

**DRAFT Finding of No Significant Impact
for Vegetation Obstruction Removal
at Wright Army Airfield / MidCoast Regional Airport,
Fort Stewart, Georgia**



DRAFT FINDING OF NO SIGNIFICANT IMPACT

1.0 INTRODUCTION

During a recent Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) survey, trees and vegetation were identified as obscuring aircraft approach zones at Wright Army Airfield (WAAF) / MidCoast Regional Airport (MCRA), located on Fort Stewart, Georgia. The runway approaches, supporting both Army operations and civilian use, are out of compliance with FAA regulations and United Facilities Criteria (UFC 3-260-01), and until removed, night flights will be restricted for safety reasons.

The Environmental Assessment analyzes the potential environmental impacts of implementing the proposed action and the no action alternative.

2.0 PURPOSE AND NEED

The purpose of the proposed action is to provide FAA-acceptable runway approaches for the safety of aircraft and passengers flying in and out of WAAF / MCRA.

3.0 PROPOSED ACTION

The U.S. Army proposes to remove trees and vegetation within areas of runway approaches that are considered obstructions to aircraft ascending and descending into WAAF / MCRA. Areas of obstruction removal are identified as Priority No. 1 and Priority No. 2. The Priority No. 1 areas (totaling approximately 112 acres) are of immediate concern to the safety of aircraft approaching and taking off from the runways. The Priority No. 2 areas require removal of trees that will imminently become vertical safety obstructions within the runway approach zones of approximately 375 acres.

Clearing operations in both priority areas will be implemented with erosion and sedimentation control measures in accordance with the State of Georgia.

4.0 NO ACTION (STATUS QUO) ALTERNATIVE

Under the status quo alternative, the work identified for the Priority No. 1 areas would take place, considering it is an activity associated with the continued maintenance of the airfield. The Priority No. 2 areas would not be cleared of imminent vertical safety obstructions as those areas have not been routinely maintained and have not been recently disturbed.

This alternative provides a “benchmark” to compare the magnitude of environmental effects of the proposed action alternative.

5.0 SUMMARY OF ENVIRONMENTAL EFFECTS

A total of three resource categories were evaluated for their potential to be impacted by the proposed action and status quo alternative: 1) water resources (including surface water quality and wetlands); 2) biological resources (including timber resources and protected species); and 3) safety.

Implementing the proposed action or maintaining the status quo will require management commitments in accordance with the Georgia Erosion and Sedimentation Control Act, Clean Water Act, Endangered Species Act, and Occupational Health and Safety Act. Avoidance of a fenced EOD area and prior coordination with the local Safety Office is also necessary.

The Government will conduct periodic inspections of the project site during implementation. If violations to surface waters or wetland areas occur, corrections will be made immediately on site. Vegetation removal will not occur until the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service issues a concurrence letter to Fort Stewart, the 14-day waiting period has ended on the notice of intent packet containing the Georgia Environmental Protection Division-approved erosion and sedimentation control plan, and the Installation Safety Office has approved the contractor's safety plan.

The Table below summarizes the potential environmental impacts provided the aforementioned requirements are implemented as part of the proposed action or status quo alternative.

AREA OF CONCERN	STATUS QUO	PROPOSED ACTION	CUMULATIVE
Surface Water Quality	Minor	Minor	Minor
Wetlands	Negligible	Negligible	N/A
Protected Species	Negligible	Minor	Minor
Timber Resources	Negligible	Negligible - Beneficial	N/A
Aviation Safety	Moderate	Beneficial	Moderate (status quo) Beneficial (proposed action)
Construction Safety	Negligible	Negligible	N/A

6.0 PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT

The Draft Finding of No Significant Impact and Environmental Assessment are available for public review from August 28 through September 26, 2013 at the following web address: http://www.stewart.army.mil/dpw/PC_NEPA.asp. If you would like a hard copy of these documents to review, please contact Amber Franks via email, amber.e.franks.civ@mail.mil.

7.0 CONCLUSION

Implementation of the proposed action will not have a significant environmental impact within the meaning of the National Environmental Policy Act, and preparation of an Environmental Impact Statement is not required. I have selected implementation of the proposed action alternative as the recommended course of action.

Date: _____

KEVIN F. GREGORY
Colonel, U.S. Army
Commanding

**Environmental Assessment
for Vegetation Obstruction Removal
at Wright Army Airfield / MidCoast Regional Airport,
Fort Stewart, Georgia**



TABLE OF CONTENTS

1.0	PURPOSE AND NEED FOR THE PROPOSED ACTION	6
1.1	Introduction	6
1.2	Purpose and Need	6
1.3	Scope and Content of the EA.....	6
2.0	DESCRIPTION OF PROPOSED ACTION AND ALTERNATIVES	8
2.1	Proposed Action	8
2.2	No Action Alternative (Status Quo)	8
3.0	EXISTING ENVIRONMENT AND ENVIRONMENTAL CONSEQUENCES	10
3.1	Introduction	10
3.2	Measuring Environmental Impacts	10
3.3	Resources Analyzed	13
3.4	Resource Analysis	13
3.4.1	Water Resources.....	13
3.4.2	Biological Resources.....	19
3.4.3	Safety	23
3.5	Summary of Environmental Effects.....	27
4.0	PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT	28
5.0	REFERENCES CITED	28
	APPENDIX A	29

1.0 PURPOSE AND NEED FOR THE PROPOSED ACTION

1.1 INTRODUCTION

The U.S. Army proposes to clear aircraft safety obstructions at Wright Army Airfield (WAAF) / MidCoast Regional Airport (MCRA) located within the Fort Stewart boundary (Figure 1-1). During a recent Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) survey, trees and vegetation were identified as obscuring aircraft approach zones of the airfield. The runway approaches are out of compliance with FAA regulations and United Facilities Criteria (UFC 3-260-01), and until removed, night flights will be restricted for safety reasons.

WAAF / MCRA is a fully operational joint military and civilian use airfield, and it serves military aviation training as well as access by Liberty County to Level II airport facilities (schedules facilitated airport instead of a non-coordinated airport).

This Environmental Assessment (EA) is prepared in accordance with the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) and 32 Code of Federal Regulations Part 651 (the Army's NEPA implementing regulation).

1.2 PURPOSE AND NEED

The purpose of the proposed action is to provide FAA-acceptable runway approaches for the safety of aircraft and passengers flying in and out of WAAF / MCRA.

1.3 SCOPE AND CONTENT OF THE EA

This EA analyzes the potential environmental impacts of implementing the proposed action and the no action alternative. Potential cumulative environmental impacts from ongoing and planned construction at WAAF / MCRA will also be addressed in this EA. Environmental consideration of these additional activities are evaluated in prior and continuing NEPA analyses that have been and are being prepared for Gray Eagle activities and joint-use efforts by Liberty County at WAAF / MCRA. The proposed action would be implemented with consideration of these cumulative sensitive environmental resource impacts.

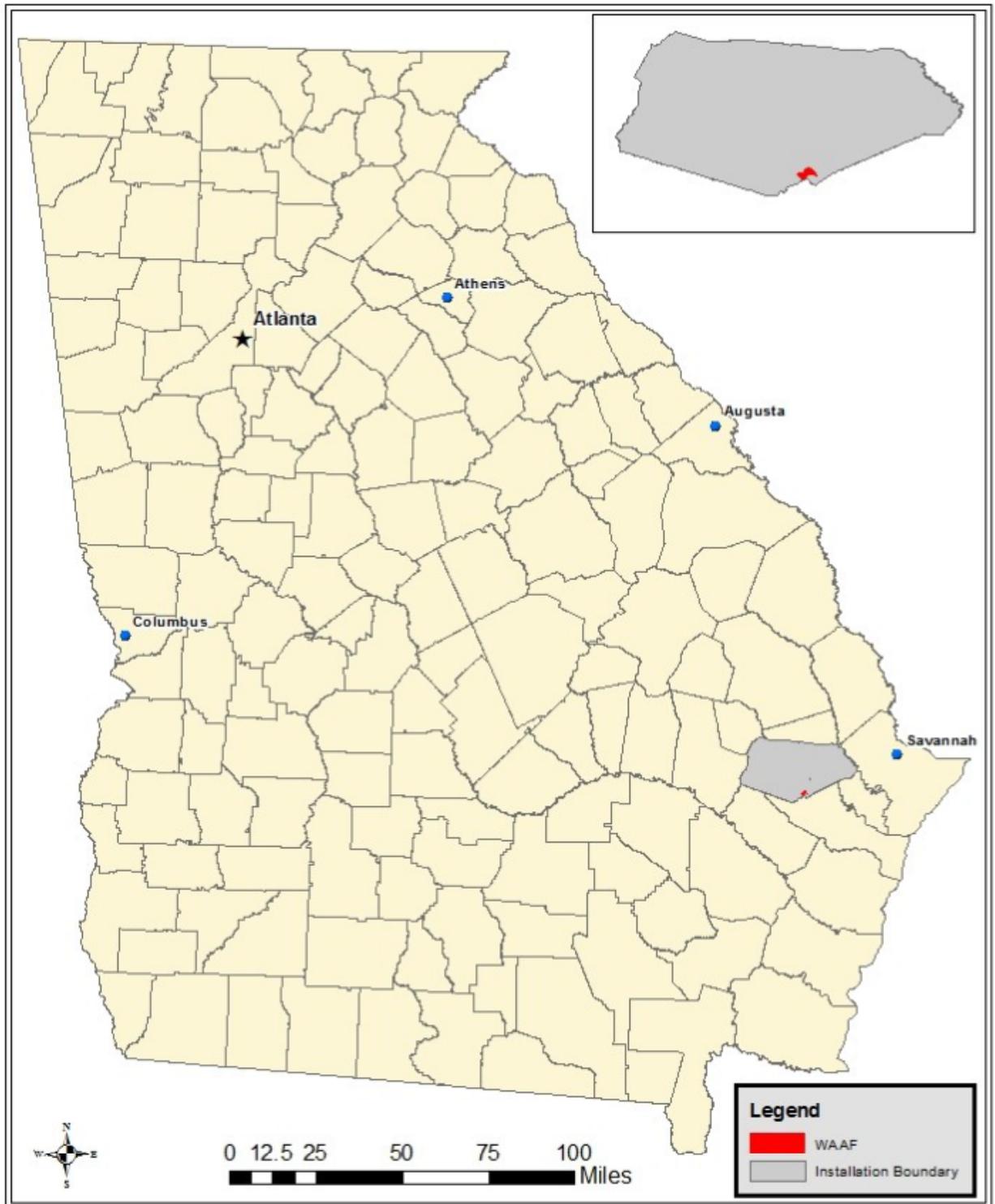


Figure 1-1. Location of Fort Stewart and WAAF / MCRA

2.0 DESCRIPTION OF PROPOSED ACTION AND ALTERNATIVES

2.1 PROPOSED ACTION

The U.S. Army proposes to remove trees and vegetation within areas of runway approaches that are considered obstructions to aircraft ascending and descending into WAAF / MCRA. Areas of obstruction removal are identified as Priority No. 1 and Priority No. 2 (Figure 2-1). The Priority No. 1 areas are of immediate concern to the safety of aircraft approaching and taking off from the runways. These Priority No. 1 areas will undergo tree and vegetation removal of approximately 112 acres. The Priority No. 1 areas will also entail grubbing and grading, with the exception of wetland areas, which will be avoided (discussed in Section 3.4.1.2). Merchantable timber does not exist in the Priority No. 1 areas and will not be harvested by the Government. Typically, the Priority No. 1 areas are maintained every 5-7 years.

The Priority No. 2 areas require removal of trees that will imminently become vertical safety obstructions within the runway approach zones of approximately 375 acres. These areas are not maintained regularly and are have not been recently disturbed (historic aerial photographs show that some timber within the Priority No. 2 areas appear to have been removed between 1940 and the late 1950s). Soil disturbance and the introduction of fill material will not occur in the Priority No. 2 areas. Merchantable timber and suitable vegetative biomass material exists in these areas and will be harvested by the Government during the vegetative removal process (see Section 3.4.2.2 for additional information).

Clearing operations in both priority areas will be implemented with erosion and sedimentation control measures in accordance with the State of Georgia.

2.2 NO ACTION ALTERNATIVE (STATUS QUO)

Under the status quo alternative, the work identified for the Priority No. 1 areas would take place, considering it is an activity associated with the continued maintenance of the airfield. The Priority No. 2 areas would not be cleared of imminent vertical safety obstructions as those areas have not been routinely maintained and have not been recently disturbed. The Priority No. 2 areas would soon become noncompliant with FAA safety regulations and flight operations for both military and civilian uses would be hindered.

This alternative provides a “benchmark” to compare the magnitude of environmental effects of the proposed action alternative.

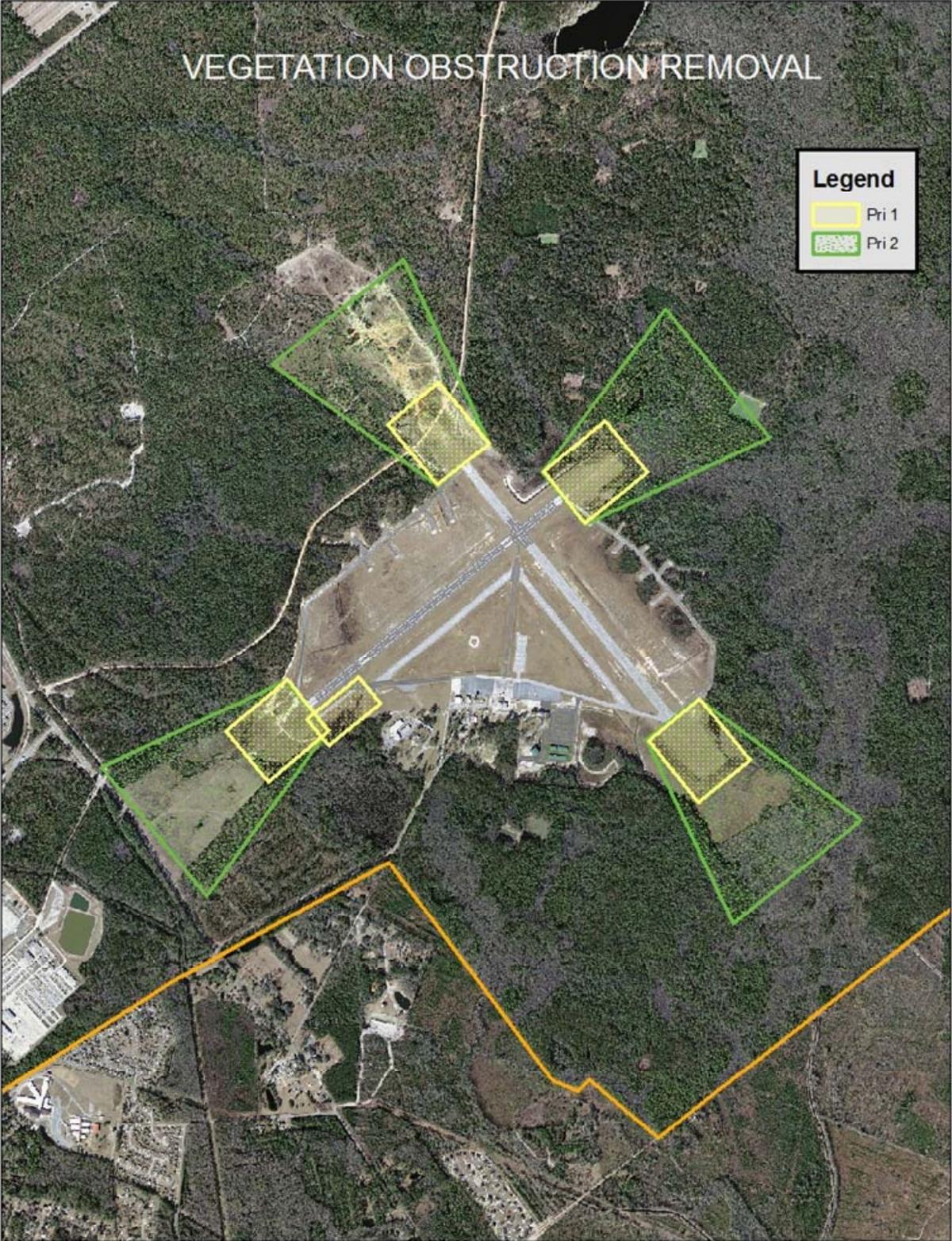


Figure 2-1. Vegetation Obstruction Removal Priority No. 1 and No. 2 Areas

3.0 EXISTING ENVIRONMENT AND ENVIRONMENTAL CONSEQUENCES

3.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter focuses on the affected environment within the proposed action's region of influence. Potential direct and indirect impacts to the affected environment are discussed as they relate to the proposed action and no action (status quo) alternative, as well as cumulative environmental impacts from ongoing and planned activities at WAAF / MCRA. This analysis enables decision-makers to compare the magnitude of environmental impacts with the baseline (status quo).

The information presented in this chapter is derived from local environmental resource subject matter experts and from previously completed NEPA documentation and ongoing NEPA analyses of current and reasonably foreseeable future actions at WAAF / MCRA.

Nearby activities to the proposed action include facility and infrastructure construction supporting Gray Eagle unmanned aerial vehicle (UAV) operation and maintenance and civilian use upgrades including a runway extension and other airfield improvements. See Figure 3-1 which shows the proposed action Priority No. 1 and No. 2 areas, Gray Eagle UAV-related construction (ongoing and planned), and civilian use upgrades (reasonable foreseeable future action).

3.2 MEASURING ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACTS

The primary purpose of preparing an EA is to provide evidence and analysis for determining if significant or potential significant direct, indirect, or cumulative environmental impact(s) are anticipated from a proposed action and a threshold level of significance (TLS) is surpassed for each resource. Direct impacts are those caused specifically by the proposed action and that occur at the same time and place. Indirect impacts are also caused by the proposed action but later in time or farther in distance. Cumulative impacts "result from the incremental impact of the action" when added to "other past, present, and reasonably foreseeable future actions, regardless of what agency (Federal or non-Federal) or what person undertakes such other actions" (Canter et. al, 2007).

An analysis of each alternative is conducted to a measure of the intensity of anticipated environmental impacts can be fully disclosed, which allows the decision-maker to weigh each alternative prior to reaching a decision. The levels of intensity of potential impacts are described as follows:

- *Negligible*. This term indicates the environmental impact is barely perceptible or measurable; remains confined to a single location; and will not result in a sustained recovery time for the resource impacts (days to months).
- *Minor*. This term indicates the environmental impact is readily perceptible and measurable; however, the impact will be temporary and the resource should recover in a relatively short period of time (days to months).

- *Moderate.* The term indicates the environmental impact is perceptible, measurable, and may not remain localized, thus also impacting areas adjacent to the proposed action. Under the impact, recovery of the resource may require several years or decades.
- *Significant.* This term indicates the threshold of intensity associated with an environmental impact has been exceeded (i.e. TLS). This threshold is defined by a potentially substantial and permanent adverse change in or loss of resources within the context of the project. In the absence of mitigation or avoidance, a significant impact would trigger the dismissal of the alternative or preparation of an Environmental Impact Statement.

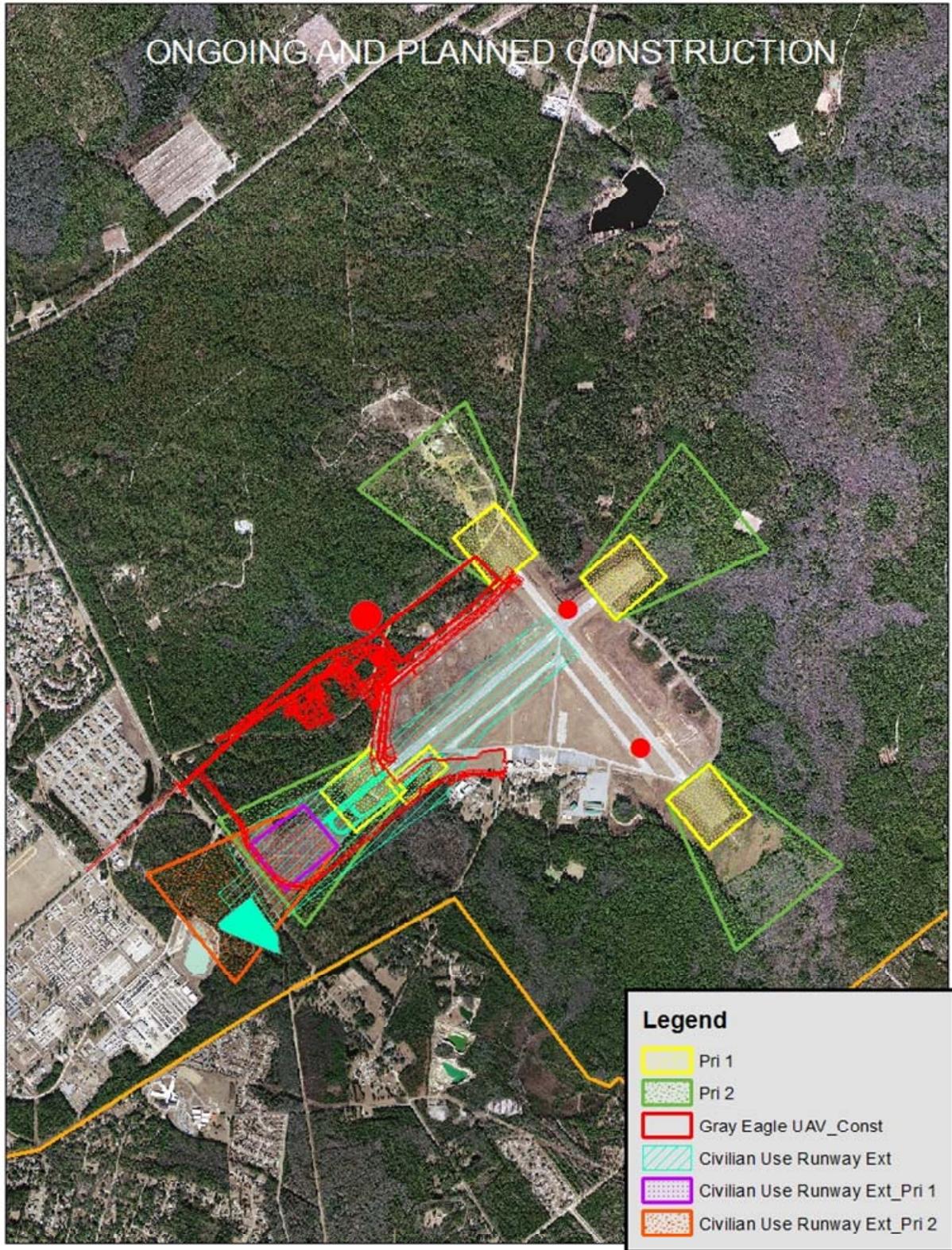


Figure 3-1. Ongoing and Planned Construction at WAAF / MCRA

3.3 RESOURCES ANALYZED

A total of three resource categories were evaluated for their potential to be impacted by the proposed action and status quo alternative: 1) water resources (including surface water quality and wetlands); 2) biological resources (including timber resources and protected species); and 3) safety.

The environmental resources on Fort Stewart which have no potential effects from the proposed action (direct, indirect, or cumulative) include groundwater quality, 100-year floodplains, cultural resources, air quality, utilities, recreation and visual resources, and socioeconomics and environmental justice. The basis for excluding these resources is presented in Appendix A.

3.4 RESOURCE ANALYSIS

3.4.1 WATER RESOURCES

Analysis of water quality generally focuses on the physical, chemical, and biological characteristics of water resources. The Clean Water Act (CWA; 33 USC § 1251 et seq) of 1972 is the primary Federal law that protects the nation's waters, including lakes, rivers, aquifers, and wetlands. The primary objective of the CWA is to restore and maintain the integrity of the Nation's waters. "Jurisdictional Waters of the U.S." are regulated resources and are subject to Federal authority under § 404 of the CWA. This term is broadly defined to include navigable waters (including intermittent streams), impoundments, tributary streams, and wetlands.

3.4.1.1 Surface Water Quality

Affected Environment. The eastern portion of the Garrison area, including WAAF / MCRA, drains to Goshen Swamp, which drains to Peacock Creek (Figure 3-2). Peacock Creek is a 303(d) impaired water body designated by the Georgia Department of Natural Resources (DNR). Peacock Creek and its tributaries are identified as impaired because they exceed fecal coliform standards and have low dissolved oxygen concentrations.

Effective implementation of timber harvest erosion and sedimentation control best management practices (BMPs), National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System (NPDES) permit requirements, site-specific erosion and sedimentation pollution control (ESPC) plan, and pre- and post-construction BMPs reduce the potential adverse impacts to surface water bodies. The Installation has a resident Natural Resource Conservation Service (NRCS) advisor who provides technical expertise during preparation of ESPC plans. During this process, the Installation's stormwater specialist and NRCS advisor review ESPC plans for compliance with the Clean Water Act (CWA) and Georgia Erosion Sedimentation Control Act. These technical experts consistently inspect and monitor on-going construction projects to assure compliance and that BMPs are maintained.

Direct and Indirect Impacts to Surface Water Quality. The proposed action and status quo alternative will result in minor adverse surface water impacts. The contract execution documents will require the contractor to adhere to a Government design which will include an erosion and sedimentation control plan and Notice of Intent to the Georgia DNR prepared in accordance with the requirements outlined in the second paragraph of

Section 3.4.1.1. Periodic Government inspections will also be conducted throughout the course of vegetation removal and grubbing and grading operations to verify compliance through turbidity sampling and E&S BMP checks, and maintaining required buffer areas of State Waters. Timber harvesting and suitable biomass vegetation removed will also be required to implement and maintain BMPs to minimize / prevent adverse impacts to surrounding surface water. The Government will mandate that violations be immediately corrected by the contractor.

Cumulative Impacts to Surface Water Quality. Off-site activities that could contribute to Peacock Creek exceeding the State's fecal coliform standards and DO limits include septic systems, sanitary sewer overflows, rural nonpoint sources, and animal wastes. Contributing on-site activities include urban nonpoint sources, such as construction, roadside ditches, nutrient loads from residential landscapes, WAAF wastewater treatment plant land application system (LAS), Evans Army Airfield wastewater LAS, Georgia Army National Guard Training Center vehicle wash facility, and animal wastes.

Effective implementation of the timber harvest BMPs, NPDES permit requirements, site-specific erosion and sedimentation pollution control (ESPC) plan, and pre- and post-construction BMPs reduce the potential adverse impacts to surface water bodies. As described above, contractors will be required to adhere to Government-prepared E&S plans and will be subject to periodic compliance inspections. Designs for ongoing and planned activities have been prepared to maintain pre-construction hydrology during and after construction. A site- or activity-specific stormwater pollution prevention plan will be prepared and implemented as each nearby facility becomes operational. Minor adverse cumulative impacts are anticipated when the proposed action or status quo alternative is added to ongoing and planned activities.

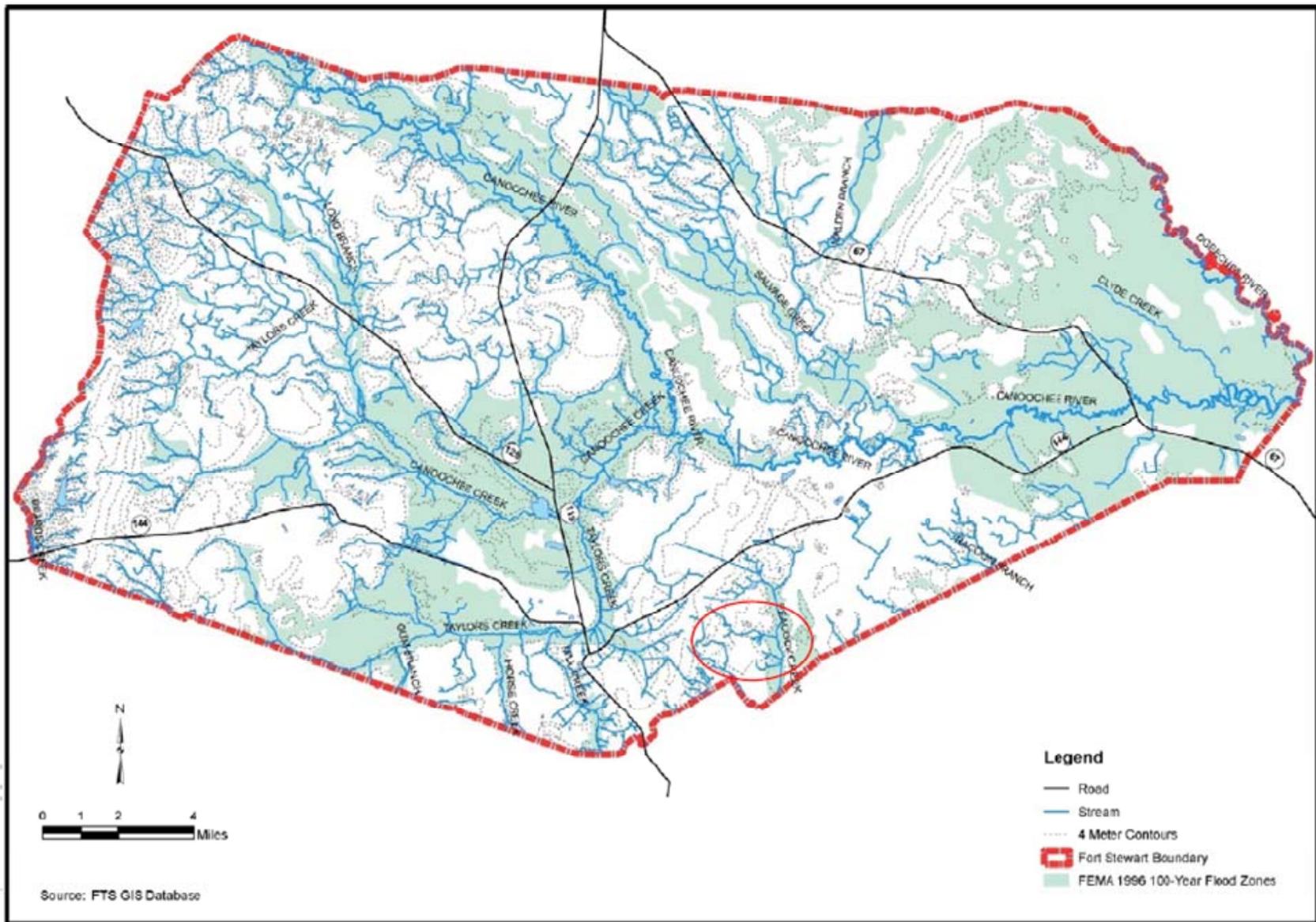


Figure 3-2. Surface Waters in the Region of Influence, WAAF / MCRA

3.4.1.2 Wetlands

Affected Environment. Lands subject to regulation as wetlands under §404 of the Clean Water Act (jurisdictional wetlands) are defined as “Those areas that are inundated or saturated by surface or groundwater at a frequency and duration sufficient to support, and that under normal circumstances do support, a prevalence of vegetation typically adapted for life in saturated soil conditions.” The US Army Corps of Engineers (USACE) administers the §404 permitting program on behalf of the Federal Government. It is responsible for reviewing proposals and issuing permits to discharge dredged and fill materials into any jurisdictional wetlands.

Wetlands serve as venues of water conveyance (feeding ponds, lakes, rivers, and coastal seas) and flood control, filter and purify water, reduce storm damage by absorbing the strength of violent weather events, and provide habitat, feeding, and breeding ground for a vast array of plant and animal life. Fort Stewart’s position on the Atlantic Coastal Plain, with its low elevation, generally flat topography, and high water table, makes wetlands prominent and defining features on the Installation. Approximately 90,000 acres on Ft Stewart are wetlands. Typical wetland types at Ft Stewart include blackwater swamps, bay forests, streamhead pocosins, wet pine flatwoods and cypress gum ponds.

Wright AAF is located in an area of Ft Stewart that contains an abundance of wetlands. Mixed pine/hardwood communities are located throughout the area, indicative of those found along sand ridges in the Atlantic Coast Flatwoods. Dominant canopy species include longleaf pine (*Pinus palustris*), loblolly pine (*Pinus taeda*) and water oak (*Quercus nigra*). The sub-canopy is dominated by live oak (*Quercus virginiana*) and black-jack oak (*Quercus marilandica*), and a well-developed shrub layer and woody vine layer. The canopy within the mixed pine/hardwood wetland areas contain predominantly sweetgum, red maple, loblolly pine, longleaf pine, black gum (*Nyssa sylvatic*), bald cypress (*Taxodium distichum*), pond cypress (*Taxodium ascendens*), loblolly bay (*Gordonia lasianthus*), and laurel oak (*Quercus laurifolia*). The subcanopy is dominated by American holly (*Ilex opaca*), red bay (*Persea borbonia*), and magnolia bay (*Magnolia virginiana*). Figure 3-3 shows the wetland systems within the affected environment.

Direct and Indirect Impacts to Wetlands. Neither the proposed action nor the status quo alternative will involve the discharge of dredged or fill material into waters of the U.S., including streams and wetlands. Excluding U.S. waters, the Priority No. 1 areas will be grubbed and graded. Ground disturbance and soil compaction will be minimized via the use of handheld equipment (for example, a chainsaw) when entering wetland areas to remove a vertical vegetative obstruction. Intensive mechanical site preparation (i.e. shearing, root raking, soil disturbance) will not be employed in wetland areas. As such, the work described under the proposed action and status quo alternative fall within the purview of Nationwide Permit (NWP) No. 3(c). This NWP authorizes work necessary to conduct this type of activity so long as appropriate measures are taken to maintain normal downstream flows and minimize flooding to the maximum extent practicable. Although not expected if the proposed action or status quo alternative are implemented, temporary fills must be removed in their entirety and the affected areas returned to pre-construction elevations and revegetated as appropriate.

Wetland areas will be flagged / marked on the ground to assist contractors in understanding the physical demarcation of wetlands versus upland within the Priority No. 1 and No. 2 areas. Periodic inspections of wetland areas will occur throughout the duration of grubbing and grading operations and vegetation/timber removal activities to ensure the work does not have more than a de minimis (i.e. inconsequential) effect on the area by causing an identifiable individual or cumulative adverse effect to the aquatic function.

Cumulative Impacts to Wetlands. Cumulative impacts to wetland resources are not anticipated as a result of the proposed action or status quo alternative because direct and indirect impacts are not expected.

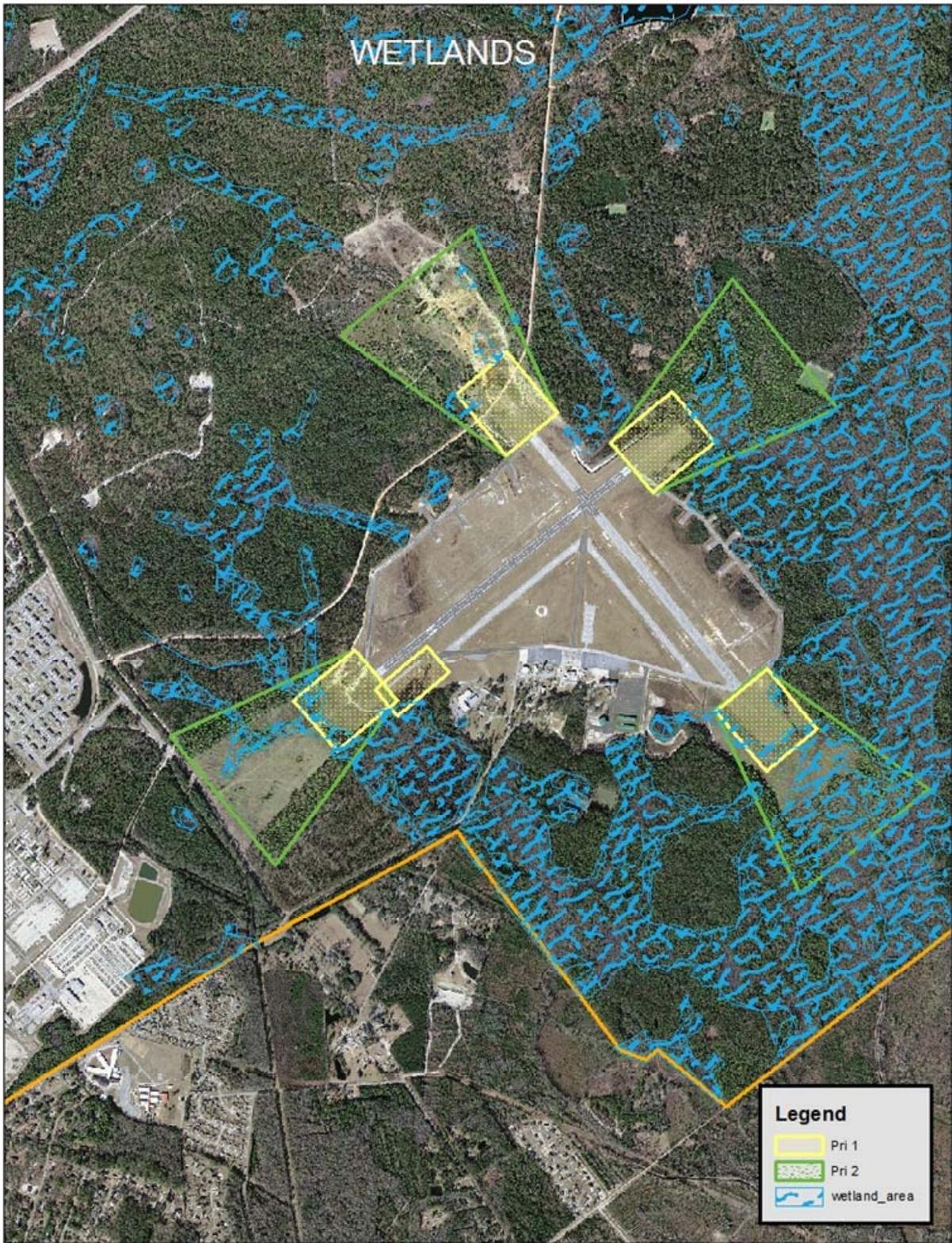


Figure 3-3. Wetland Areas at WAAF / MCRA

3.4.2 BIOLOGICAL RESOURCES

Protected species are defined as those listed by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) as endangered or threatened under the Endangered Species Act; listed by Georgia's Department of Natural Resources (DNR) as rare, unusual, endangered, or threatened; designated as a special species of concern by the Georgia Natural Heritage Program; or proposed for listing by the DNR or USFWS. Of the protected species known to occur on Fort Stewart, red-cockaded woodpecker (RCW) habitat is within the affected environment of the proposed action. No other Federal or state special status species are within the area of potential effect.

Fort Stewart supports one of the largest forest resources program in the Department of Defense. The primary purpose of the program is to manage Fort Stewart's forested lands to support the Army training mission, to protect and improve threatened and endangered species habitat, and to enhance ecosystem integrity through sound forest management practices.

The Installation contains Georgia's largest remaining forest of longleaf pine, which is essential habitat for the RCW. All thinning operations include the requirements to favor the retention of longleaf pine over other pine species, as well as provide natural longleaf regeneration areas adjacent to existing longleaf seed sources. Re-establishment of longleaf pine occurs on approximately 200 acres of forestland per year.

Additional objectives include the production of commercial forest products and conducting a chip and haul program, which recycles otherwise unusable timber debris by converting it into a sustainable resource. The timber debris chipped as part of the chip and haul program provide fuel to operate Fort Stewart's Central Energy Plant (CEP).

3.4.2.1 Protected Species

Affected Environment. Red-cockaded woodpecker habitat is found within portions of the runway approaches of WAAF / MCRA. The quality of foraging habitat varies depending upon vegetation in the understory, weather, soils, season, and fire frequency and intensity. The highest populations of RCWs occur on areas with active prescribed burning programs that control hardwoods (frequency of every 2-3 years). Wooded areas near WAAF / MCRA are not actively prescribed-burned due to smoke concerns around the airfield that could increase aircraft safety risks.

Direct and Indirect Impacts to Protected Species. If the status quo were maintained without implementing the proposed action, adverse impacts to the RCW habitat would be negligible and would not require prior consultation with the USFWS. Portions of the Priority No. 2 areas (approximately 75 acres) contain RCW habitat, as shown in Figure 3-4. Implementing the proposed action will require prior informal consultation with the USFWS. A Biological Assessment is currently being prepared to thoroughly examine these impacts and will be submitted to the USFWS for their review. Impacts from the proposed action are expected to result in minor adverse effects to the RCW, as it will not impact any RCW forage partitions or critical habitat. The response from the USFWS will be included in the Final EA, and provided to the decision-maker as part of his consideration before choosing between the status quo alternative or implementing the proposed action.

Cumulative Impacts to Protected Species. The construction and operation of the ongoing and future Gray Eagle facilities will remove approximately 60 acres of RCW habitat. The planned civilian joint-use infrastructure will not require removal of RCW habitat. These actions will not adversely impact any cavity or start trees. Total cumulative impact will, therefore, entail 135 acres of displaced or unmanageable habitat for the RCW. These actions cumulatively will not impact any RCW forage partitions and Fort Stewart still expects to continue its achievement of 350 potential breeding groups (the recovery benchmark). As such, cumulative minor adverse impacts to the RCW are expected.

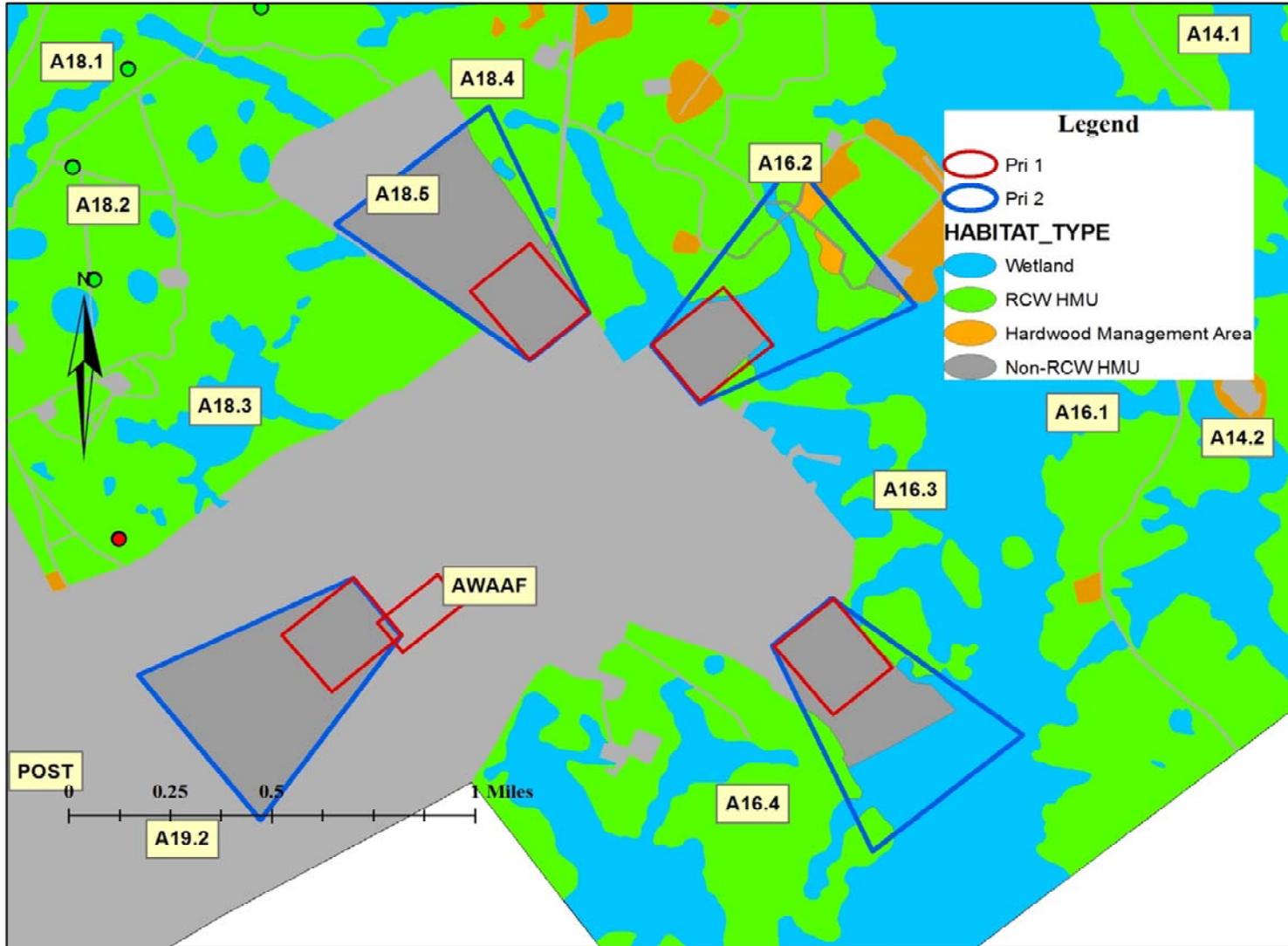


Figure 3-4. RCW Habitat Areas

3.4.2.2 Timber Resources

Affected Environment. The Priority No. 1 areas are previously disturbed. Vegetation consists of scrub shrub and wetland vegetation characterized by a mixed community of trees, shrubs, and herbaceous plants typical of hydrophytic (“water-plant”) vegetation in the southeastern United States, which are those plants preferring a wet environment. The Priority No. 2 areas consist of undisturbed forested areas characterized by upland mixed pine/hardwoods and wetland hydrophytic vegetation.

Direct and Indirect Impacts to Timber Resources. The vegetation that would be removed within the Priority No. 1 areas provide no commercial value and are not suitable for the chip and haul program. The Priority No. 1 footprint is also not managed for longleaf regeneration. The status quo alternative, therefore, will result in negligible impacts to timber resources. Approximately 135 acres of merchantable timber exists within the Priority No. 2 footprint and would be harvested by Fort Stewart. Residual timber debris from the harvest would be hauled to an existing designated area within the Installation’s cantonment area where chipping operations would convert the material into woodchips for fueling the CEP. Additional vegetative debris from non-merchantable timber removal within approximately 153 acres of the Priority No. 2 area will also be added to the chip and haul program. Beneficial impacts are anticipated as a result of timber sales, providing funding for all Department of the Army forestry and natural resource management programs. Negligible impacts to the forest longleaf pine inventory are also expected from implementation of the proposed action.

Cumulative Impacts to Timber Resources. Cumulative impacts to timber resources are not anticipated as a result of the proposed action or status quo alternative because adverse direct and indirect impacts are not expected.

3.4.3 SAFETY

The “Army Safety Program,” AR 385-10, governs Army policies, responsibilities, and procedures to protect and preserve Army personnel and property against accident loss. The regulation provides for operational safety and mandates compliance with applicable safety laws and regulations. Related key effects include and aviation safety (meeting FAA and UFC requirements) and construction safety.

3.4.3.1 Aviation Safety

Affected Environment. The air safety component of the Installation Compatible Use Zone (ICUZ) identifies areas around the airfield where a mishap would be most likely to occur and assess the likely impact of any single accident. The following ICUZ air safety zones exist around WAAF:

- **Clear Zone.** The Clear Zone is an area 1,000 feet wide by 3,000 feet long at the immediate ends of the runway. The accident potential in this area is sufficient to recommend prohibiting any structures in the Clear Zone.
- **Accident Potential Zone I.** Accident Potential Zone I is less critical than the Clear Zone but still possess significant potential for accidents. A variety of industrial, manufacturing, transportation, open space, and agricultural uses can

exist safely within this 1,000-foot-wide-by-2,500-foot-long area just beyond the Clear Zone. However, uses that concentrate people in small areas, such as higher density housing, pose a conflict with the safety risks of this zone.

- **Accident Potential Zone II.** Accident Potential Zone II is the least critical of the three air safety zones but still carries some risk of an accident. Accident Potential Zone II is 1,000 feet wide and extends 2,500 feet beyond Accident Potential Zone I. Compatible land uses include those of Accident Potential Zone I as well as low-density single family residential and lower intensity commercial activities. High-density functions such as multistory buildings and places of assembly (such as theaters, schools, churches, and restaurants), however, raise compatibility issues.

Direct and Indirect Impacts to Aviation Safety. The proposed action will increase aviation safety by bringing WAAF / MCRA into compliance with FAA and UFC requirements for civilian-use and army airfields. All flight vegetative obstructions would be removed within the entire Clear Zone, causing a beneficial impact for pilots and passengers during flight operations. The status quo alternative will have moderate adverse impacts to aviation safety. Only 20 percent of obstructions within the Clear Zone would be removed as a result of this alternative. While maintaining the status quo will remove hazards that are in closer proximity to the runway, when compared to the Priority No. 2 areas, flight safety risks from vegetation will not be completely eliminated within the Clear Zone.

Cumulative Impacts to Aviation Safety. Cumulative beneficial impacts are expected from the proposed action. Military flight operations of the Gray Eagle UAV from WAAF / MCRA will also benefit with the removal of any vegetative flight obstruction. Cumulative moderate adverse impacts from implementation of the status quo alternative would occur. Removing only 20 percent of the vegetative obstructions within the Clear Zone will not eliminate accident potential from these types of hazards.

3.4.3.2 Construction Safety

Affected Environment. Workers must comply with Occupational Safety and Health Act (OSHA) standards.

Direct and Indirect Impacts to Construction Safety. The proposed action and status quo alternative are expected negligible impacts to workers, provided the following requirements are met:

- Contractors are expected to perform work in accordance with OSHA regulations. Before commencing, all activity must be coordinated between contractors and the Safety Office. Contractors must have a Health and Safety plan that is approved by the Safety Office prior to land disturbance. The plan must sufficiently address potential safety risks and response actions, including the discovery of potential military explosives of concern (MEC). It is recommended that all personnel working on site take MEC awareness training / safety briefing.
- Appropriate measures must be implemented to limit unauthorized persons from accessing the site, to further minimize potential safety risks.

- A fenced in Explosive Ordnance Disposal (EOD) area must remain off-limits during implementation of the proposed action or status quo alternative. This EOD area is under a land-use control that prohibits timber removal described in the proposed action. See Figure 3-5, showing this area that must be avoided.

Cumulative Impacts to Construction Safety. Cumulative impacts are not expected because direct and indirect impacts to construction safety are expected to be negligible.



Figure 3-5. Fenced EOD Area Requires Avoidance (see orange block)

3.5 SUMMARY OF ENVIRONMENTAL EFFECTS

Implementing the proposed action or maintaining the status quo will require management commitments in accordance with the Georgia Erosion and Sedimentation Control Act, Clean Water Act, Endangered Species Act, and Occupational Health and Safety Act. Avoidance of a fenced EOD area and prior coordination with the local Safety Office is also necessary.

The Government will conduct periodic inspections of the project site during implementation. If violations to surface waters or wetland areas occur, corrections will be made immediately on site. Vegetation removal will not occur until the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service issues a concurrence letter to Fort Stewart, the 14-day waiting period has ended on the notice of intent packet containing the Georgia Environmental Protection Division-approved erosion and sedimentation control plan, and the Installation Safety Office has approved the contractor's safety plan.

Table 3-1 summarizes the potential environmental impacts provided the aforementioned requirements are implemented as part of the proposed action or status quo alternative.

AREA OF CONCERN	STATUS QUO	PROPOSED ACTION	CUMULATIVE
Surface Water Quality	Minor	Minor	Minor
Wetlands	Negligible	Negligible	N/A
Protected Species	Negligible	Minor	Minor
Timber Resources	Negligible	Negligible - Beneficial	N/A
Aviation Safety	Moderate	Beneficial	Moderate (status quo) Beneficial (proposed action)
Construction Safety	Negligible	Negligible	N/A

Table 3-1. Summary of Anticipated Effects

No significant or potentially significant cumulative impacts are expected to any resource.

4.0 PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT

The Draft EA and Draft Finding of No Significant Impact (FNSI) will be available for public review from August 28 – September 26 at the local public libraries in Hinesville and Savannah and at the Post Library on Fort Stewart. These documents will also be available for review on the Fort Stewart website.

5.0 REFERENCES CITED

Canter, L., Chawla, M., Webster, R. 2007. NEPA Analysis Guidance Manual. U.S. Army Environmental Command. Aberdeen Proving Ground, MD.

Department of Defense. United Facilities Criteria 3-260-01, Airfield and Heliport Planning and Design. 2008.

APPENDIX A

RESOURCES WITH NO POTENTIAL EFFECTS FROM THE PROPOSED ACTION

As mentioned in Section 3.3, the environmental resources on Fort Stewart to which no potential effects from the proposed action are predicted (direct, indirect, or cumulative) include groundwater quality, 100-year floodplains, cultural resources, air quality, utilities, recreation and visual resources, and socioeconomics and environmental justice. The basis for excluding these resources is described below.

Groundwater Quality. Groundwater is not expected to be affected by the proposed action or status quo alternative because pollutant loads potentially found in infiltrating water would be limited, would occur primarily during grading, and would be controlled through erosion and sedimentation control measures. Therefore, the proposed action and status quo alternative will pose little threat to the aquifer water quality.

100-Year Floodplains. There are no 100-year floodplains with the footprint of the proposed action and status quo alternative location according to the 2008 FEMA floodzone map. Therefore, the 100-year floodplain will not be adversely impacted by the proposed action or the status quo alternative.

Cultural Resources. The proposed action and status quo alternative locations have been surveyed for cultural resources and it has been determined that no historic properties will be adversely affected. This finding has been documented in accordance with the Programmatic Agreement between the Installation and the Georgia State Historic Preservation Office regarding compliance with Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act.

Air Quality. Fort Stewart's air quality is better than the National Ambient Air Quality Standards. Implementation of the proposed action or the status quo alternative would not change long-term pollutant emission rates.

Utilities. Utilities will not be used to implement the proposed action or status quo alternative. A dig permit is a standard practice for ensuring existing utilities that may be found on a construction site are flagged and avoided.

Recreation and Visual Resources. Visibility and visual sensitivity evaluations are based on public viewing opportunities and concern for the potential for changes to the landscape. Although the loss of approximately 400 acres of forested lands would occur under the proposed action, these changes will occur in areas off-limits to the public.

Socioeconomics and Environmental Justice. Completion of the proposed action or the status quo alternative would be accomplished by private contractors. Few to no new jobs would be created, regional population demographics are not expected to change, and the small scale of proposed expenditures would not result in noticeable regional direct or indirect effects to socioeconomic indices.

Because the propose location is entirely within the Installation boundary and no low-income or minority populations or their operations are adjacent to or in the vicinity of the proposed action, environmental justice has been eliminated from further analysis.