

Missoula International Airport - Environmental Overview for the Master Plan Update

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This technical memorandum provides a general overview of potential environmental effects of recommendations made in the Missoula International Airport (MSO or the Airport) Master Plan Update (MPU). It does not represent an environmental assessment under the provisions of the National Environmental Policy Act of 1969 (NEPA). At the time of project implementation, when demand warrants, the appropriate level of NEPA environmental documentation and coordination must be completed. The preparation of additional environmental documentation will require coordination with Federal, State, or local environmental agencies to secure the necessary approvals and permits to implement specific recommended development projects.

This technical memorandum does not provide an overview of all required NEPA environmental categories. This technical memorandum provides an overview of known, general environmental features to assist with the preliminary screening of alternatives for the MPU. An Environmental Constraints Map (attached with this technical memorandum) was prepared to highlight the general environmental features surrounding the Airport.

The recommended airfield improvements do not include additional runways or runway extensions, and would be developed on previously disturbed Airport property. The Master Plan Update also recommends development of a nonaviation business park to be located on Airport property on the west side of Airport as described in Chapter 7, Nonaviation Development.

Surrounding Land Uses and Zoning

The majority of land uses surrounding the Airport are agricultural and open space. The zoning on Airport property and surrounding Airport property is commercial. According to the Missoula County Office of Planning and Grants and the City of Missoula, an area surrounding MSO is designated an "Airport Influence Area". Development within the Airport Influence Area is subject to review and approval of the Missoula County Airport Authority (MCAA). The Airport Influence Area designation is intended to regulate development surrounding the Airport that is not compatible with airport operations.

Agricultural land uses are regulated by the U.S. Department of Agriculture, Natural Resource Conservation Service (NRCS). Coordination with the NRCS during previous

environmental documentation determined there are no prime or unique farmland soils or farmlands of statewide importance at MSO.

Historic Properties

The closest National Register listed site in the vicinity of the Airport is the DeSmet Schoolhouse, shown on the Environmental Constraints Map. DeSmet Schoolhouse is located off Airport property, away from development areas and would not be adversely affected from any improvement projects recommended in the Master Plan Update. Previous coordination with the Montana State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO) noted that there is potential for unknown or unrecorded cultural resources in the area. Prior to implementation of proposed Airport development projects on previously undisturbed land, consideration should be taken for the potential for unknown resources in the area and additional coordination with the SHPO should occur.

Biotic Resources

According to the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS), the following species are federally listed as threatened in Missoula County: bull trout, Canada lynx, grizzly bear, and the water howellia, a wetland plant. The yellow-billed cuckoo is listed as candidate species, and the gray wolf is listed as an endangered species. Coordination with the USFWS for previous NEPA documentation at the Airport indicated none of the listed species in Missoula County are known to be present on Airport property. Prior to implementation of proposed Airport development projects on previously undisturbed land should consult with USFWS to identify habitat for threatened and endangered species and determine any impacts to biotic resources.

Waterways

Several waterways are located within the MSO property line. As shown on the Environmental Constraints Map, Butler Creek and Grant Creek, both crossing through Airport property, are tributaries of the Clark Fork River. The Clark Fork River, located southwest of the Airport, off Airport property, is the largest river by volume in the State of Montana. Small, isolated pockets of USGS-defined wetlands are associated with Butler Creek. Also shown on the Environmental Constraints Map are the floodplain boundaries associated with these waterways. Prior to development within a floodplain, Missoula County Office of Planning and Grants, Floodplain Administration Program should be contacted regarding permitting and regulatory work associated with the floodplain in the City of Missoula and Missoula County.