-term, negligible, adverse impacts on topography could occur and would be dependent on the level of alteration to the dune line. The dune line within the project area would be restored as necessary following the completion of the pathway. Short-term, minor, adverse impacts on soils would be expected due to soil compaction, soil disturbance, modification of soil structure, and an increased potential for shoreline erosion because of construction. Following completion of the pathway, Okaloosa County would repair erosion issues and repair/regrade areas on both sides of the pathway back to the original design. BMPs and management actions (e.g., construction activities would be sequenced to limit length of soil exposure) would be implemented to avoid erosion and protect inland areas (see Section 4.3 of the EA). Based on this analysis, there are no significant impacts associated with geological resources.

Hazardous Materials and Wastes (EA § 3.5, pages 3-32 to 3-36): No hazardous materials, petroleum products, or hazardous wastes are stored or generated within the project area. There are no contamination sites, including munitions and explosives of concern, within the project area. Short- and long-term, negligible, adverse impacts on hazardous materials and waste management would occur from construction and operation (e.g., maintenance and repair) of the pathway. All hazardous materials used as well as hazardous wastes and used petroleum products generated during construction, maintenance, and repair of the pathway would be contained, stored, and managed appropriately (e.g., secondary containment, inspections, spill kits) in accordance with Eglin AFB Instruction 32-7086 (*Hazardous Materials Management*); Eglin AFB *Hazardous Waste Management Plan and Spill Prevention, Control, and Countermeasure Plan*; and federal, state, and local regulations to minimize the potential for a release. Any pesticides used within the project area would be on the Eglin AFB and Florida Department of Environmental Protection list of approved pesticides. All personnel conducting pesticide treatment activities in the project area would be Department of Defense- or state-certified pesticide applicators or qualified individuals under direct supervision of a certified applicator. No impacts are expected to result from the adjacent contamination sites during construction and operation of the pathway. BMPs and management actions (e.g., construction debris would be managed in accordance with Air Force Instruction 32-7042, *Waste Management*, Eglin AFB's *Integrated Solid Waste Management Plan*) and would be implemented to avoid or minimize impacts from hazardous materials and wastes (see Section 4.3 of the EA). Based on this analysis, there are no significant impacts associated with hazardous materials and wastes.

Infrastructure and Transportation (EA § 3.6, pages 3-36 to 3-43): Most utilities would be avoided or protected during construction. The North Alternative would result in short-term, negligible, adverse impacts on the electrical system due to relocation of utility poles with overhead electrical lines. The Proposed Action would increase the area of impervious surface, which could result in long-term, minor, adverse impacts on stormwater management due to increased sheetflow, increased stormwater flow in the ditches, and reduced capacity of the soils to absorb or infiltrate stormwater. BMPs and management actions (e.g., coordination with utility providers prior to ground-disturbing activities) would be implemented to avoid or minimize impacts on infrastructure (see Section 4.3 of the EA).

Construction contractors would be responsible for disposal of solid waste during construction. Okaloosa County would continue to remove trash and pet waste from the trashcans at the Airman Beach, Matterhorn Beach, and Princess Beach Eglin AFB-designated beach access point parking areas and beach areas, as well as the trashcans at the Okaloosa County-managed parks and public parking areas near the project area. Additional solid waste generation would be minor.

Short-term, negligible, adverse impacts on transportation would be expected from construction of the pathway due to temporary access restrictions and increased construction truck and construction worker traffic. The North Alternative would result in long-term, minor, beneficial impacts on transportation because the pathway would provide pedestrians and cyclists a safer means of travelling along U.S. 98 and assist in completion of the Great Northwest Coastal Trail Corridor. The South Alternative would result in the same long-term, minor, beneficial impacts as the North Alternative, as well as additional long-term benefits from the upgraded parking areas at three Eglin AFB-designated beach access point parking areas and the upgraded ingress/egress and associated safety features for West Jetties Parking (currently closed). Based on this analysis, there are no significant impacts associated with infrastructure and transportation.

Land Use (EA § 3.7, pages 3-43 to 3-50): Short-term, negligible, adverse impacts on land use and recreation would occur because construction could temporarily block access to residential, commercial, federal, and recreational properties. Construction of the pathway would be phased to reduce access impacts. Long-term, minor, beneficial impacts on recreation would occur by connecting a gap in the Great Northwest Coastal Trail Corridor, providing a greater recreational experience through a continuous and safe trail, and connecting recreational areas. No land use changes would occur. The pathway would be compatible with adjacent land uses. Management actions (e.g., public notice of temporary restricted access and closures) would be used to reduce recreation impacts (see Section 4.3 of the EA).

The project area is within the coastal zone of Florida but outside of the Coastal Construction Control Line. Eglin AFB prepared and submitted a coastal consistency determination that notes the Proposed Action would be consistent with the Florida Coastal Management Program. **[[Preparer's Note: Text will be updated upon receipt of a response from the State of Florida.]]** Based on this analysis, there are no significant impacts associated with land use.

Noise (EA § 3.8, pages 3-50 to 3-55): Construction of the pathway would result in short-term, negligible to minor, adverse impacts on the ambient noise environment due to the use of heavy equipment for clearing, excavation, grading, and paving. However, construction would be intermittent and temporary and the noise-generating activities would continuously advance throughout the project area and, therefore, would only affect areas for a short time. Long-term, intermittent, negligible to minor, adverse noise impacts would occur due to general maintenance and repair of the pathway. This noise would be temporary and would end upon the completion of the maintenance and repair activity. BMPs and management actions (e.g., heavy equipment mufflers would be properly maintained and in good working order) would be implemented to reduce noise impacts (see Section 4.3 of the EA). Long-term, constant noise would not be produced from operation of the pathway. Based on this analysis, there are no significant impacts associated with noise.

Safety (EA § 3.9, pages 3-55 to 3-58): Short-term, minor, adverse impacts on safety would occur from exposure of workers to the inherent safety hazards associated with construction. To minimize safety risks, safety standards required by the Occupational Safety and Health Administration, Department of Defense, and USAF, and adherence to management actions (e.g., FDOT *2018 Highway Safety Plan*) would be followed during construction and general maintenance and repair actions (see Section 4.3 of the EA).

Long-term, moderate, beneficial impacts on safety would result from the Proposed Action. Pedestrians and cyclists would have a safe pathway, separated from U.S. 98, which extends the length of the project area and connects with adjacent pathways. The location of the pathway outside the FDOT clear zone, to the extent possible, and the addition of safety devices such as safety barriers, bollards, and traffic control devices would improve safety for pedestrians and cyclists.

Long-term, negligible, adverse impacts on safety could result from the addition of the pathway users. Pathway users traveling to and from the pathway could increase the number of vehicles, cyclists, and

pedestrians on local roads and sidewalks, which could increase the potential for an accident. Additionally, it is anticipated that accidents on the pathway, such as a cyclist running into a pedestrian, could occur. However, in balance, the beneficial safety effects of the pathway would outweigh the adverse safety effects from the addition of the pathway users. Based on this analysis, there are no significant impacts associated with safety.

Socioeconomics (EA § 3.10, pages 3-59 to 3-62): Short-term, minor, beneficial impacts on the local economy would occur because of expenditures during pathway construction. Construction of the pathway would provide temporary direct increases in income for local construction workers and indirect increases in retail trade revenues through the purchase of equipment, supplies, and materials. Additionally, long-term, minor, beneficial impacts would occur on the local economy within Okaloosa County because of increased pedestrian and cyclist connectivity between Fort Walton Beach and Destin and increased accessibility to recreational facilities on Santa Rosa Island. It is expected that the pathway would result in increased recreational facility use and an increase in pedestrian and cyclist movement throughout Santa Rosa Island, which in turn would benefit nearby hotels, restaurants, stores, attractions/activities, and the communities of Fort Walton Beach and Destin. Based on this analysis, there are no significant impacts associated with socioeconomics.

Environmental Justice (EA § 3.11, pages 3-62 to 3-64): Okaloosa County has a lower percentage of minorities, families living below the poverty line, and Hispanic or Latino populations as compared to the State of Florida. The percentage of children living in Okaloosa County is roughly equal to the percentage in the State of Florida. The closest areas of potential environmental justice concern are in Destin and Fort Walton Beach, which are over 0.5 mile from the east and west ends of the project area, respectively. As such, the Proposed Action would result in no disproportionate impacts on environmental justice populations. Based on this analysis, there are no significant impacts associated with environmental justice.

Water Resources (EA § 3.12, pages 3-64 to 3-73): Short- and long-term, negligible, direct, adverse impacts on surficial aquifers would be expected from implementation of the Proposed Action. Short-term impacts on groundwater could occur from an accidental spill during construction or maintenance activities or reduction in groundwater recharge. The potential for contaminant discharges from construction equipment and vehicles to reach groundwater would be minimized through the use of appropriate BMPs, prompt response to discharges, and implementation of Eglin AFB's or a project-specific Spill Prevention, Control, and Countermeasure Plan, as applicable. Surface water runoff would be attenuated during and following construction with the use of temporary or permanent drainage management features and standard practices in accordance with FDOT's 2019 *Standard Specifications for Road and Bridge Construction*, Eglin AFB's *Range Road Management Plan*, a stormwater pollution prevention plan, and Energy Independence and Security Act Section 438 requirements.

Short- and long-term, minor, adverse, direct impacts on surface water could occur during construction and operation of the pathway. Proper grading techniques, implementation of standard BMPs and erosion and sediment controls, and adherence to management actions (e.g., stormwater management controls, inspections, and required remedial actions would be in accordance with the project Stormwater Pollution Prevention Plan) would minimize the transport of sediment to nearby surface waters (see Section 4.3 of the EA). Stormwater controls and BMPs would be implemented in accordance with Florida Environmental Resource Permit requirements and an Erosion and Sediment Control Plan, as applicable. Construction of the pathway, as well as maintenance and repair activities that disturb 1 acre or more, would be regulated under the Florida Department of Environmental Protection Construction Generic Permit. Permit-required BMPs and a stormwater pollution prevention plan would be implemented to minimize potential impacts on surface water. Additionally, construction of the pathway would adhere to Section 438 of the Energy Independence and Security Act.

Short- and long-term, negligible, adverse, direct impacts on wetlands would occur from deposition of fill materials or increased sedimentation into wetlands. Most of the nearby wetlands would be avoided during design, but up to 0.42 acre of wetlands would be filled under the North Alternative and up to 0.64 acre of wetlands would be filled under the South Alternative. These wetlands are located along the proposed pathway and are unavoidable. There is no practicable alternative to construction in the wetland. Pathway construction would be conducted in a manner such that activities would have negligible impacts on wetlands to the maximum extent practical. Pertinent local, state, and federal permits would be obtained, as needed, for the proposed activities including work that could occur in jurisdictional drainages, waterways, or wetlands. Mitigation requirements, if any, would be determined during permitting. Permit-required controls and BMPs would be implemented to minimize impacts. Consultation with Florida Department of Environmental Protection and U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, as appropriate, would be taken to minimize wetland impacts and identify potential avoidance, minimization, and conservation measures. Due to the impact on wetlands, a Clean Water Act Section 404 permit and a Florida Environmental Resource Permit would be obtained prior to construction, as well as maintenance and repair actions that would impact wetlands.

The Proposed Action would result in short- and long-term, minor, adverse impacts on the 100-year floodplain. The entire project area is within the 100-year floodplain. Construction within the floodplain is unavoidable because the entire Florida panhandle coast is within the floodplain. Therefore, there are no practicable alternatives for avoiding the floodplain. The Proposed Action would not situate critical infrastructure within the floodplain and would not affect existing flood heights or floodplain limits. Based on this analysis, there are no significant impacts associated with water resources.

Cumulative Effects (EA § 3.13, pages 3-73 to 3-78): The Proposed Action would not contribute to cumulatively significant impacts when considered with other past, present, and reasonably foreseeable future actions occurring at or in the vicinity of the project area. Short- and long-term, negligible to minor, adverse cumulative impacts on air quality, biological resources, geological resources, hazardous materials and wastes, infrastructure and transportation, land use, noise, safety, and water resources would be expected. Short- and long-term, minor, beneficial cumulative impacts on biological resources, geological resources, infrastructure and transportation, and socioeconomics would be expected. Based on this analysis, there are no significant impacts associated with cumulative effects.

MANAGEMENT PRACTICES

Chapter 4 of the EA lists the plans, regulations, permits, and management actions associated with the Proposed Action. Adherence to these requirements would reduce the potential environmental impacts of the Proposed Action.

EARLY PUBLIC NOTICE AND PUBLIC REVIEW

Because the Proposed Action is within the 100-year floodplain and wetlands, it is subject to the requirements and objectives of Executive Orders 11988, *Floodplain Management*, and 11990, *Protection of Wetlands*, respectively. As such, a Public Notice was published in the *Northwest Florida Daily News* on November 1, 2019, to notify the public that the Proposed Action would occur in the 100-year floodplain and wetland areas. The notice solicited public comment. Eglin AFB received no public comments in response to the Public Notice.

A Notice of Availability was published in the *Northwest Florida Daily News* on **[[Insert date here]]** inviting the public to review the EA and draft finding of no significant impact (FONSI), beginning the 30-day comment period. The Florida State Clearinghouse requests a 60-day review period. The USAF directly notified state and local stakeholders of the availability of the documents, and the documents were

made available on Eglin AFB's public website. The Florida State Clearinghouse coordinated state and local review of the EA and draft FONSI and **determined the action is consistent** with the Florida Coastal Management Program. The 30-day comment period ended on **[[Insert date here]]** with **no comments received**. **[[Preparer's Note: Text will be updated after the 30-day comment period and receipt of a response from the State of Florida.]]**

MITIGATION AND MONITORING

The Proposed Action does not include mitigation and monitoring measures. Wetland mitigation requirements, if any, would be determined during permitting.

FINDING OF NO SIGNIFICANT IMPACT

Based on review of the facts and analysis summarized above and contained within the findings of the EA, the USAF finds the Proposed Action (i.e., North Alternative and South Alternative) to construct and operate a multi-use pathway on Santa Rosa Island will not have a significant impact on the natural or human environment; therefore, an environmental impact statement is not required. In addition, the USAF finds there is no practicable alternative to conducting the Proposed Action within the floodplain and wetland areas as described in the EA and that the Proposed Action includes all practicable measures to minimize harm to the environment. This analysis fulfills the requirements of NEPA, the President's Council on Environmental Quality regulations at 40 CFR §§ 1500–1508, USAF EIAP regulations at 32 CFR § 989, and Executive Orders 11988, *Floodplain Management*, and 11990, *Protection of Wetlands*.

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Date

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