

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**Department 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 decision 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 incorporate 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 and 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