

**Department of Transportation  
Federal Aviation Administration**

**FINDING OF NO SIGNIFICANT IMPACT  
Saint Mary's Airport Improvements  
State Project Number #Z605630000**

**Purpose and Need**

The Alaska Department of Transportation and Public Facilities (DOT&PF) owns and operates Saint Mary's Airport, and in cooperation with the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA), proposes to upgrade existing airport facilities in Saint Mary's, Alaska.

The purpose of the proposed project is to improve safety at Saint Mary's Airport by upgrading existing aviation facilities to meet current FAA standards for the De Havilland Canada Dash 8-100 and Cessna 208 Caravan, the design aircraft for Runway 17/35 and Runway 6/24, respectively. Saint Mary's and the surrounding communities served by the airport are not connected to the Alaska State Highway System. Freight is barged to the Saint Mary's City dock facilities in the summer months or flown into the Saint Mary's airport year-round. The continued safe operation of Saint Mary's Airport is critical; the airport is a hub for residents, visitors, bypass mail, freight, medical emergencies/needs, and commercial fishing shipping.

The primary north/south runway (17/35) does not currently meet the FAA 600-foot runway safety area (RSA) standard beyond each runway end and the runway surface has degraded over time. Runway 6/24 does not currently meet the FAA standard safety area width of 150 feet and the runway surface has degraded over time. Taxiway A and B and the transient and main aprons also have degraded surfaces.

All runway and taxiway lighting components and most navigational aids are more than 24 years old and at the end of their useful life. There are existing embankment drainage issues in many locations and water is present in the surface and subsurface of many runway, taxiway, and apron areas. Drainage ditches around the airport facilities would need to be shifted based on the proposed changes in airport layout. Vegetation within the proposed RSA expansions consists of shrubs and trees which would require clearing to support a new embankment.

**Requested Federal Action**

The Federal Action requested of the FAA by the DOT&PF is to approve the proposed improvements to Saint Mary's Airport and fund it under FAA's Airport Improvement Program. There are no proposed modifications to FAA Design Standards included in this project.

## Proposed Action

Proposed safety improvements to the Saint Mary's Airport (Proposed Action) include the following elements:

<b>Proposed Action Element</b>	<b>Proposed Action Details</b>
Runway, Taxiway and Apron Resurfacing	Runways 17/35 and 6/24 and Taxiways A and B would be resurfaced with new crushed aggregate. With the exception of the existing asphalt paved portion of the main apron, all other operational surfaces at the Airport would be resurfaced. The asphalt paved section of the apron would be repaved. The asphalt pavement's location, materials, and dimensions would remain the same as the existing conditions following reconstruction.
Runway Safety Area Extension and Operational Surfaces	At the north end of north/south Runway 17/35, an approximately 415-foot-long by 300-foot-wide embankment would be constructed to extend the RSA 450 feet north of its current endpoint. At the south end of north/south Runway 17/35, the operational surface would be maintained, but the landing point would be moved north approximately 400 feet. The outer edges of the Runway 6/24 RSA embankment would be widened by approximately 18 feet on each side of runway centerline. The west end of Runway 6 RSA embankment would be lengthened by approximately 60 feet.
Drainage Improvements	A new drainage ditch would be constructed on the west side of Runway 17/35. The new ditch would extend from a high point near Taxiway B north and drain to the north and south to daylight. Existing drainage ditches on the west edge of the paved apron and south side of Taxiway B would be expanded. These ditches would be increased in size and depth to ensure water drains from the reconstructed paved asphalt apron and the resurfaced gravel apron and taxiway sections. The 36" culvert under Taxiway B would be replaced in kind and the 24" culvert under Runway 17/35 would be replaced with a 36" culvert.

<p>Navigational Aids and Lighting Improvements</p>	<p>All Airport runway and taxiway lighting components, including most navigational aids, would be replaced. The existing Runway 17 approach lighting system would be permanently removed. The segmented circle and lighted wind cone would be replaced and shifted slightly to accommodate drainage ditches. Runway 6/24's supplementary wind cone would be replaced in situ. The project would also include removal of the existing Runway 17 MALSR, existing Runway 17 and Runway 35 VASI, installation of new PAPI for each end of Runway 17/35 and new REIL at the Runway 17 end and at the new Runway 35 displaced threshold.</p>
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**Reasonable Alternatives**

*Proposed Action Alternative*

The Proposed Action would resurface both runways and aprons, extend the north/south runway RSA, improve drainage, and replace navigational aids and lighting. The Proposed Action would meet FAA standards while minimizing environmental impacts and keeping the project's cost within available funding limits.

*No Action Alternative*

Under the No Action Alternative, no airport improvements would occur, and existing deficiencies would remain present at the airport. The No Action Alternative would not improve operational surfaces. The No Action Alternative would not meet the project's purpose and need.

**Coordination**

*Public Involvement*

Throughout the project, DOT&PF kept the public informed through emails, newspaper and radio ads, flyers, online posting of public notices, project website postings, and meetings. Public meetings were held June 3, 2021, and November 23, 2021. Additionally, due to a request from the City of Saint Mary's, the project's design and environmental leads held three in-person meetings in Saint Mary's, Pitka's Point, and Mountain Village to discuss the project, receive input and answer questions. The Draft EA was released on October 29, 2021, with a Notice of Availability published in the State of Alaska online Public Notices, Anchorage Daily News, and Delta Discovery. The Draft EA was also available for review or download on two project websites. Comments on the Draft EA were

received during meetings and were submitted by two entities and one person. Public input resulted in changes to the project and to the EA primarily in the sections on Historic, Cultural Resources and Noise and Noise-Compatible Land Use. Residents shared knowledge of the area and its natural resources that contributed to descriptions of the affected environment, agency coordination discussions, and overall project design. Most comments obtained were received through public meeting discussions and have been paraphrased in public meeting notes. A summary of all public comments and how they were addressed can be found in Appendix F of the EA.

*Agency Coordination*

On behalf of the FAA, agency scoping for the project was conducted May 7 through June 7, 2021. Scoping letters describing the project and soliciting information were sent to the appropriate state and federal agencies, tribal organizations, and other entities. Additionally, agencies participated in the draft EA public review meeting.

**Impact Assessment**

The Proposed Action would have no significant adverse impacts in any resource category. A summary of environmental effects relevant to the Proposed Action and No Action Alternatives are outlined in the following table. Non-issue resource categories are not included.

<b>Metric</b>	<b>Proposed Action</b>	<b>No Action</b>
<b>Air quality</b>	Minor impacts from material transport.	Non-issue
<b>Biological resources</b>	Approximately 20.4 acres of previously undisturbed wildlife habitat would be affected; 16.8 acres of vegetation clearing, and fill would be placed in uplands and 3.6 acres of vegetation clearing and fill would be placed in wetlands. The project is not anticipated to have an effect on bald or golden eagles.	Would not affect biological resources beyond existing effects.
<b>Hazardous materials, solid waste, and pollution prevention</b>	The Proposed Action does not involve a property on the National Priorities List and hazardous waste generation is not anticipated. Construction generated solid waste is not expected to exceed available landfill capacities. No PFAS contamination exists.	The No Action Alternative would not result in a change from existing conditions.

<b>Historical, architectural, archaeological, and cultural resources</b>	The Proposed Action Alternative would not affect any historical, architectural, archaeological, or cultural resources.	The No Action Alternative would not affect historical, architectural, archaeological, or cultural resources.
<b>Natural resources and energy supply</b>	The Proposed Action would potentially result in a temporary increase in fuel demands during construction, though additional fuel would likely be barged in to support the project.	The No Action Alternative would not result in a change to current energy consumption levels or material needs.
<b>Noise and noise-compatible land use</b>	Temporary noise impacts in the immediate vicinity of the Airport and material sites would occur during construction, but these impacts are anticipated to be minimal and short-term. Minor, temporary noise may be generated from haul trucks transporting material through Saint Mary's but is not anticipated to be substantial.	The No Action Alternative would not change noise levels from current conditions.
<b>Socioeconomics</b>	The Proposed Action would have positive socioeconomic impacts on Saint Mary's and surrounding villages. The Proposed Action would provide a safer and more reliable air travel and access, including medical evacuation, for all residents, including children and low-income minorities.	The No Action Alternative would not affect socioeconomics.
<b>Children's health and safety risks</b>	Vehicle traffic may increase during construction, particularly along haul routes to material sites, or to the barge landing site, but it is unlikely to result in any substantial increase in safety risks.	The No Action Alternative would potentially affect children's health or safety risks that would increase over time related to airport deficiencies such as soft spots and degrading pavement.
<b>Visual effects</b>	Existing views of the Airport from adjacent roadways would not change significantly with the proposed improvements.	The No Action Alternative would not affect visual resources.
<b>Wetlands</b>	Proposed improvements associated with Saint Mary's Airport would result in the fill of 4.48 acres of terrestrial wetlands. A Clean Water Act Section 404 wetland fill permit application has	The No Action Alternative would not affect wetlands.

	<p>been submitted for impacts to 2.61 acres. The submitted permit does not include any expansion to the Pitka's Point material site as the contractor will obtain the USACE permit if expansion occurs.</p>	
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### **Consistency with Community Planning**

The Proposed Action would not change land uses as the Saint Mary's Airport Layout Plan identifies all undeveloped land as an aviation use and expansion of the airport is consistent with the Saint Mary's Community Economic Development Strategy economic goals and objectives.

### **Environmental Commitments**

The Proposed Action would include standard BMPs and adherence to requirements in applicable permits, such as the APDES Construction General Permit, Section 404 Permit to fill wetlands, and the Section 401 Water Quality Certification. Additional measures outlined below are project-specific and would be included in construction specifications.

- To reduce dust resulting from haul trucks in town, water would be applied during haul operations in dry conditions, as needed throughout the day to minimize dust.
- The operational limits of the airport barge landing and extent of the Yukon River Access Road will be physically marked to prevent use of fish camp area and avoid buildings owned by Boreal Fisheries.
- Truckloads of large aggregates (such as riprap) are expected to be significantly fewer than for surfacing and would not be allowed to be mounded above the truck bed sides to minimize loose materials falling off moving trucks. Smaller aggregates like the surfacing may be mounded but are not anticipated to pose a significant safety risk. Reduced speed limits could be imposed if safety remains a concern.
- No mechanized vegetation clearing will occur from May 1 to July 15 unless a mitigative work plan is submitted to DOT&PF for approval.

### **Required Permits and/or Approvals**

- United States Army Corps of Engineers (USACE), Section 404 Clean Water Act (CWA) Individual Permit
- Alaska Department of Environmental Conservation (ADEC), Section 401 CWA Certificate of Reasonable Assurance; Alaska Pollutant Discharge Elimination System (APDES) General Permit for Discharges from Large and Small Construction Activities

**Federal Finding and Approval**

After careful and thorough consideration of the facts contained herein, the undersigned finds that the proposed Federal action is consistent with existing national environmental policies and objectives of Section 101 of the National Environmental Policy Act of 1969 (NEPA) and other applicable environmental requirements and will significantly affect the quality of the human environment or otherwise include any condition requiring consultation pursuant to section 102(2)(C) of NEPA.

Approved by: \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_  
Kristi Warden  
Division Director  
Airports Division, FAA Alaskan Region