

the Air Force must independently review the EA or EIS and determine that it is current and that it satisfies the requirements of this part. The Air Force then prepares its own FONSI or ROD, as the case may be. In the situation where the proposed action is not substantially the same as that described in the EA or the EIS, the Air Force may adopt the EA or EIS, or a portion thereof, by circulating the EA or EIS as a draft and then preparing the final EA or EIS.

#### § 989.10 Tiering.

The Air Force should use tiered (40 CFR 1502.20) environmental documents, and environmental documents prepared by other agencies, to eliminate repetitive discussions of the same issues and to focus on the issues relating to specific actions. If the Air Force adopts another Federal agency's environmental document, subsequent Air Force environmental documents may also be tiered.

#### § 989.11 Combining EIAP with other documentation.

(a) The EPF combines environmental analysis with other related documentation when practicable (40 CFR 1506.4) following the procedures prescribed by the CEQ regulations and this part.

(b) The EPF must integrate comprehensive planning (AFI 32-7062, Air Force Comprehensive Planning<sup>9</sup>) with the requirements of the EIAP. Prior to making a decision to proceed, the EPF must analyze the environmental impacts that could result from implementation of a proposal identified in the comprehensive plan.

#### § 989.12 AF Form 813, Request for Environmental Impact Analysis.

The Air Force uses AF Form 813 to document the need for environmental analysis or for certain CATEX determinations for proposed actions. The form helps narrow and focus the issues to potential environmental impacts. AF Form 813 must be retained with the EA or EIS to record the focusing of environmental issues.

[64 FR 38129, July 15, 1999; 66 FR 16868, Mar. 28, 2001]

<sup>9</sup>See footnote 1 to § 989.1.

#### § 989.13 Categorical exclusion.

(a) CATEXs define those categories of actions that do not individually or cumulatively have potential for significant effect on the environment and do not, therefore, require further environmental analysis in an EA or an EIS. The list of Air Force-approved CATEXs is in Appendix B. Supplements to this part may not add CATEXs or expand the scope of the CATEXs in Appendix B.

(b) Characteristics of categories of actions that usually do not require either an EIS or an EA (in the absence of extraordinary circumstances) include:

(1) Minimal adverse effect on environmental quality.

(2) No significant change to existing environmental conditions.

(3) No significant cumulative environmental impact.

(4) Socioeconomic effects only.

(5) Similarity to actions previously assessed and found to have no significant environmental impacts.

(c) CATEXs apply to actions in the United States and abroad. General exemptions specific to actions abroad are in 32 CFR part 187. The EPF or other decision-maker forwards requests for additional exemption determinations for actions abroad to HQ USAF/ILEB with a justification letter.

(d) Normally, any decision-making level may determine the applicability of a CATEX and need not formally record the determination on AF Form 813 or elsewhere, except as noted in the CATEX list.

(e) Application of a CATEX to an action does not eliminate the need to meet air conformity requirements (see § 989.30).

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#### § 989.14 Environmental assessment.

(a) When a proposed action is one not usually requiring an EIS but is not categorically excluded, the EPF supports the proponent in preparing an EA (40 CFR 1508.9). Every EA must lead to either a FONSI, a decision to prepare an EIS, or no action on the proposal.

(b) Whenever a proposed action usually requires an EIS, the EPF responsible for the EIAP may prepare an EA

to definitively determine if an EIS is required based on the analysis of environmental impacts. Alternatively, the EPF may choose to bypass the EA and proceed with preparation of an EIS.

(c) An EA is a written analysis that:

(1) Provides analysis sufficient to determine whether to prepare an EIS or a FONSI.

(2) Aids the Air Force in complying with the NEPA when no EIS is required.

(d) The length of an EA should be as short and concise as possible, while matching the magnitude of the proposal. An EA briefly discusses the need for the proposed action, reasonable alternatives to the proposed action, the affected environment, the environmental impacts of the proposed action and alternatives (including the "no action" alternative), and a listing of agencies and persons consulted during preparation. The EA should not contain long descriptions or lengthy, detailed data. Rather, incorporate by reference background data to support the concise discussion of the proposal and relevant issues.

(e) The format for the EA may be the same as the EIS. The alternatives section of an EA and an EIS are similar and should follow the alternatives analysis guidance outlined in § 989.8.

(f) The EPF should design the EA to facilitate rapidly transforming the document into an EIS if the environmental analysis reveals a significant impact.

(g) As a finding contained in the draft FONSI, a Finding of No Practicable Alternative (FONPA) must be submitted (five hard copies and an electronic version) to the MAJCOM EPF when the alternative selected could be located in wetlands or floodplains, and must discuss why no other practicable alternative exists to avoid impacts. See AFI 32-7064, Integrated Natural Resources Management.

(h) EAs and accompanying FONSI that require the Air Force to make Clean Air Act General Conformity Determinations shall be submitted (five hard copies and an electronic version) through the MAJCOM EPF to HQ USAF/ILEB for SAF/MIQ approval. SAF/MIQ signs all General Conformity Determinations and will also sign the

companion FONSI, when requested by the MAJCOM (see § 989.30).

(i) In cases potentially involving a high degree of controversy or Air Force-wide concern, the MAJCOM, after consultation with HQ USAF/ILEB, may request HQ USAF ESOHC review and approval of an EA, or HQ USAF may direct the MAJCOM to forward an EA (five hard copies and an electronic version) for HQ USAF ESOHC review and approval.

(j) As a minimum, the following EAs require MAJCOM approval because they involve topics of special importance or interest. Unless directed otherwise by HQ USAF/ILEB, the installation EPF must forward the following types of EAs to the MAJCOM EPF, along with an unsigned draft FONSI: (MAJCOMs can require other EAs to receive MAJCOM approval in addition to those types specified here.)

(1) All EAs on non-Air Force proposals that require an Air Force decision, such as use of Air Force property for highways, space ports, and joint-use proposals.

(2) EAs where mitigation to insignificance is accomplished in lieu of initiating an EIS (§ 989.22(c)).

(k) A few examples of actions that normally require preparation of an EA (except as indicated in the CATEX list) include:

(1) Public land withdrawals of less than 5,000 acres.

(2) Minor mission realignments and aircraft beddowns.

(3) New building construction on base within developed areas.

(4) Minor modifications to Military Operating Areas (MOAs), air-to-ground weapons ranges, and military training routes.

(l) The Air Force will involve other federal agencies, state, Tribal, and local governments, and the public in the preparation of EAs (40 CFR 1501.4(b) and 1506.6). The extent of involvement usually coincides with the magnitude and complexity of the proposed action and its potential environmental effect on the area. For proposed actions described in § 989.15(e)(2), use either the scoping process described in

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## § 989.15

§ 989.18 or the public notice process in § 989.24.

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### § 989.15 Finding of no significant impact.

(a) The FONSI (40 CFR 1508.13) briefly describes why an action would not have a significant effect on the environment and thus will not be the subject of an EIS. The FONSI must summarize the EA or, preferably, have it attached and incorporated by reference, and must note any other environmental documents related to the action.

(b) If the EA is not incorporated by reference, the FONSI must include:

(1) Name of the action.

(2) Brief description of the action (including alternatives considered and the chosen alternative).

(3) Brief discussion of anticipated environmental effects.

(4) Conclusions leading to the FONSI.

(5) All mitigation actions that will be adopted with implementation of the proposal (see § 989.22).

(c) Keep FONSI as brief as possible. Only rarely should FONSI exceed two typewritten pages. Stand-alone FONSI without an attached EA may be longer.

(d) For actions of regional or local interest, disseminate the FONSI according to § 989.24. The MAJCOM and NGB are responsible for release of FONSI to regional offices of Federal agencies, the state single point of contact (SPOC), and state agencies concurrent with local release by the installations.

(e) The EPF must make the EA and unsigned FONSI available to the affected public and provide the EA and unsigned FONSI to organizations and individuals requesting them and to whomever the proponent or the EPF has reason to believe is interested in the action, unless disclosure is precluded for security classification reasons. Draft EAs and unsigned draft FONSI will be clearly identified as drafts and distributed via cover letter which will explain their purpose and need. The EPF provides a copy of the documents without cost to organizations and individuals requesting them. The FONSI transmittal date (date of letter of transmittal) to the state

SPOC or other equivalent agency is the official notification date.

(1) Before the FONSI is signed and the action is implemented, the EPF should allow sufficient time to receive comments from the public. The time period will reflect the magnitude of the proposed action and its potential for controversy. The greater the magnitude of the proposed action or its potential for controversy, the longer the time that must be allowed for public review. Mandatory review periods for certain defined actions are contained in § 989.15(e)(2). These are not all inclusive but merely specific examples. In every case where an EA and FONSI are prepared, the proponent and EPF must determine how much time will be allowed for public review. In all cases, other than classified actions, a public review period should be the norm unless clearly unnecessary due to the lack of potential controversy.

(2) In the following circumstances, the EA and unsigned FONSI are made available for public review for at least 30 days before FONSI approval and implementing the action (40 CFR 1501.4(e)(2)):

(i) When the proposed action is, or is closely similar to, one that usually requires preparation of an EIS (see § 989.16).

(ii) If it is an unusual case, a new kind of action, or a precedent-setting case in terms of its potential environmental impacts.

(iii) If the proposed action would be located in a floodplain or wetland.

(iv) If the action is mitigated to insignificance in the FONSI, in lieu of an EIS (§ 989.22(c)).

(v) If the proposed action is a change to airspace use or designation.

(vi) If the proposed action would have a disproportionately high and adverse environmental effect on minority populations and low-income populations.

(f) As a general rule, the same organizational level that prepares the EA also reviews and recommends the FONSI for approval by the EPC. MAJCOMs may decide the level of EA approval and FONSI signature, except as provided in § 989.14(g), (h), (i), and (j).