



OFFICE OF LOCAL DEFENSE COMMUNITY COOPERATION

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National Environmental Policy Act Adoption of the Categorical Exclusion for the Tinker School Reconstruction Project, Hillsborough County Public Schools-MacDill AFB, Florida

Pursuant to the Council on Environmental Quality regulations (40 Code of Federal Regulations [CFR] Parts 1500–1508) implementing the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA), the Department of Defense Office of Local Defense Community Cooperation (OLDCC) gives notice that it is adopting the MacDill Air Force Base (AFB) Air Force Form 813 for “Replace Tinker School Campus for Permanent PK-8 Conversion” executed March 14, 2024 (Attachment 1). The prospective OLDCC Grantee, Hillsborough County Public Schools, proposes to fully replace the existing Tinker School campus with new, updated facilities. The proposed action would demolish approximately 73,000 square feet of facilities and 78,000 square feet of pavement. Following demolition, 5 new buildings totaling approximately 135,000 square feet and 78,000 square feet of impervious pavement would be constructed in the newly cleared area. The new Tinker School will increase its capacity to approximately 1,000 students.

OLDCC is the grantor of federal funding for the proposed project under the Public Schools on Military Installations Program, which seeks to assist Local Education Agencies in constructing, renovating, repairing, or expanding elementary and secondary public schools on military installations in order to address capacity and facility condition deficiencies pursuant to Section 8108 of Public Law 117-328, “Consolidated Appropriations Act, 2023.” The prospective Grantee and MacDill AFB prepared an Air Force Form 813 Environmental Impact Analysis Process Document (Attachment 1) for the reconstruction of the Tinker PK-8 School. MacDill AFB applied Categorical Exclusion A2.3.11 of 32 CFR § 989, Appendix B for the proposed action. It provides for an exemption from further NEPA analysis for “actions similar to other actions which have been determined to have insignificant impact in a similar setting as established in an environmental impact statement or an Environmental Assessment resulting in a Finding of No Significant Impact (FONSI).” The proposed action was determined to be sufficiently similar to the construction of a U.S. Special Operations Command Military Information Support Operations facility that was analyzed in an Environmental Assessment in 2019 (Attachment 2). Furthermore, MacDill AFB determined that none of the extraordinary circumstances outlined in Appendix B of 32 CFR § 989 are applicable to this project. OLDCC agrees with this determination and finds the attached documentation appropriately evaluates the proposed action. Because the proposed project location is within a floodplain, MacDill AFB drafted a FONPA (Finding of No Practicable Alternative) (Pages 2-4 on Attachment 1) pursuant to the provisions of Executive Order 11988 (*Floodplain Management*), Executive Order 11990 (*Protection of Wetlands*), and AFMAN 32-7003, Section 3C and 3D.

In accordance with the Council on Environmental Quality’s “National Environmental Policy Act Implementing Regulations” at 40 CFR §1506.3, OLDCC may adopt another agency’s determination that a Categorical Exclusion applies to a proposed action if the action covered by the original Categorical Exclusion determination and OLDCC’s proposed action are substantially the same. The action evaluated in the MacDill AFB Air Force Form 813 is the same proposed

project that is the subject of the OLDCC award. Further, OLDCC agrees the Proposed Action will not have significant individual or cumulative environmental impacts, meets the criteria for the listed Categorical Exclusion, and that no extraordinary circumstances exist to preclude use of the Categorical Exclusion. Therefore, OLDCC adopts the Air Force Categorical Exclusion determination for the subject project as supported by the analysis and documentation provided in the following attached files, which are incorporated by reference herein:

- “Environmental Impact Analysis Process Document FONPA and Supporting AF Form 813, Replace Tinker School Campus for Permanent PK-8 Conversion” Air Force Categorical Exclusion Determination signed by USAF Colonel David Jokinen on March 14, 2024, and Andrew W. Rider, Chief of Environmental Element, on January 5, 2024; also includes additional supporting consultation records (Attachment 1- Tinker AF 813 and FONPA-MacDill AFB).
- “Final Environmental Assessment (EA) for the U.S. Special Operations Command (USSOCOM) Military Information Support Operations (MISO) Facility, MacDill Air Force Base, Florida,” signed by USAF Colonel Randy L. Boswell on May 17, 2019 (Attachment 2-MacDill AFB 2019 EA, FONSI, and FONPA).

The Categorical Exclusion determination and supporting materials in Attachments 1 and 2 demonstrate that the Proposed Action will have no significant environmental impacts and therefore does not require further assessment. The documentation constitutes a complete NEPA determination and shows that Air Force Categorical Exclusion A2.3.11 of 32 CFR § 989, Appendix B is applicable to the subject project.

OLDCC has independently reviewed the attached documentation and finds that implementation of the Proposed Action will not significantly impact the quality of the human environment. MacDill AFB is in Hillsborough County, which is in attainment for all criteria pollutants. Emissions from the proposed action were calculated using the Air Force’s Air Conformity Applicability Model (found in Attachment 1). Air quality impacts from the construction will be limited and temporary. Typical construction noise is anticipated during the construction and will be temporary. Once constructed, the proposed action will not increase noise levels.

The proposed action is located within the 100-year coastal floodplain. Under Executive Order 11988, and Executive Order 11900, *Protection of Wetlands*, agencies must avoid construction of facilities or structures within floodplains and wetlands unless there is no Practicable Alternative. Pursuant to this executive order, MacDill AFB analyzed the Proposed Action for its potential impacts to floodplains and wetlands, considered alternate construction locations, and documented their determination as a FONPA (Attachment 2). In the FONPA, they determined that the new facilities are constructed so that the furnished floor is a minimum of 2 feet above the 100-year floodplain, no wetlands will be filled, altered, or impacted, and there will be no negative impacts to existing floodplains. Further, they reasonably examined alternative sites and concluded that the proposed location is the only location available for the Tinker School and there is no practicable alternative. OLDCC concurs with this assessment and has determined that the provided FONPA and analysis satisfies the requirements of Executive Orders 11988 and 11900. Pursuant to public outreach requirements of Executive Orders 11998 and 11990, an early

Public Notice was published in the Tampa Bay Times on May 17, 2023, announcing that the Proposed Action would take place in a floodplain and seeking advanced public comment. To date, no comments have been received.

The Federal Coastal Zone Management requires Federal agencies carrying out activities subject to the Act to provide a “negative determination” to the relevant state agency. The Air Force Form 813, FONPA, and negative determination was submitted to the State Clearinghouse for review under the Coastal Zone Management Act. Upon review of the negative determination, the State Clearinghouse stated that they had no objections to the project as proposed and found it consistent with the Florida Coastal Management Program.

The wood stork (which is listed as federally endangered) and the tricolored bat (which is currently proposed for listing as endangered) have been observed on MacDill AFB. MacDill AFB personnel submitted a determination that the proposed action may affect, but is not likely to affect, these species to the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) on October 26, 2023. The USFWS concurred with this assessment on November 17, 2023, and had no objections to the project as proposed. Consultation with USFWS on this project can be found in Attachment 1. To complete construction, a maximum of 51 trees will be removed at the project site. No trees will be removed from May to July during the tricolored bat maternity season as to not impact bat pups. A bald eagle nest is known to exist nearby to the site but is located outside of the 600-foot buffer for construction activities recommended in the USFWS’s *National Bald Eagle Management Guidelines*. Otherwise, the effects of construction would result in temporary disturbance to local wildlife. While the project will disturb soils, the site has been historically disturbed due to previous construction. Minor changes would occur but not significantly affect the topography of the area. Best Management Practices to prevent soil erosion such as silt fencing and revegetating disturbed area will be implemented.

MacDill AFB initiated consultation with federally recognized tribes for their comments on the project on April 28, 2023. The tribes consulted include the Seminole Tribe of Florida, Miccosukee Tribe of Indians, Seminole Nation of Oklahoma, and the Muscogee (Creek) Nation. The Seminole Tribe of Florida provided written response on June 21, 2023, stating that they had no objection to the proposal. The Seminole Nation of Oklahoma provided written response on November 30, 2023, and confirmed that they had no objection to the proposed action and requested that they receive periodic reports if anything changes with the project. The Muscogee (Creek) Nation responded via email on December 8, 2023, stating that they concurred with the Air Force’s determination that no historic properties would be affected by the proposed action. No responses have been received from the Miccosukee Tribe of Indians at the time of writing. Consultation with tribes can be found in Attachment 1.

The action for which the prospective Grantee and MacDill AFB prepared and executed the attached Categorical Exclusion determination (Attachment 1) is the same action as OLDCC’s Proposed Action and applying the Air Force Categorical Exclusion A2.3.11 of 32 CFR Part 989, Appendix is an appropriate NEPA determination for this project. Therefore, OLDCC adopts the Categorical Exclusion determination per 40 CFR § 1506.3. Further, OLDCC, as the adopting agency, confirms that none of the circumstances listed in 40 CFR § 1506.3(e) are present.

I have determined that the information provided above and in the attached documents provides sufficient evidence and analysis for determining that an Environmental Assessment or Environmental Impact Statement is not required.

Sincerely,

Patrick J. O'Brien
Director

Attachments:
As stated