

**DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION
FEDERAL AVIATION ADMINISTRATION
FINDING OF NO SIGNIFICANT IMPACT
RECORD OF DECISION
FOR
REEVALUATION OF THE ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT DATED OCTOBER
2005 WITH RESPECT TO NEW INFORMATION CONCERNING SECTION 4(f)
MITIGATION MEASURES FOR RUNWAY 6-24 EXTENSION PROJECT AT ERIE
INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT, ERIE, PENNSYLVANIA**

On December 8, 2005, the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) issued a Finding of No Significant Impact / Record of Decision (FONSI/ROD) for proposed development at Erie International Airport (ERI). The 2005 FONSI/ROD approved a proposed 1,900 feet extension of Runway 6-24 to accommodate existing and future aviation demand as well as to comply with FAA safety regulations and the National Plan of Integrated Airport Systems for 2005-2009. The FONSI/ROD is based on the Final Environmental Assessment (EA) for the Proposed Extension of Runway 6-24 at Erie International Airport, Tom Ridge Field, Erie, Pennsylvania (October 2005) and on the Erie International Airport, Tom Ridge Field, Section 4(f) Report (July 2005).

Since the issuance of the FONSI/ROD, major steps in the advancement of the project have been taken including: the acquisition of funding approvals, advancement of preliminary design studies, acquisition of needed right-of-way parcels, preparation of conceptual wetland and stream mitigation plans, agency coordination, and submission Chapter 105 / Section 404 permit applications.

New information concerning the Section 4(f) mitigation measures for the project impacts to the Millcreek Golf Course and Learning Center (MGC) was recently brought to the FAA by the Erie Regional Airport Authority (ERAA) and Millcreek Township. Millcreek Township is the official agency with jurisdiction over the MGC, a Section 4(f) resource. The mitigation measures included in the original Section 4(f) Report required that the MGC be:

“Reconfigured to not eliminate or degrade the recreational purpose for which the golf course was originally established and that the mitigation restores and enhances the course’s playability.”

Conceptual mitigation prepared for the EA proposed to mitigate the impacted 2 holes by reconfiguring and expanding the MGC into the Runway Protection Zone (RPZ), a residential area to the north. The mitigation was required to maintain both recreational golf and golf learning activities at this facility.

Millcreek Township has recently requested a modification of the Section 4(f) mitigation measures as a result of their change of recreation management focus for the MGC. Under this new management focus, the township would prefer to have the MGC reconfigured to a 6-hole facility for the sole purpose of golf learning activities and divert recreational golf to their soon to be acquired 18-hole golf course.

Since the issuance of the FONSI/ROD, the ownership of the currently closed 18-hole City of Erie Golf Course (CGC), which is located in Millcreek Township, will be transferred to Millcreek Township through a cooperative agreement and with 100% financial backing from Erie County.

The CGC is an existing golf course located in Millcreek Township approximately 2.5 miles from the MGC. The CGC is an 18-hole facility with a club house, restaurant, and bar. The CGC has been closed for business for the past few years, but regular property and grounds maintenance has been continued by the City of Erie. The CGC property is deed restricted in perpetuity for recreational use. The CGC is a superior recreational golf facility than the existing 9-hole MGC facility for the following reasons: it is not located in the runway approach area of the Erie International Airport; it is not located on a Superfund site; and it is an 18-hole golf course with club house, restaurant, and lounge amenities.

The details of the proposed change in Section 4(f) mitigation were addressed in a Supplemental Section 4(f) document prepared in October 2008 and subsequently reviewed and concurred upon by the US Department of the Interior on December 15, 2008. Based on this assessment, the modified reconfiguration of the MGC to a 6-hole facility for the singular purpose of golf learning is consistent with the management focus of Millcreek Township and is successful in further minimizing harm to the Section 4(f) resource caused by the Erie International Airport Runway 6-24 Extension Project.

Possible environmental impacts from the proposed modified mitigation plan for the MGC were considered in a Written Reevaluation of the Environmental Assessment. In addition to this document, the following related documentation was reviewed:

- Final Environmental Assessment (EA) for the Proposed Extension of Runway 6-24 at Erie International Airport, Tom Ridge Field, Erie, Pennsylvania (October 2005)
- Section 4(f) Evaluation Report (July 2005)
- Finding of No Significant Impact / Record of Decision (FONSI / ROD) (December 8, 2005)
- Section 4(f) Report – Supplement (October 2008)
- Millcreek Township's request for a modification of the mitigation measures of the EA concerning the Millcreek Golf and Learning Center (October 9, 2008)
- U.S. Department of the Interior, National Park Service, Office of Environmental Policy and Compliance's letter of concurrence with proposed change in Section 4(f) mitigation measures (December 15, 2008)

Based upon its review of the Reevaluation and related materials the FAA has concluded that the proposed modified Section 4(f) mitigation plan would not result in any significant environmental impacts. The proposed modified Section 4(f) mitigation plan is consistent with Millcreek Township's change in their recreational management focus for the MGC as a result of Millcreek Township's acquisition of the currently closed, City of Erie owned, 18-hole golf course (CGC).

Additionally, the reconfiguration of the MGC from its current 9-hole to 6-hole design would adhere to the other related commitments of the 2005 EA and Section 4(f) report including:

- Installation of the lighting consists of landscaping treatment consistent with the golf course design in order to screen or buffer the units within the golf course itself.
- Consultation with a qualified golf course designer is recommended.
- Dwarf evergreen trees, plants and shrubs native to the region are recommended for landscaping treatments.
- All tree plantings and design considerations should comply with FAR Part 77 and the Millcreek Township Airport Zoning Ordinance.
- Additional measures include monitoring remaining environmental controls during the grow-in period.
- Landscaping treatment within the golf course landscape design is provided to offset visual impact and the removal of tree obstructions within the Section 4(f) resource.
- The CAT I runway approach lighting system and access road will not eliminate or severely degrade the use of the Section 4(f) land.

In conclusion, it has been determined that the proposed changes to the Section 4(f) mitigation plan are beneficial to the 4(f) resource involved and that the revised mitigation plan will not lead to adverse and/or significant impacts to the environment. Therefore, the contents of the original EA and the findings of the FAA FONSI/ROD signed December 8, 2005 are still valid and no additional supplemental environmental analyses is required.

Approval of this document completes FAA's review of the new information concerning Section 4(f) mitigation measures for the Runway 6-24 Extension Project at the Erie International Airport, located in Millcreek Township, Erie County, Pennsylvania.

Approved:



Carmine Gallo
 FAA, Eastern Regional Administrator

2/2/09
 Date

This decision is made pursuant to the provisions of the Federal Aviation Act of 1958, as amended 49 U.S.C. 40101, and the Airport and Airway Improvement Act of 1982, as amended, 49 U.S.C. 47101. It constitutes a final order of the Administrator subject to review by the Courts of Appeals of the United States in accordance with the provisions of 49 U.S.C Section 46110.