

FINDING OF NO SIGNIFICANT IMPACT

NODAK ELECTRIC TO CONSTRUCT FACILITY AT GRAND FORKS AIR FORCE BASE (AFB), NORTH DAKOTA

Pursuant to the Council on Environmental Quality regulation for implementing the procedural provisions of the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA), Title 40 of the Code of Federal Regulations (CFR) §§ 1500-1508; Air Force Environmental Impact Analysis Process (EIAP) regulations 32 CFR § 989 and Department of Defense Directive 6050.1, the Air Force has prepared an Environmental Assessment (EA) to identify and assess the potential impacts on the natural and human environment associated with the construction of a Nodak Electric facility at Grand Forks AFB, North Dakota.

Purpose of and Need for Proposed Action (EA § 1.0, pages 12 to 17): The 319th Air Base Wing, Grand Forks Air Force Base, North Dakota, provides Base operating and direct operations support to wing personnel, two tenant units and eleven geographically separated units (GSU) including Cavalier AFS ND. The wing trains, deploys and redeploys over 1,400 Airmen in support of the Air Expeditionary Force and combatant commander requirements. It also provides facilities and equipment support for the Department of Homeland Security Customs and Border Protection and the 69th Reconnaissance Group. The wing is also only one of two locations worldwide operating the High Frequency Global Communications System, providing operational support of senior leader communications for all Department of Defense agencies, including the President of the United States. In addition, the wing provides logistics, medical, civil engineering, contracting, communications, security and force support functions as well as facilities and equipment. On June 28, 2019, the 319th Air Base Wing will be re-designated as the 319th Reconnaissance Wing. The Base will continue to fly the high-altitude, remotely-piloted RQ-4 Global Hawk aircraft on their intelligence, surveillance and reconnaissance missions.

Defense Logistics Agency (DLA) has awarded a fifty-year contract, SP0600-18-C-8321, to Nodak Electric Cooperative to provide all electric utilities at Grand Forks AFB. The contract, called Utility Privatization, has a period of performance from December 1, 2018 to November 30, 2068. The purpose of this action is to establish the required facility and logistic support needed to perform electrical utilities at Grand Forks AFB. Privatization of utility systems involves a "bill of sale" conveyance of the electric property to a third party, such as a municipal or cooperative utility company. The Air Force conveys the entire system within points of demarcation on the installation, and no longer owns, operates, maintains, or repairs these systems. The agreement also includes a utility service contract for operations, maintenance, and recapitalization for a specified 50 years. System ownership is transferred to the successful offeror under terms and conditions that protect Air Force interests. The terms of the contract are solely for the service of the system and does not include electrical power. By divesting the Air Force of these utilities, installation commanders can focus on operations and core defense missions and functions, rather than repairs and upgrades to utility systems.

Alternatives Eliminated from Further Consideration (EA § 2.5, pages 28 to 31): Four locations on Grand Forks AFB were considered for the new Nodak Electric facility. The site A-1 is considered the best alternative along Contractor Row. Alternatives eliminated from further

analysis included three open sites along 1st Avenue. Site A-2 is at the corner of G Street and south of the RV lot. Site A-3 is at the corner of H Street and west of Building 328. Site A-4 is at the west end of 1st Avenue where the Security Forces building had been demolished and provides easy access to the airfield. The three sites along 1st Avenue did not meet the purpose and need as well as the site on Contractor Row. Sites A-2 and A-3 were each within 200 feet of the Security Forces canine training area which requires quiet and minimum traffic. Site A-4 is close to the airfield and is better suited for an operation related to flying or aircraft maintenance. Therefore, only the Contractor Row site and the No Action alternative were carried forward for further environmental analysis.

Description of the Proposed Action (EA § 2.4, pages 22 to 28): Under the Proposed Action, Nodak Electric proposes a 100' x 50' steel frame, steel-sided, clear span facility with a concrete floor and 16 feet overhead doors to be constructed on Contractor Row. The facility would include racks, bins, shelving and office furniture. Electric hydronic heat in the concrete floor is proposed. Nodak proposes to build a pad at GFAFB. The pad at GFAFB would include a driveway to the facility and the overhead doors, an open parking area for POVs and under cover area for Nodak vehicles and equipment, a transformer/switch/junction box, cable and pole storage area. The proposed facility would meet GFAFB architectural standards.

Description of the No-Action Alternative (EA § 2.4.2, page 28): Under this alternative electric utility operations for the Nodak Electric fifty-year contract would not be located at Grand Forks AFB. Nodak Electric would not construct any facilities or infrastructure at Grand Forks AFB nor would any additional property acquisitions occur to accommodate the new mission. The No-Action Alternative is the baseline for the rest of the analyses and helps determine the level of impact the other alternatives would have on the environment.

SUMMARY OF ENVIRONMENTAL FINDINGS

Environmental analyses focused on the following areas: air space, noise, air quality, water resources, biological resources, earth resources, hazardous materials and waste, cultural resources, land use, infrastructure and utilities, safety, socioeconomic resources and environmental justice.

Airspace Compatibility - The Proposed Action to construct a 5,000 SF facility for Nodak Electric would have insignificant impact to Airspace Compatibility. It is similar to other activities already conducted at Grand Forks AFB, existing Industrial area capacity can accommodate the facility, and it would be 3,000 feet from the nearest Taxiway. (EA § 4.2.1, page 67).

Noise - Insignificant impacts from Noise would be expected. Analyses did not show any noise sensitive areas (e.g., residential areas, hospitals, churches) within 4,000 feet of the project areas. Noise levels would be minimized by wearing hearing protection, ensuring that construction and operating equipment is equipped with a recommended muffler in good working order and ensuring that construction activities are not conducted during early morning or late evening hours. Short-term impacts associated with construction activities would be insignificant, temporary and cease at the completion of these activities. (EA § 4.3.1, page 67).

Air Quality and Climate Change - Implementation of the Proposed Action would have temporary, insignificant impacts from short-term emissions of pollutants from mobile sources equipment and vehicular traffic. There would be temporary, localized emissions during construction activities associated with grading, excavating, filling and equipment operations, which would quickly dissipate away from the source. Best management practices (BMPs) to reduce fugitive emissions would be implemented to reduce the amount of these emissions. Once the Nodak equipment and personnel arrive, there would be insignificant long-term air quality impacts since Nodak proposes to use floor heat and an electric boiler. The Proposed Action is located in an attainment area for all National Ambient Air Quality Standards under the Clean Air Act. Conformity Determination analysis is not required.

If Nodak should change their operation and add stationary air sources, such as generators/boilers, they would need to acquire their own permit to construct and be subject to air compliance under the Title V permit (Chapter 33-15-14, N.D.A.C.), since utility privatization contractors are required to acquire their own air permits. They will not be added to the existing Title V Permit and Base Air Pollutant Emission Inventory. All new generators must meet new standards of 40 CFR Part 60, Subpart IIII regarding new limits on equipment emissions and must obtain certification. (EA § 4.4.1, page 68).

Water Resources – Short-term impacts to water resources would be avoided or minimized through implementation of BMPs, such as silt fences and traps, detention basins, buffer strips or other features used in various combinations, (i.e., erosion control measures), as part of the Proposed Action. If an excavated area fills with groundwater, water would need to be pumped from the excavation, filtered and discharged as surface water. Proper stabilization and seeding the construction site immediately upon completion of the construction would provide beneficial vegetation, controlling erosion. Prior to introducing a new line to the water main, it should be disinfected IAW AWWA standards to include bacteriological testing by the contractors. Backflow Prevention Devices (BPFs) must be used before connection to any water line on base. Surface water leaves the proposed construction site to the eastern edge of GFAFB and drains into Kellys Slough National Wildlife Refuge.

A Storm Water Pollution Prevention Plan would be implemented for the Proposed Action in order to minimize the amount of sediment released to surface water from construction and demolition (C&D) activities. In addition, existing GFAFB National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System permit, general permits (multi-sector, storm water discharges & Phase II small municipal discharges) would be obtained or amended, as necessary. Resulting impacts to surface water as a result of the Proposed Action would be less than significant.

Floodplains do not exist within the Proposed Action. The floodplain at the lagoon is over one mile from Contractor Row. The floodplain at Turtle River is two miles from Contractor Row.

There are no wetlands on the proposed siting. There is a wetland 500 feet to the southwest and 1,000 feet to the east of Contractor Row. While this wetland would not be directly impacted, increased storm water and sediment runoff from C&D activities may indirectly affect wetland quality. Best management practices would be put in place to mitigate potential negative impacts in regard to surface water. Provided best management practices (BMPs) are followed, there would

be insignificant impacts on stormwater, surface water, wastewater, water quality, wetlands and floodplains. (EA § 4.5.1, page 69):

Biological and Natural Resources – There would be minor, long-term loss of habitat under the Proposed Action to construct a 5,000 SF building. BMPs and control measures, including silt fences, storm drain covers, covering of stockpiles and keeping construction equipment in construction areas, would be implemented to ensure that impacts to biological resources be kept to a minimum. The one half acres of disturbed area should be re-established as soon as possible. BMPs would be required to prevent the spread of noxious weeds, minimize soil erosion and promote the establishment of native plant species. All trees and shrubs that need removal shall be either relocated on site if appropriate and/or replaced one for one, following guidance in AFI 32-7064 and the Base INRMP. BMPs to:

- limit possible weed seed transport from infested areas to non-infested sites,
- avoid activities in or adjacent to heavily infested areas,
- remove seed sources and propagules from site prior to conducting activities,
- limit operations to non-seed producing seasons,
- wash or otherwise remove all vegetation and soil from equipment before transporting to a new site

would help control noxious weeds on federal properties IAW Public Law 93-629, the Federal Noxious Weed Act (7 USC 2801 et seq.) and Executive Order 13112. Construction would have insignificant impacts to vegetation, wildlife and state-threatened and endangered species. The proposed new Nodak Electric facility is in an improved area where grounds are maintained by the grounds maintenance contractor.

Impacts to migratory bird species from the Proposed Action are anticipated to be short-term and minor. Migratory birds would be discouraged from the sites with routine mowing, maintenance and vegetation removal prior to the breeding season (April-July). There are no known federally listed threatened and endangered species or state species of concern within the project site. Two rare orchid species, the Large and Small Yellow Lady's Slipper, are known to exist west of the runway. The Eastern prickly gooseberry and Dutchman's breeches were discovered in the Turtle River Lowland Woodlands in the northwestern portion of the Base. Other species of concern have been observed at the lagoon, the Turtle River and the grassland west of the airfield. The proposed action is located over a mile from the Turtle River, lagoons or grassland west of the airfield where threatened and species of concern are most likely to appear.

There would be no overall change to species diversity at the site. There is a nearby network of waterways, wetlands, woodlands, grasslands and other natural areas of base to accommodate any displaced biological resources. Due to the abundance and mobility of species present at this location and the profusion of similar landscaped areas in the general vicinity, any wildlife disturbed would be able to find similar habitat in the local areas. (EA § 4.6.1, page 70).

Earth Resources – Provided best management practices (BMPs) are followed, the Proposed Action would not affect ERP sites, geology or pesticides. BMPs would be implemented to prevent increased runoff, erosion and sedimentation from soils exposed during construction and construction activities. The soils in the project areas have been previously disturbed by parking

of construction company trailers and sheds. Three support pads remain in the grass, but no trailers and sheds remain. A rack for telephone poles remains on the west side of the proposed construction area. One half acre would be disturbed, following an approved erosion and sediment control plan, in completing the construction activities. No long-term impacts would be expected following grading, paving and revegetation in the project areas.

As shown in the EA, there are five monitoring wells in the nearby area. Soil and groundwater at the POL site are contaminated with petroleum products due to periodic spillage that occurred during fuel unloading over the past fifty years at site ST007, Petroleum, Oils and Lubricant (POL) Unloading Area. Natural attenuation continues to remediate the site and has enough assimilative capacity to remove all contamination. The proposed construction area is considered “clean” by Restoration purposes, but in the event petroleum-contaminated soils or other contaminants are found, the contractor should stop work and contact the Base Restoration Program Manager, at 701-747-4183 for coordination and guidance.

The addition of impervious cover (one half acre) would result in short-term construction-related soil erosion on site and long-term, permanent loss of vegetation and potential for soil erosion down gradient of paved areas. Best management practices (BMPs) would be implemented to minimize both short- and long-term erosion impacts. Because the topography at the Proposed construction site is relatively flat, there is a very low to moderately low capacity for soil erosion to be transmitted to storm water, nor would prime farmland soils be impacted since none were identified. Drainage system BMPs would be installed to prevent soil loss and minimize sediment runoff at the construction site during storm events. These could include preservation of existing vegetation to the extent practical, management/control of storm water run-on and management of disturbed soil areas. Any topsoil disturbed would be temporarily stockpiled for reuse on site where feasible. There would be no significant, long-term impacts to physical earth resources operations to construct a new Nodak Electric facility on Contractor Row. (EA § 4.7, page 71).

Hazardous Materials, Hazardous Waste and Stored Fuels - Significant impacts to hazardous materials and waste management, solid waste management, environmental restoration program sites, asbestos-containing material abatement and lead-based paint abatement are not expected. Nodak Electric will be responsible for disposal of their own hazardous and solid wastes from construction and operation of a new facility. The process is not expected to change the Base as a Small Quantity Generator. Solid waste debris would be disposed in an approved location, such as the Grand Forks Municipal Landfill twelve miles east of the Base. Inert construction debris may be disposed at an approved location, such as the inert landfill, permit number IT-198, four miles northeast of the Base. Pre-existing petroleum-contaminated soils (PCSs), Mercury, PCB, lead based paint and asbestos-containing materials discovered during the Proposed Action to construct a facility must be removed and disposed by applicable environmental laws and regulations.

The nearest USTs and ASTs include two aboveground storage tanks (AST) of Octagon Process Inc Anti-icing Fluid Type-4 located 400 feet to the north west, along F Street. One is a 26,000 gallon, steel tank with concrete dike. The other is an 8,600 gallon, stainless double-walled tank. There are also two 10,000-gallon fiberglass underground storage tanks (UST) for emergency spill recovery of the aircraft fuel truck off-load along F Street. At Building 493, the Grounds Maintenance Contractor, located 400 feet south of the proposed action, are two AST's. One is a

300-gallon steel double-walled tank for Mogas and the other is a 300-gallon steel double-walled tank for diesel fuel.

Batteries, pesticides, mercury devices and lamps such as fluorescent light bulbs can be stored and disposed as Universal Waste. Ignitable, corrosive, reactive and toxic wastes must be stored and disposed as Hazardous Waste. Workers must be protected from exposure and must be properly trained in the removal and disposal of hazardous materials and wastes. Appropriate efforts to reduce, reuse and/or recycle waste materials are encouraged by the State of North Dakota. All solid waste materials would be managed, transported and disposed in accordance with the Federal and State's solid and hazardous waste rules. The amount of hazardous materials used/waste generated in maintenance operations of the Nodak Electric would be similar to what is currently used/generated in the Exterior Electric operation of the Air Force. The existing hazardous waste permits would not need to be amended to include the new processes, because Nodak Electric will remove their own hazardous waste generated off base for disposal. (EA § 4.8, page 72).

Cultural Resources - There are archaeological sites present within the undeveloped boundaries of GFAFB; however, they are not eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places (NRHP). Grand Forks AFB had Section 106 consultation with SHPO to include a Cultural inventory of fifty-year-old buildings and gained approval that facilities do not meet NRHP criteria for individual significance and are ineligible for listing. No historic properties are within the proposed construction site and there are no archaeological properties within the site. There would be no impact to cultural resources with the Proposed Action.

In the unlikely event any archaeological artifacts are discovered during the construction of Nodak's new facility, the operator or contractor would be instructed to halt operations and immediately notify Grand Forks AFB Cultural Resource Manager at 701-747-4774 who would notify the State Historic Preservation Officer. (EA § 4.9.1, page 73).

Land Use – The USAF land use planning process is designed to ensure efficient use of available resources and that the functional relationships of land use arrangements meet the goals and objectives of the Base. The proposed construction would not change the land use, since the new Nodak Electric facility is in the Industrial District area designated for contractor operations. The Proposed Action would be limited to the central area of Contractor Row and would not have long-term adverse impacts to resources on Grand Forks AFB, Grand Forks County, or the state of North Dakota. Approximately one half acre would be changed from undeveloped (grass) to concrete; however, the land use will remain Industrial. Overall, there would be no significant impacts to land use compatibility for the proposed action (EA § 4.10.1, page 73).

Infrastructure, Utilities and Transportation Systems – The proposed operation would have insignificant impact to transportation systems on base due to vehicles traveling to and from the new Nodak Electric facility. There would be no impacts to utilities and infrastructure since there is sufficient capacity for the electric utility activities location on Contractor Row (EA § 4.11.1, page 74).

Safety and Occupational Health – Individual participants in the excavation and construction of the Nodak facility are required to wear appropriate personnel protective equipment (PPE) for

protection from exposure. Provided best management practices are used, the Proposed Action to construct a new facility for Nodak Electric would have insignificant impact on safety and occupational health. (EA §§ 4.12.1, page 74).

Socioeconomic Resources - The Proposed Action would not involve population growth to the region of influence (ROI). The economic benefits would be local and short-term with three permanent employment positions created. The implementation of the Proposed Action would provide a short-term, beneficial impact to local retailers during the construction phase of the project. This would not affect the ability of public services, transportation or infrastructure to effectively support the community. Current housing and school capacities can accommodate the increase of three in population. The benefits to Nodak Electric would be long-term and beneficial changes to income and growth potential. (EA § 4.13, page 74).

Environmental Justice - EO 12898 requires federal agencies to identify and address, as appropriate, disproportionately high and adverse human health or environmental effects of their programs, policies and activities on minority and low-income populations. There is no minority or low-income populations within or immediately adjacent to the area of the Proposed Action or Alternatives and, thus, there would be no disproportionate or adverse impact to children, minority or low-income populations due to the Proposed Action. (EA §4.14, page 75).

Mitigations

The EA refers to the use of Best Management Practices (BMPs). For this FONSI and in compliance with Air Force regulation, BMPs will be carried forward.

Public Review

A public notice was placed in the Grand Forks Herald and the Grand Forks AFB web page on (date) announcing the availability of the Draft EA and Draft FONSI for public review and comment. The documents were made available for review on the internet at <https://www.grandforks.af.mil/About-Us/Economic-and-Environmental-Information/> on (date). During the comment period, (subject) comments were received from the (agency and/or public).

FINDING OF NO SIGNIFICANT IMPACT

Based upon my review of the facts and analyses contained in the attached EA, I find the Proposed Action to construct a Nodak Electric facility at Grand Forks AFB will not have a significant impact on the natural or human environment; therefore, an Environmental Impact Statement is not required. This analysis fulfills the requirements of NEPA, the President's Council on Environmental Quality 40 C.F.R. §§ 1500-1508 and the Air Force EIAP regulations 32 C.F.R. § 989.

BENJAMIN W. SPENCER, Colonel
Commander, 319th Air Base Wing
Grand Forks AFB, ND

(Date)

Enclosure
EA Construct Nodak Electric Facility