

new construction or renovation of structures for a reasonable range of alternatives to accommodate the introduction of the Super Hornet aircraft to the East Coast.

Alternatives Considered: A screening process, based upon criteria set out in the Environmental Impact Statement (EIS), was conducted to identify a reasonable range of alternatives that would satisfy the Navy's purpose and need for this action. Eight home basing alternatives and a no-action alternative were analyzed in detail, as were six alternative OLF sites.

ALT 1 proposed homebasing all 10 fleet squadrons and the FRS at NAS Oceana. This alternative included use of Naval Auxiliary Landing Field (NALF) Fentress and the addition of a new OLF to support the field carrier landing practice (FCLP) operations of the Super Hornet squadrons.

ALT 2 proposed homebasing all 10 fleet squadrons and the FRS at MCAS Cherry Point. This alternative included a new OLF to support the FCLP operations of the Super Hornet squadrons because the projected number of FCLP operations of the 10 fleet squadrons and the FRS could not be accommodated at MCAS Cherry Point.

ALT 3 proposed homebasing all 10 fleet squadrons and the FRS at Marine Corps Air Station (MCAS) Beaufort, South Carolina. This alternative included a new OLF to support the FCLP operations of the Super Hornet squadrons because the projected number of FCLP operations of the 10 fleet squadrons and the FRS could not be accommodated at MCAS Beaufort. It also included the transfer of existing Marine Corps aircraft assets at MCAS Beaufort to MCAS Cherry Point in order to accommodate all of the Super Hornet squadrons at MCAS Beaufort.

ALT 4A proposed homebasing six fleet squadrons and the FRS at NAS Oceana and the remaining four fleet squadrons at MCAS Cherry Point. This alternative included continued use of NALF Fentress to support the FCLP operations of the Super Hornet squadrons homebased at NAS Oceana and the addition of a new OLF to support the FCLP operations of the Super Hornet squadrons homebased at both MCAS Cherry Point and NAS Oceana. An OLF located between the two air stations could be used by squadrons at both homebases because of the proximity of the two air stations.

ALT 4B proposed homebasing six fleet squadrons and the FRS at NAS Oceana and the remaining four fleet squadrons at MCAS Beaufort. This alternative included continued use of

NALF Fentress and the addition of a new OLF to support the FCLP operations of the Super Hornet squadrons based at NAS Oceana. It also included a new OLF or parallel runway to support the FCLP operations of the Super Hornet squadrons homebased at MCAS Beaufort because the projected FCLP operations of the four fleet squadrons could not be accommodated on the existing runway configuration at MCAS Beaufort.

ALT 5A proposed homebasing six fleet squadrons and the FRS at MCAS Cherry Point and the remaining four fleet squadrons at NAS Oceana. This alternative included a new OLF to support the FCLP operations of Super Hornet squadrons homebased at MCAS Cherry Point because the projected number of FCLP operations of the six fleet squadrons and the FRS could not be accommodated at MCAS Cherry Point.

ALT 5B proposed homebasing six fleet squadrons and the FRS at MCAS Cherry Point and the remaining four fleet squadrons at MCAS Beaufort. This alternative included a new OLF to support the FCLP operations of the MCAS Cherry Point Super Hornet squadrons because the projected number of FCLP operations of the six fleet squadrons and the FRS could not be accommodated there. It also included a new OLF or parallel runway at MCAS Beaufort to support the FCLP operations of the Super Hornet squadrons homebased at MCAS Beaufort because the projected FCLP operations of the four fleet squadrons could not be accommodated on the existing runway configuration at MCAS Beaufort.

ALT 6 proposed homebasing eight fleet squadrons and the FRS at NAS Oceana and the remaining two fleet squadrons at MCAS Cherry Point. This alternative included continued use of NALF Fentress and the addition of a new OLF to support the FCLP operations of the Super Hornet squadrons homebased at both NAS Oceana and MCAS Cherry Point.

The Navy also conducted a thorough OLF siting study using the criteria described in the EIS to identify potential OLF sites to support Super Hornet homebasing. Six OLF site alternatives were evaluated in the EIS. Each site consisted of approximately 30,000 acres with a 2000-acre core area that would contain the runway and support structures. The six alternatives were: Site A, in Perquimans County, North Carolina; Site B, in Bertie County, North Carolina; Site C, in Washington County, North Carolina; Site D, in Hyde County, North Carolina; Site E, in Craven

County, North Carolina; and Site F, in Burke County, Georgia.

The no action alternative maintained the status quo at air stations and OLF sites. No new or expanded facilities would be constructed, and there would be no increase in functional capacity at any homebasing site. While the no action alternative does not meet the purpose and need of providing adequate facilities and functions to support the introduction of the Super Hornet squadrons to the East Coast, it served as the baseline for describing and quantifying the impacts associated with the various siting alternatives analyzed in the EIS.

ALT 6, homebasing eight Super Hornet squadrons and the FRS at NAS Oceana and two Super Hornet squadrons at MCAS Cherry Point, is the environmentally preferred alternative. The primary environmental impact associated with homebasing the Super Hornet squadrons are impacts common to all of the homebasing alternatives: an increase in off-station noise exposure. While emissions decrease under all alternatives for NAS Oceana, and increase at other receiving bases, ALT 6 provides additional emission reduction at NAS Oceana. Of the dual-siting alternatives, ALT 6 also maximizes the investment in existing facilities and limits the amount of new construction and construction-related environmental impacts.

Site C was the environmentally preferred OLF site alternative. The estimated population within the greater than 60 Day-night average sound level (DNL) noise zone is lower at Site C than at Sites A, B, E, and F and comparable to that of Site D. Construction of the OLF at Site C will not impact wetlands, threatened and endangered species, or cultural resources. While there would be some impacts to migratory waterfowl, these impacts are mitigable and would be minor. Surrounding land use is primarily agricultural and is considered compatible with aircraft operations.

Environmental Impacts

The EIS evaluated the potential environmental consequences for each of the homebasing alternatives and the OLF sites. Potential significant impacts that could result from ALT 6, including construction of a new OLF at Site C in Washington County are discussed below:

There may be significant impacts related to noise from aircraft operations. Noise levels will increase in the vicinity of NAS Oceana, MCAS Cherry Point, and OLF Site C. Approximately 97,560 people will be within the greater than 65 DNL noise zone around the NAS