



ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT STATEMENT

T-7A RECAPITALIZATION AT SHEPPARD AIR FORCE BASE, TEXAS



PUBLIC SCOPING FOR T-7A RECAPITALIZATION AT SHEPPARD AIR FORCE BASE, TEXAS



Photo Credit: Boeing T-7A Red Hawk Website, September 2021, <https://www.boeing.com/defense/t-7a/#gallery>

Introduction

The National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) was enacted in 1969. Under NEPA, an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) is the most detailed form of environmental analysis. The U.S. Department of the Air Force (DAF) has published a Notice of Intent to prepare an EIS, pursuant to NEPA, for the proposed T-7A recapitalization at Sheppard Air Force Base (AFB). The Proposed Action entails introduction of T-7A Red Hawk aircraft and flight operations at Sheppard AFB and associated airspace to replace all T-38C Talon aircraft assigned to the installation; temporary changes to

the number of personnel and dependents in the Sheppard AFB region; and construction and upgrade of operations, support, and maintenance facilities. The range of alternatives to the Proposed Action are described on the back of this brochure.

Background

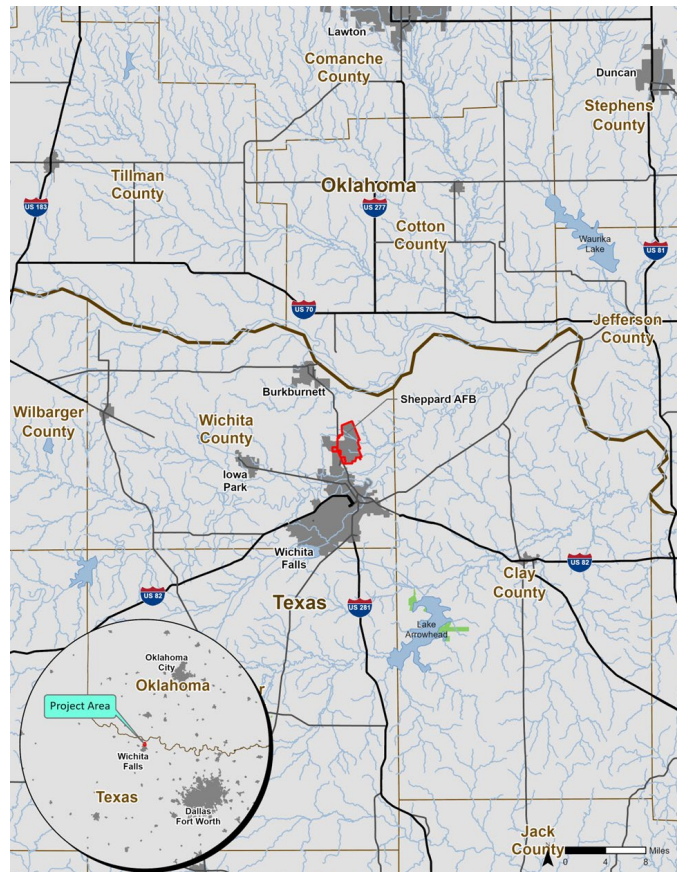
DAF proposes to recapitalize the flight training program at Sheppard AFB with T-7A aircraft because the T-38C is expected to reach the end of its service life within the next decade. Training with the T-38C does not adequately prepare pilots for the technological advancements of modern fourth and fifth generation aircraft including nighttime flight training. The Secretary of the Air Force has made strategic basing decisions to recapitalize existing T-38C pilot training installations, and Sheppard AFB would be the fifth of five installations for this beddown action.

What is the Public Scoping Process?

Public scoping is an early and open process, conducted in compliance with NEPA, for identifying issues and alternatives to be addressed in an EIS and determining who is interested in a proposed action. Public outreach is conducted as a part of the scoping process to provide information to interested parties and to receive comments. Comments received during the public scoping process are considered in the preparation of the Draft EIS. A timeline showing the steps of the EIS process is on the back of this brochure.

Elements common to Alternatives 1, 2, and 3

- Beddown and aircraft operations of the T-7A at Sheppard AFB
- Timeline to implement the action
- Facility construction and renovation projects
- Number of permanent personnel and dependents
- Use of existing Special Use Airspace with no changes to current configurations



Alternatives

DAF is considering three alternatives to the Proposed Action (i.e., Alternatives 1, 2, and 3) and the No Action Alternative. These alternatives are described as follows:

Alternative 1: Up to 108 T-7A Aircraft and T-7A Operations at a Level Sustaining Pilot Training while Simultaneously Phasing Out the T-38C and Phasing In the T-7A

Sheppard AFB would receive up to 108 T-7A aircraft between 2034 and continuing through 2036. Pilot training operations would gradually transition from the T-38C to the T-7A during 2034, 2035, and 2036, and pilot training operations would be performed at a level to meet DAF's anticipated training needs. Operations are takeoffs, landings, the approach phase of a "touch-and-go", and the takeoff phase of a "touch-and-go". Up to 3,432 annual nighttime T-7A operations would occur. Existing military training airspace would be used, and no changes to airspace configurations would be required. All T-7A operations would be sub-sonic except as specified in the existing training syllabus.

Alternative 2: Up to 108 T-7A Aircraft and T-7A Operations 25 Percent Greater than Alternative 1

Alternative 2 would also result in up to 108 T-7A aircraft being delivered to Sheppard AFB; however, T-7A operations would be performed at an operational level 25 percent greater than Alternative 1. Up to 4,290 annual nighttime T-7A operations would occur. Alternative 2 covers a potential scenario in which DAF requires a surge or increase in pilot training operations above current plan.

Alternative 3: Up to 131 T-7A Aircraft and T-7A Operations 22 Percent Greater than Alternative 1

Alternative 3 would result in up to 131 T-7A aircraft being delivered to Sheppard AFB. Total annual T-7A operations would be approximately 22 percent greater than Alternative 1. Alternative 3 is intended to provide DAF with operational flexibility, and inclusion of this alternative in the EIS provides analysis to evaluate future capacity needs.

No Action Alternative: Does Not Implement T-7A Recapitalization at Sheppard AFB

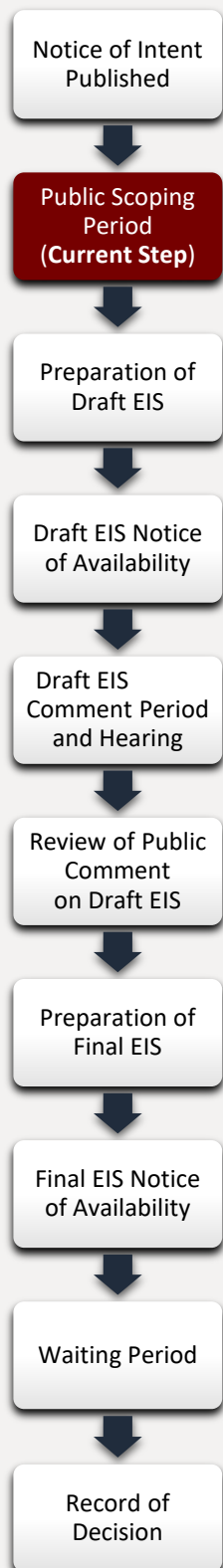
The No Action Alternative assesses the environmental consequences from taking no action and serves as a baseline to compare the environmental consequences of the Proposed Action. For the No Action Alternative, T-38C aircraft would remain in service with no changes to operations at Sheppard AFB or airspace areas even though they will reach the end of their service lives within the next decade. No changes to the number of personnel and dependents would occur, and no construction would be undertaken.

Environmental Impact Analysis Process

DAF anticipates potential for increased air emissions, particularly nitrogen oxides, and changes in aircraft noise levels from the Proposed Action. Increased noise could have a disproportionate impact on environmental justice populations and impact off-installation land use compatibility. In addition, facilities and supporting structures improvement associated with the Proposed Action may impact floodplains. DAF will consult with the United States Fish and Wildlife Service, the Texas Historical Commission, and Native American tribes to determine the potential for significant impacts.

The EIS will model air emissions, noise levels, and the number of disturbance events and compare them to current conditions. DAF will also consult with appropriate resource agencies and Native American tribes to determine the potential for significant impacts. Consultation will be incorporated into the preparation of the EIS and will include, but not be limited to, consultation under Section 7 of the Endangered Species Act and consultation under Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act. Additional analysis will be provided in the Draft EIS, which is anticipated in mid-2025. The Final EIS and a decision on which alternative to implement is expected in late 2025.

EIS Timeline



Notice of Intent Published

Public Scoping Period
(Current Step)

Preparation of Draft EIS

Draft EIS Notice of Availability

Draft EIS Comment Period and Hearing

Review of Public Comment on Draft EIS

Preparation of Final EIS

Final EIS Notice of Availability

Waiting Period

Record of Decision

Please provide comments on the project website, by email at chinling.chen@us.af.mil, or via postal mail to Ms. Chinling Chen, AFCEC/CIE; Attn: Sheppard AFB T-7A Recapitalization EIS (Project #00099); Headquarters Air Education and Training Command Public Affairs; 100 H. East Street, Suite 4; Randolph AFB, TX 78150. The scoping materials are also available in print at the Wichita Falls Public Library (600 11th Street, Wichita Falls, Texas) and by request.

<https://sheppard.t-7anepadocuments.com/>

To ensure DAF has sufficient time to consider public input, please submit all comments by August 12, 2024.