DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE

Office of the Secretary

Strategic Environmental Research and Development Program, Scientific Advisory Board

ACTION: Notice.

In accordance with section 10(a)(2) of the Federal Advisory Committee Act (P.L. 92–463), announcement is made of the following Committee meeting:

Date of Meeting: August 12, 1998 from 0830 to 1730 and August 13, 1998 from 0800 to 1530.

Place: Arlington Hilton Hotel & Towers, 950 North Stafford Street, Mezzanine-Gallery II, Arlington, VA.

Matters to be Considered: Research and Development proposals and continuing projects requesting Strategic Environmental Research and Development Program funds in excess of $1M will be reviewed.

This meeting is open to the public. Any interested person may attend, appear before, or file statements with the Scientific Advisory Board at the time and in the manner permitted by the Board.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Mrs. Amy Kelly, SERDP Program Office, 901 North Stuart Street, Suite 303, Arlington, VA or by telephone at (703) 696–2124.

Dated: July 31, 1998.

L. M. Bynum,

Alternate OSD Federal Register Liaison Office Officer, Department of Defense.

[FR Doc. 98–21093 Filed 8–6–98; 8:45 am]

BILLING CODE 5000–04–M

DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE

Deparment of the Navy

Record of Decision and General Conformity Determination for the Development of Facilities To Support Basing U.S. Pacific Fleet F/A–18E/F Aircraft on the West Coast of the United States

AGENCY: Department of the Navy, Department of Defense.

ACTION: Notice of record of decision.

SUMMARY: The Department of the Navy, after carefully weighing the operational, environmental, and cost implications of basing U.S. Pacific Fleet F/A–18E/F aircraft in the western United States, announces its deicsion to base those aircraft, and associated military and civilian personnel, and family members, at Naval Air Station (NAS) Lemoore.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Mr. Samuel L. Dennis, Naval Facilities Engineering Field Activity West Command (Code 7031), 900 Commodore Drive, San Bruno, CA 94066–5006, telephone number (650) 244–3007.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION: The text of the entire Record of Decision (ROD) is provided as follows:

The Department of the Navy (DON), pursuant to Section 102(c) of the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) of 1969 (42 U.S.C. Section 4331 et. seq.), and the regulations of the Council on Environmental Quality (CEQ) that implement NEPA procedures (40 CFR Parts 1500–1508), hereby announces its decision to construct facilities to support basing of U.S. Pacific Fleet F/A–18E/F aircraft, and associated military and civilian personnel, and family members, at NAS Lemoore, California.

F/A–18E/F aircraft incoroprate major operational improvements that enhance strike/fighter capability and replace older outdated aircraft models that cannot accommodate new weapons and weapons systems. The F/A–18E/F aircraft is intended to replace existing strike/fighter capacity on the West Coast.

Basing and operating of 164 F/A–18E/F aircraft will be accomplished as set out in the Preferred Alternative described in the Final Environmental Impact Statement (FEIS). To support personnel, operations, and maintenance associated with the F/A–18E/F homebasing, 12 construction projects, consisting primarily of additions to existing facilities, are required at NAS Lemoore. The homebasing of the F/A–18E/F aircraft will also increase aircraft operations at NAS Lemoore and associated training ranges, particularly the R–2508 complex.

Implementation of the decision will begin in 1999 with Phase I, the introduction of 92 F/A–18E/F strike/fighter aircraft comprising one new fleet replacement squadron and four new fleet operational squadrons. Phase II of the implementation process, extending to 2010, involves replacement of 72 existing F/A–18C/D strike/fighter aircraft based at NAS Lemoore with F/A–18E/F strike/fighter aircraft.

Pursuant to Section 176(c) of the Clean Air Act (CAA) (42 U.S.C. 7476(c)), the DON has determined that the homebasing of F/A–18E/F aircraft as NAS Lemoore will conform to the San Joaquin Valley Unified Air Pollution Control District (SJVUAPCD) Implementation Plan.

Process

A Notice of Intent (NOI) to prepare an EIS for the homebasing of up to 164 F/A–18E/F aircraft on the West Coast of the United States was published in the **Federal Register** on April 23, 1997. Three public scoping meetings were held on April 28, 29 an 30 of 1997, in Lemoore, CA; El Centro, CA; and Point Mugu/Camarillo, CA, respectively.

A Notice of Availability (NOA) for the Draft EIS (DEIS) was published in the **Federal Register** on December 12, 1997. Public hearings were held on January 7 and 8, in Lemoore, CA, and El Centro, CA, respectively. Approximately 75 individuals, agencies, and organizations submitted comments on the DEIS. The FEIS addressed all oral and written comments.

The NOA for the FEIS was published in the **Federal Register** on June 5, 1998. Public notices and news releases noting the availability of the FEIS and draft Final Clean Air Act (CAA) Conformity Determination were published in local and regional newspaper on June 5, 1998. The DON received approximately 40 public comments during the 30 day public comment period.

Alternatives Considered

The DON screened nine West Coast Navy and Marine Corps Air installations as potential sites for homebasing the F/A–18E/F aircraft. This screening process examined installations relative to the following operational criteria: (1) Field elevation, (2) training ranges, (3) basing at least two F/A–18E/F squadrons at each installation, (4) airfield tempo of operations, (5) 24-hour aircraft operations, (6) dual runways, and (7) field carrier landing practice. Installations meeting the operational screening criteria were NAS Lemoore and Naval Air Facility (NAF) El Centro.

The DON evaluated operational, logistical, and personnel requirements, environmental impacts, and life cycle cost of homebasing at each of the alternative locations. Based upon this comparative analysis, the DON selected NAS Lemoore as its Preferred Alternative. NAS Lemoore is also the environmentally preferred alternative.

Environmental Impacts

Environmental resources involving land use and airspace, visual resources, socioeconomics, cultural resources, traffic and circulation, air quality, noise, biological resources, hydrological resources, utilities and services, public health and safety, and hazardous materials and waste were analyzed in the EIS. The DON also considered potential cumulative impacts of the proposed action and consistency of the proposed action with federal policies addressing environmental justice. This Record of Decision focuses on the

significant impacts that could result from the homebasing of F/A–18E/F aircraft at NAS Lemoore.

Air Quality

There is the potential for significant impacts on air quality due to emissions from activities associated with the increased air operations associated with the F/A–18E/F aircraft. Direct and indirect emissions would exceed the relevant CAA conformity de minimis thresholds for ozone and PM10 precursors. A formal CAA conformity determination that net emission increases have been addressed as required by SJVUAPCD Rule 9110, which incorporates by reference the EPA Determination of Conformity for General Federal Actions (40 CFR 51.860). Maximum conformity-related emission increases to support F/A–18E/F aircraft equal 340.12 tons per year of reactive organic compounds, 304.77 tons per year of nitrogen oxides, and 167.86 tons per year of PM10. These conformity-related emissions have been compensated by mobile source conformity offsets previously obtained by NAS Lemoore as a result of the closure of Castle Air Force Base in 1995 and an additional 218.28 tons of reactive organic compound mobile source conformity offsets transferred by the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA). In the Air Force ROD for the disposal of Castle Air Force Base, signed in January 1995, the Air Force transferred to the DON air credits so that the DON could achieve conformity for the then proposed realignment of Navy aircraft from former NAS Miramar to NAS Lemoore. That realignment did not occur, leaving the DON with unused offsets in the amount of 100 tons per year of reactive organic compounds, 367.1 tons per year of nitrogen oxides, and 151.6 tons per year of PM10. The remainder of the Air Force credits, 2311.2 tons of reactive organic compounds and 642.7 tons of nitrogen oxide were transferred to the FAA by the Air Force for their use in satisfying any conformity requirements generated by a airport redevelopment proposal for Castle Air Force Base. To date the civilian airport redevelopment proposal has not required the use of mobile source conformity offsets. The DON identified the need for 218.28 tons of reactive organic compounds to support the introduction of the F/A–18E/F aircraft. The FAA concurred in the request and transferred this amount of reactive organic compound mobile source conformity offsets for DON use at NAS Lemoore effective July 22, 1998. The remaining pollutant-specific deficiencies and surpluses are: a dificienty of 21.84 tons per year for reactive compounds; a surplus of 62.33 tons per year for nitrogen oxides; and a deficiency of 16.26 tons per year for PM10 (FEIS Appendix E).

The SJVUAPCD recognizes and supports interpollutant trading for purposes of demonstrating CAA conformity. Nitrogen oxides are recognized by the SJVUAPCD as both ozone and PM10 precursors. The surplus conformity offsets of nitrogen oxide emissions are more than sufficient to provide interpollutant offsets that address the reactive organic compound and PM10 conformity offset requirements. Consequently CAA conformity has been demonstrated (FEIS Appendix E) pursuant to 40 CFR 51.858(a) (2) and 40 CFR 58.858(a) (5) (iii). Both EPA and SJVUAPCD have concurred with DON's conformity determination. No other comments were received on the draft Final CAA General Conformity Determination.

This ROD provides an enforceable mechanism for implementing the mobile source conformity offsets consistent with the EPA's general conformity rule. NAS Lemoore will follow SJVUAPCD procedures to ensure that new, relocated or modified facilities and equipment meet applicable rules and regulations (including all state implementation plan requirements) prior to facility construction or installation.

As part of this Record of Decision, I approve the CAA Conformity Determination included in FEIS Appendix E.

Hazardous Substances

There is the potential for significant impacts from the exposure of flightline personnel at NAS Lemoore to hazardous substances contained in aviation fuel. With increased fuel handling to support the additional F/A–18E/F aircraft, the risk of exposure to hazardous substances will increase. Additionally, increased fuel handling will increase the risk of fuel spills. To mitigate these potential impacts, plans and programs governing the construction of new fuel storage areas, the operation of new fuel storage areas, and fuel handling procedures will be amended to implement procedures for reducing exposure to hazardous substances associated with increased fuel usage. Combined with current efforts to meet regulatory requirements for the installation of enhanced monitoring equipment for the existing fuel storage areas, the risk of exposure to hazardous substances will be reduced to a less than significant level. Additionally, existing Spill Prevention Control and Countermeasure (SPCC) plans will be amended to account for the increased risk of fuel spills.

Schools—There is the potential for significant impacts to schools because the homebasing of F/A–18E/F aircraft will add between 783 and 1,283 students to area school districts. Area schools are either near or over capacity. An increase in student population will exacerbate this situation. School districts may be eligible for federal funding which aids local school districts in the education of military children. Schools must apply for impact aid and the funds are paid directly by the Department of Education. To mitigate these potential impacts, the DON will assist affected school districts, to the extent practicable, in their pursuit of federal impact aid. Implementation of this mitigation measure may reduce the level of impact to one that is less than significant. However, full funding of federal impact aid is unlikely because of federal funding decreases in recent years.

Traffic

There is the potential for significant impacts to traffic circulation at the signalized intersection of Grangeville Road and State Route 41 during the evening peak hour due to increases in personnel assigned to NA Lemoore. This impact could be mitigated by increasing the signal cycle at the Grangeville Road and State Route 41 intersection during evening peak hour. With a change in cycle length from 80 to 90 seconds, the impact on the intersection would be reduced to a less than significant level. As this mitigation measure involves local off-base roadways, DON has no authority to implement the measure. Implementation is under the control of state and/or local officials.

Noise

While there will be no significant impacts from noise associated with operation of F/A–18E/F aircraft, it is clear from public comments throughout the EIS process that the public is concerned with noise impacts from aircraft, especially overflight of national parks and wilderness areas. In response to these public comments the Navy conducted focused noise analyses for four areas of concern: the NAS Lemoore airfield and vicinity, the transit routes to the R–2508 Airspace Complex, the R–2508 Airspace Complex, and the VR–1257 military training route (MTR). The focused noise analyses are discussed in FEIS Section 4.7.

Average daily noise levels, expressed as Community Noise Equivalent Level (CNEL), will increase by up to 5 dBA at

NAS Lemoore and some areas in the immediate vicinity. Even with this increase military family housing, on-base schools, and affected off-base agricultural lands will not be exposed to incompatible noise levels.

There are two primary flight corridors connecting NAS Lemoore with the R–2508 Complex. These corridors are identified by the name assigned to the associated R–2508 access points, Kiote and Swoop. Both of these corridors overfly western parts of Sequoia and Kings Canyon National Parks. Aircraft from NAS Lemoore normally enter the R–2508 Complex via one access point and return to NAS Lemoore via the other, thus separating aircraft flying in different directions at similar altitude. A new access point, Fangg, has been proposed north of the Kiote access point and near the northwestern corridor of the R–2508 Complex. This proposal is currently under review by FAA. Development of the Fangg access point is being coordinated with the National Park Service and the R–2508 Central Coordination Facility (CCF). If the new access point is approved by the FAA, NAS Lemoore will discontinue use of the Kiote access point. Thus, the entry and exit points for the R–2508 Complex would be from the northern and southern most access points and away from the areas most used by park visitors.

Analysis of noise from existing NAS Lemoore air traffic along these corridors indicates a CNEL level of 50 dBA. The addition of the F/A–18E/F aircraft would increase the CNEL by about 6 dBA, resulting in CNEL levels along the highest ridgelines between 50 and 56 dBA. Visitors to national parks and wilderness areas will hear individual aircraft, but the noise will be of limited duration and will not significantly affect use of the parks or wilderness areas. Establishment of the Fangg access point will route aircraft away from areas generally used by park visitors. DON will continue to work with the National Park Service to address concerns about overflight and noise.

Once the aircraft cross the crest of the Sierra Mountains they enter the R–2508 Complex. Aircraft from NAS Lemoore generally operate in the northern half of the complex and are required by the range manager to maintain flight altitudes of at least 3,000 feet above ground level (AGL) when flying over designated noise sensitive areas. Phase 1 of the proposed action will increase the number of Navy operations in the R–2508 Complex by approximately 7,000 per year, resulting in a 19.5 percent increase in total military operations within the complex. This would result in a CNEL increase of less than 1 dBA.

Implementation of Phase 2 of the proposed action, the replacement of existing F/A–18C/D aircraft with F/A–18E/F aircraft, will result in a decrease in noise impacts within the R–2508 Complex. This decrease would occur because most of the sorties would be conducted by newer F/A–18E/F aircraft, which produce less noise at higher power settings than the existing F/A–18C/D aircraft.

Aircraft stationed at NAS Lemoore use a number of military training routes (MTRs). All but one of these routes avoid significant noise sensitive land uses. The VR–1257 low altitude MTR passes over portions of Joshua Tree National Park and Anza-Borrego Desert State Park. Portions of the corridor are flown at altitudes as low as 400 feet AGL. As a result of discussions with the National Park Service the Navy voluntarily raised the flight altitude for the portion of VR–1257 that crosses Joshua Tree National Park. This portion is flown at FAA's maximum allowable altitude of 1,500 feet AGL. Current use of the VR–1257 is relatively low. Only 164 sorties were flown in 1997, of which 87 were attributed to F/A–18C/D aircraft. An additional 50 sorties per year would be added to VR–1257 by F/A–18E/F aircraft. CNEL noise levels would increase only by an undetectable 0.5 dBA. With F/A–18E/F aircraft using the MTR, CNEL noise levels would be 55 dBA for those portions of the route flown at 400 feet AGL, and less than 50 dBA for those portions of the corridor flown at or above altitudes of 1,000 AGL. Visitors to Joshua Tree National Park and Anza-Borrego Desert State Park will hear individual aircraft, but the noise will be of limited duration and will not significantly affect use of the parks. DON will continue to work with the National Park Service and state park officials to address concerns about overflight and noise.

Response to Comments Received Regarding the Final Environmental Impact Statement

The DON received 40 comments on the FEIS from two federal agencies, one state agency, three local agencies, and numerous citizens groups and individuals. A majority of the comments received on the FEIS dealt with noise impacts to national parks, wilderness areas, and State parks associated with increased aircraft operations. Generally those that commented upon noise impacts to recreational areas simply disagreed with the conclusions reached by the FEIS. Substantive comments are addressed below.

Several commentors criticized the discussion of noise impacts for not considering the unique nature of solitude in national parks and wilderness areas. Federal and state land management agencies generally have not adopted noise criteria for open space, natural resource management, or recreation lands under their jurisdiction. The National Park Service, for example, identifies ''sounds of nature'' and ''natural quiet'' as resources to be protected, but does not have any quantitative criteria for determining when the magnitude or frequency of noise events constitutes an adverse impact on these resources. Consequently, noise impacts affecting park and wilderness lands were assessed using existing annual average day/night noise criteria (CNEL).

The National Parks and Conservation Association commented that the Navy failed to comply with Section 4(f) of the Transportation Act (49 U.S.C. Section 303(c)) which requires special analysis of actions that use parklands. The Navy is not required to undertake such special analysis for aircraft operations. Section 1079 of Title 10, U.S. Code, expressly excludes military aircraft operations from the application of section 4(f) of the Transportation Act.

The National Parks and Conservation Association has suggested the proposal to add a fourth access point to the R–2508 Complex merits the issuance of a supplemental EIS. A supplemental EIS is not required for every piece of information added to a final EIS as a result of review of the draft EIS. By establishing an iterative review and revision process for NEPA documents, CEQ regulations clearly contemplate modification and expansion of analysis in the final EIS over that contained in the draft. The establishment of a new access point is adequately discussed in the FEIS. The types of impacts associated with the new access point do not differ from those described for the existing access points. In fact, because establishment of a new access point will move aircraft away from areas normally used by park visitors, the overall impact of establishing a new access point is positive. A supplemental EIS is not warranted.

The National Parks and Conservation Association has stated that the ongoing Department of Defense/National Park Service study of the perception of aircraft noise upon park visitors must be completed prior to any decision on the proposed action. The FEIS discusses the noise levels associated with the proposed action and their impact upon the human environment based upon existing criteria. Should the ongoing

study develop new criteria for analysis of noise impacts on parks or wilderness areas, DON would evaluate that information to determine whether supplemental analysis under NEPA was warranted.

Conclusions

In determining where to homebase the U.S. Pacific Fleet F/A–18E/F aircraft on the west coast, I considered the following: assets and capabilities of existing Navy and Marine Corps Air Stations; the F/A–18E/F operational and training requirements; environmental impacts; costs associated with construction of facilities, the operation and maintenance of aircraft, and training of personnel; and comments received during the DEIS and FEIS public involvement periods.

After carefully weighing all of these factors and analyzing the data presented in the Final Environmental Impact Statement, I have determined that the Preferred Alternative, homebasing the F/A–18E/F aircraft at NAS Lemoore, has the fewest adverse environmental impacts, best meets the operational requirements for the F/A–18E/F, and involves the minimum additional costs associated with the development of facilities to support the F/A–18E/F aircraft and personnel.

Therefore, on behalf of the Department of the Navy, I have decided to implement the proposed action by homebasing 164 F/A–18E/F aircraft at NAS Lemoore. In addition to the specific mitigation measures identified in this Record of Decision, the Department of Navy will continue to review its operational procedures and coordinate with other federal, state, and local entities as necessary to determine if any additional mitigation measures are feasible and practicable.

Dated: July 28, 1998.

Duncan Holaday,

Deputy Assistant Secretary of the Navy, (Installations and Facilities).

[FR Doc. 98–21247 Filed 8–6–98; 8:45 am]

BILLING CODE 3810–FF–M

DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

National Educational Research Policy and Priorities Board; Teleconference

AGENCY: National Educational Research Policy and Priorities Board; Education.

ACTION: Notice of Executive Committee Teleconference.

SUMMARY: This notice sets forth the schedule and proposed agenda of a forthcoming teleconference of the Executive Committee of the National Educational Research Policy and Priorities Board. Notice of this meeting is required under Section 10(a)(2) of the Federal Advisory Committee Act. This document is intended to notify the general public of their opportunity to attend the meeting. The public is being given less than 15 days notice of this meeting because of the need to accommodate the schedules of the members.

DATES: August 10, 1998.

TIME: 2–3 p.m., EDT.

LOCATION: Room 100, 80 F St., NW, Washington, DC 20208–7564.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Thelma Leenhouts, Designated Federal Official, National Educational Research Policy and Priorities Board, Washington, DC, 20208–7564. Tel.: (202) 219–2065; fax: (202) 219–1528; e-mail: Themla__Leenhouts@ed.gov.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION: The National Educational Research Policy and Priorities Board is authorized by Section 921 of the Educational Research, Development, Dissemination, and Improvement Act of 1994. The Board works collaboratively with the Assistant Secretary for the Office of Educational Research and Improvement to forge a national consensus with respect to a long-term agenda for educational research, development, and dissemination, and to provide advice and assistance to the Assistant Secretary in administering the duties of the Office. The teleconference is open to the public. The Executive Committee will consider issues related to evaluations of staff performance. Records are kept of all Board proceedings and are available for public inspection at the office of the National Educational Research Policy and Priorities Board, Suite 100, 80 F St., NW, Washington, DC 20208–7564.

Dated: August 3, 1998.

Eve M. Bither,

Executive Director.

[FR Doc. 98–21127 Filed 8–6–98; 8:45 am]

BILLING CODE 4000–01–M

DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

National Educational Research Policy and Priorities Board; Meeting

AGENCY: National Educational Research Policy and Priorities Board; Education.

ACTION: Notice of Meeting.

SUMMARY: This notice sets forth the schedule and proposed agenda of a forthcoming meeting of the National Educational Research Policy and Priorities Board. Notice of this meeting is required under Section 10(a)(2) of the Federal Advisory Committee Act. This document is intended to notify the general public of their opportunity to attend the meeting.

DATES: September 16, 17, and 18, 1998.

TIME: September 16 and 17, 9 a.m. to 5 p.m.; September 18, 9 a.m. to 3 p.m.

LOCATION: Room 100, 80 F St., NW, Washington, D.C. 20208–7564.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Thelma Leenhouts, Designated Federal Official, National Educational Research Policy and Priorities Board, Washington, D.C. 20208–7564. Tel.: (202) 219–2065; fax: (202) 219–1528; e-mail: *Thelma Leenhouts@ed.gov*, or nerppb@ed.gov. The main telephone number for the Board is (202) 208–0692.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION: The National Educational Research Policy and Priorities Board is authorized by Section 921 of the Educational Research, Development, Dissemination, and Improvement Act of 1994. The Board works collaboratively with the Assistant Secretary for the Office of Educational Research and Improvement to forge a national consensus with respect to a long-term agenda for educational research, development, and dissemination, and to provide advice and assistance to the Assistant Secretary in administering the duties of the Office. The meeting is open to the public. On September 16, the Board will conduct on-site visits to the five National Research Institutes housed at 555 New Jersey Ave., NW (directly adjacent to 80 F St., NW; schedule to be announced). On September 17, the Board will hear reports and make final comments on studies (on Peer Review, Reform of the Research, Development, and Communications System) commissioned by its various committees, and discuss the progress of its contract with the National Academy of Education.

On September 18, the Board will review and approve standards for monitoring grants, contracts, and cooperative agreements, and hear a briefing by Media and Information Services on results of a survey of customers of research findings. A final agenda will be available from the Board office on September 7, 1998.

Records are kept of all Board proceedings and are available for public inspection at the office of the National Educational Research Policy and Priorities Board, Suite 100, 80 F St., NW, Washington, D.C. 20208–7564.