



**DECISION NOTICE AND
FINDING OF NO SIGNIFICANT IMPACT
HENRY H. Y. KIM AIRBASE EXPANSION
AT THE PRESCOTT FIRE CENTER
U.S. FOREST SERVICE
PRESCOTT NATIONAL FOREST
YAVAPAI COUNTY, ARIZONA**

The Prescott National Forest has completed an environmental assessment (EA) to evaluate and document the environmental effects that would be expected for a proposed expansion of the Henry Y. H. Kim airbase at the Prescott Fire Center. Based on the effects displayed in the EA, the Responsible Official has determined that there would be no significant environmental impacts and has decided to approve the project for implementation. This document displays the rationale for the finding of no significant impacts and the decision.

The significance of environmental impacts must be considered in terms of context and intensity. This means that the significance of an action must be analyzed in several contexts such as society as a whole (human and national), the affected region, the affected interests, and the locality. Significance varies with the setting of the proposed action. In the case of a site-specific action, significance usually depends upon the effects in the locale rather than in the world as a whole. Intensity refers to the severity or degree of impact. (40 CFR 1508.27)

CONTEXT

The environmental effects of this project would be localized, affecting mainly the immediate vicinity of the work. It would not result in notable economic impacts as the construction would be relatively small scale. The project would improve the Prescott Fire Center's ability to effectively respond to fire incidents in the local and the region. The only environmental effect that might extend beyond the project area would be noise during construction. However, the construction noise would not be expected to be noticeable much beyond the work areas, and because there are no other inhabited areas in close proximity, it is unlikely that the noise would affect others in any notable way.

INTENSITY

The intensity of effects was considered in terms of the following:

1. **Impacts that may be both beneficial and adverse. A significant effect may exist even if the Federal agency believes that, on balance, the effect will be beneficial.** This project is anticipated to have mostly beneficial effects because of the increased

effectiveness of the airbase during fire fighting events. It is expected to have no significant adverse effects. Consideration of the intensity of environmental effects is not biased by beneficial effects of the action.

2. **The degree to which the proposed action affects public health or safety.** There will be no significant effects on public health and safety because all safety features will be followed and safe construction practices will be implemented. (See EA page 4)
3. **Unique characteristics of the geographic area, such as proximity to historic or cultural resources, park lands, prime farmlands, wetlands, wild and scenic rivers, or ecologically critical areas.** There will be no effects on historic or cultural resources, park lands, prime farmlands, wetlands, wild and scenic rivers, or ecologically critical areas because there are no such unique characteristics in the area. (See EA page 5)
4. **The degree to which the effects on the quality of the human environment are likely to be highly controversial.** The effects on the quality of the human environment are not likely to be highly controversial. There is no known credible scientific controversy over the impacts of the proposed action, it is a type of action regularly undertaken around the world and the effects are well known. (See EA page 5)
5. **The degree to which the possible effects on the human environment are highly uncertain or involve unique or unknown risks.** The Agency has considerable experience with actions like the one proposed. The analysis shows the effects are not uncertain, and do not involve unique or unknown risks. The Forest Service has a great deal of experience with the construction of various facilities and uses qualified contractors. (See EA page 5)
6. **The degree to which the action may establish a precedent for future actions with significant effects, or represents a decision in principle about a future consideration.** The action is not likely to establish a precedent for future actions with significant effects, because the project sets no precedents for future actions. (See EA page 5)
7. **Whether the action is related to other actions with individually insignificant but cumulatively significant impacts.** The cumulative impacts are not significant. The only impacts identified that could potentially add cumulatively to other impacts are effects to water quality from this and other construction projects and uses in the immediate area. The potential effects of this project are mitigated or eliminated through Best Management Practices and would not add cumulatively to result in any significant impacts to water quality in the project area. (See EA page 5)
8. **The degree to which the action may adversely affect districts, sites, highways, structures, or objects listed, or eligible for listing, in the National Register of Historic Places or may cause loss or destruction of significant scientific, cultural, or historical resources.** The action will have no significant adverse effect on districts, sites, highways, structures, or objects listed in or eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places, because there are no such features or sites within or adjacent to the project area to be affected. The action will also not cause loss or destruction of any significant scientific, cultural, or historical resources because there are also no such features in the project area. (See EA page 5)

9. **The degree to which the action may adversely affect an endangered or threatened species or its habitat that has been determined to be critical under the Endangered Species Act of 1973.** The action will not adversely affect any endangered or threatened species or its habitat that has been determined to be critical under the Endangered Species Act of 1973, because there are no endangered or threatened species or their habitat within or adjacent to the project area. (See EA page 5)
10. **Whether the action threatens to violate Federal, State, or local law or requirements imposed for the protection of the environment.** The action will not violate Federal, State, and local laws or requirements for the protection of the environment. Applicable laws and regulations were considered and will be followed. The action is consistent with the Prescott National Forest's Land and Resource Management Plan. (See EA page 5)

After considering the effects of the actions analyzed, in terms of context and intensity, I have determined that these actions will not have a significant effect on the quality of the human environment. Therefore, an environmental impact statement will not be prepared.

DECISION

Based upon my review of the Henry Y. H. Kim Airbase Expansion Environmental Assessment (EA), I have decided to approve the project as described in the EA for implementation, with the following exception. The EA and public notices gave an estimated start date for construction of August 2012, with an estimated completion date of March 2013. Because of funding uncertainties, it is likely that the project will not follow these timelines and may occur in a subsequent year. If the agency becomes aware of new information or changed conditions regarding this project prior to implementation, that new information or changed circumstances would be evaluated to determine if it would affect the analysis or decision.

PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT

This action was originally listed as a proposal on the Prescott National Forest's Schedule of Proposed Actions during the third quarter of 2011, and was updated periodically during the analysis. People were invited to review and comment on the proposal through a scoping letter mailed on July 18, 2011 to 26 organizations, agencies, or individuals. A scoping notice was also published in the *Prescott Daily Courier* on July 20, 2011.

A notice of the 30-day opportunity to comment on the proposal and the analysis was sent to 26 organizations and individuals, and a legal notice of the proposal and opportunity to comment was published in the *Prescott Daily Courier* on January 9, 2012. The EA lists agencies and people consulted on page 7.

FINDINGS REQUIRED BY OTHER LAWS AND REGULATIONS

This decision is consistent with the Prescott National Forest Land Management Plan (Forest Plan), which states: "Construct, maintain and regulate use of Forest Service facilities to protect natural resources, correct safety hazards, reduce disinvestments, and support management

activities. (Forest Plan, pg. 14). The Forest Plan also says, "Maintain facilities to ensure health and safety of the public and employees. Maintain administrative facilities in a safe condition to minimize disinvestment." (Forest Plan, pg. 46)

The project was also designed in conformance with required construction permits and design criteria for Yavapai County and the State of Arizona.

DECISION RATIONALE AND DECISION

The Henry H. Y. Kim airbase facility is a vital resource for the forests and communities in northern and central Arizona, as well as to the Forest Service's Southwestern Region (Arizona and New Mexico) and surrounding regions. The facility is home to the Prescott Fire Cache, the Prescott Airtanker Base, the Prescott Hotshot Crew, the Prescott Helitack Crew, the Prescott Dispatch Center, as well as fire and fuels managers and support services. It also serves as a training facility and hosts numerous meetings.

After 20 years of service, there is a need for additional capacity and to update and improve the existing facilities. Safety features need to be upgraded and modernized while landing and loading areas need to be expanded and resurfaced. These improvements will make the airbase more serviceable, safe, and effective for the continued support for fire fighting and other agency needs and responsibilities.

As the Responsible Official, I have reviewed the Henry Y. H. Kim Airbase Expansion EA which documents the environmental analysis and conclusions upon which this decision is based. The evaluation and documentation of effects in the EA were considered. I determined these actions will not have a significant effect on the quality of the human environment, and an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) will not be prepared.

ADMINISTRATIVE REVIEW (APPEAL) OPPORTUNITIES

Regulations at 36 CFR 215 state that, "Only those who submit timely [during the 30-day legal comment period] and substantive comments will have eligibility to appeal the subsequent decision ..." (36 CFR 215). Substantive comments are defined as "comments within the scope of the proposed action, specific to the proposed action, have a direct relationship to the proposed action, and include supporting reasons for the responsible official to consider."

There were three comments received on this proposal during the 30-day comment period. Two were supportive and one had some questions and concerns about additional air traffic. Therefore, this decision is subject to administrative appeal under 36 CFR 215.

IMPLEMENTATION DATE

The original proposal had an estimated implementation date of August, 2012, with an estimated completion date of March, 2013. Because of funding uncertainties, it is likely that the project will not occur within this timeframe and may not occur until a subsequent fiscal year. This decision will remain valid for implementation unless changed conditions or new information indicate the need for additional analysis and a new decision.



CONTACT

For additional information concerning this project or decision, contact: Dan Salcido, Forest Engineer, 344 S. Cortez St., Prescott, AZ 86303; or by phone at (928) 443-8167.

Betty A. Mathews,

Forest Supervisor

2/28/12
Date

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