



ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT STATEMENT

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



Welcome

Draft Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) T-7A Recapitalization at Sheppard Air Force Base



Photo Credit: Boeing T-7A Red Hawk Website, July 2022. <https://www.boeing.com/defense/t-7a/#/gallery>

Note: The aircraft in the foreground is a T-7A "Red Hawk" prototype, and the aircraft in the background is a restored P-51C "Mustang." The P-51C were flown by the Tuskegee Airmen during World War II and have been retired from service for many decades. The P-51C is not part of this project.





ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT STATEMENT

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



National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA)

- Law that requires federal agencies to **analyze and disclose potential impacts** of proposed actions, reasonable alternatives, and a no action alternative, before action is taken.
- EIS prepared to comply with NEPA when an action may have a significant impact on the environment.
- The goal is to support sound decisions through the assessment of impacts and involve the public in the EIS process.
- The results of this analysis and other relevant factors will be considered before the Air Force makes a decision on this proposal.





ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT STATEMENT

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



AETC and Sheppard AFB Introduction

Sheppard AFB is home to the 80th Flying Training Wing (FTW) of Air Education and Training Command (AETC).

- 80 FTW conducts the Euro-NATO Joint Jet Pilot Training Program.
- Undergraduate pilot training is accomplished with the T-38C “Talon.”

The T-38C aircraft are approaching the end of their useful life, and student pilots need a more technologically advanced aircraft with which to train.





ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT STATEMENT

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



T-7A Strategic Basing Initiative

- The Air Force plans to recapitalize the T-38C “Talon” fleet with T-7A “Red Hawk” aircraft to provide a training environment suitable for modern aircraft.
- Procure approximately 350 T-7A aircraft and deliver these aircraft to the five T-38C pilot training installations using a geographically phased replacement plan.
 - ❖ Joint Base San Antonio (JBSA)-Randolph, Texas
 - ❖ Columbus AFB, Mississippi
 - ❖ Laughlin AFB, Texas
 - ❖ Vance AFB, Oklahoma
 - ❖ Sheppard AFB, Texas
- T-7A aircraft would provide a training environment suitable for modern aircraft.





ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT STATEMENT

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



Why is Sheppard AFB Fifth?

- The Acting Secretary of the Air Force selected Sheppard AFB to be the fifth installation to undergo T-7A recapitalization.
- Recapitalizing Sheppard AFB fifth would:
 - ❖ Result in the least impact on continued pilot production during the transition of aircraft types.
 - ❖ Provide the most efficient cost and student production and management plan.
 - ❖ Align with AETC's student pipeline flow for the Undergraduate Pilot Training and Introduction to Fighter Fundamentals curricula.
- JBSA-Randolph and Columbus, Laughlin, and Vance AFBs are the first four installations.



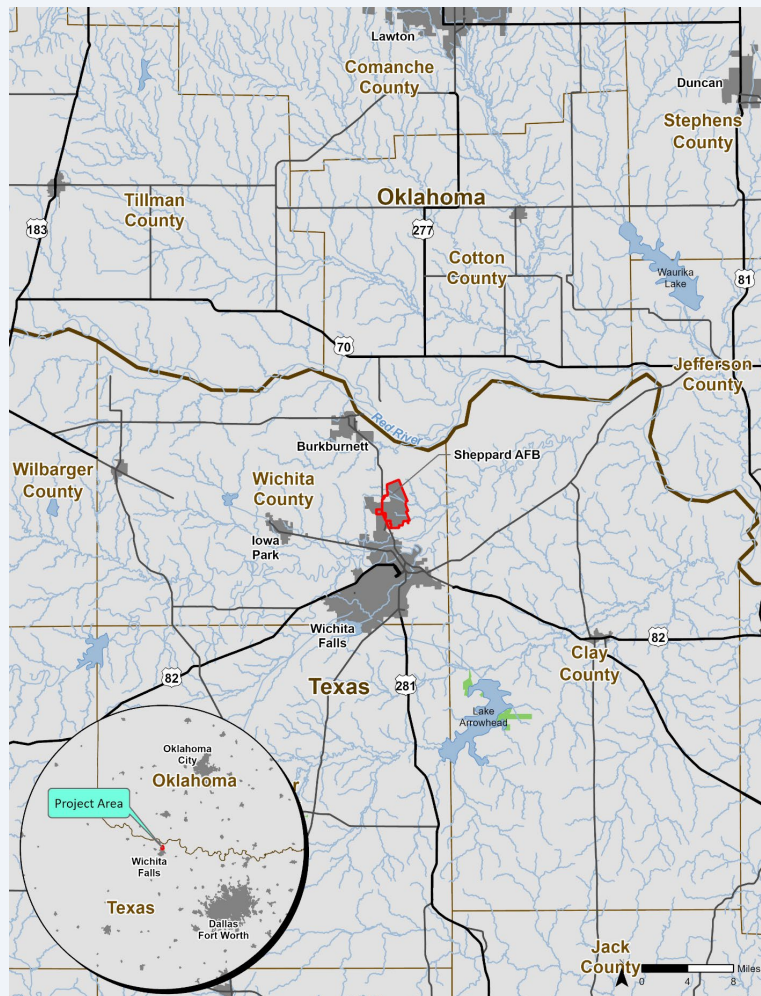


ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT STATEMENT

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



Project Location





ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT STATEMENT

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



Purpose & Need

Purpose:

- Continue the T-7A strategic basing initiative at Sheppard AFB.
- Better train pilots to operate modern aircraft.

Need:

- Current training practices with T-38C aircraft fail to adequately prepare pilots to operate modern aircraft.
- Recapitalizing Sheppard AFB is needed to:
 - ❖ Allow for enhanced and improved flight and simulator training.
 - ❖ Ensure pilot training requirements are met.





ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT STATEMENT

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



Overview of the Proposed Action

Recapitalization entails the following elements:

- Replacement of all 131 T-38C aircraft assigned to Sheppard AFB with T-7A aircraft.
- Transition of aircraft operations from the T-38C to T-7A.
- Temporary changes to the number of personnel and dependents in the Sheppard AFB region.
- Construction and upgrade of operations, support, and maintenance facilities to support pilot training and aircraft operations and maintenance.
 - ❖ Small to medium-scale construction or renovation projects.
 - ❖ Total ground disturbance would be up to 3.8 acres.
 - ❖ Begin in 2031 and 2032. Complete by 2034.





ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT STATEMENT

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



Overview of Action Alternatives

- The Air Force analyzed the environmental impacts of three action alternatives:
 - ❖ Alternative 1 – up to 108 T-7A aircraft and operations at a level sustaining pilot training
 - ❖ Alternative 2 – up to 108 T-7A aircraft and operations 25 percent greater than Alternative 1
 - ❖ Alternative 3 – up to 131 T-7A aircraft and operations 21 percent greater than Alternative 1
- Aircraft Operation = 1 Takeoff, Landing, or “Touch-and-Go.”
 - ❖ T-38C fleet currently performs 178,700 annual operations.





ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT STATEMENT

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



Alternative 1

Alternative 1 – 108 T-7A Aircraft and Operations at a Level Sustaining Pilot Training

- T-7A aircraft would be delivered to Sheppard AFB beginning in 2034 and continuing through 2036.
- As T-7A aircraft are delivered and placed into service, all 131 T-38C aircraft would be withdrawn from service.
 - ❖ T-38C withdrawal would begin in 2034 and be complete by the end of 2036.
 - ❖ T-7A operations would begin in 2034 and increase to steady state in 2037.
 - ❖ Annually, the T-7A fleet would perform approximately 31,400 fewer operations at steady state than the T-38C fleet.
 - Identical number of operations per aircraft.
 - 108 T-7A vs. 131 T-38C equates to the decrease in operations.
 - At steady state, operations would decrease from approximately 178,700 currently with the T-38C to approximately 147,300 with the T-7A.





ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT STATEMENT

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



Alternative 2

Alternative 2 – 108 T-7A Aircraft and T-7A and T-38C Operations 25 Percent Greater than Alternative 1

- Intended to cover a scenario where the Air Force requires a surge or increase in operations above the current plan.
- Like Alternative 1, 108 T-7A aircraft would be delivered and placed into service beginning in 2034, T-38C withdrawal would be complete by the end of 2036, T-7A operations would increase to steady state by 2037, and T-38C operations would conclude by the end of 2036.
- T-7A aircraft would perform 25% more operations than Alternative 1.
 - ❖ At steady state, operations would increase from approximately 178,700 currently with the T-38C to approximately 184,100 with the T-7A.





ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT STATEMENT

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



Alternative 3

Alternative 3 – 131 T-7A Aircraft and T-7A Operations Approximately 21 Percent Greater than Alternative 1

- Intended to provide operational flexibility so that 23 additional T-7A aircraft can be assigned to Sheppard AFB, if needed.
- Total of 131 T-7A aircraft by end of 2037.
- T-7A operations would increase to steady state by 2037, and T-38C operations would conclude by the end of 2036.
- Annually, the T-7A fleet would perform the same number of operations as the current T-38C fleet.
 - ❖ Identical number of operations per aircraft.
 - ❖ Same number of T-7A and T-38C aircraft – 131.
 - ❖ At steady state, T-7A operations would be equal to the current number of T-38C operations – 178,700.





ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT STATEMENT

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



No Action Alternative

- A “No Action Alternative” is considered in the Draft EIS.
- Provides a means to evaluate the impacts of the Proposed Action.
- The Air Force would not implement T-7A recapitalization at Sheppard AFB.
- No change to number of personnel, number and types of T-38C operations, and no construction or renovation projects undertaken.
- If the No Action Alternative is selected, the Air Force would re-evaluate their T-7A strategic basing decisions and may implement all or a portion of the basing requirements proposed for Sheppard AFB at an undetermined installation.





ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT STATEMENT



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

Alternatives Comparison

Comparison of Alternatives

	Current Conditions & No Action	Alternative 1	Alternative 2	Alternatives 3
Aircraft				
Number of Aircraft	131	108	108	131
Compared to No Action	--	-23	-23	No Change
Operations				
Steady State Operations	178,700	147,300	184,100	178,700
Compared to No Action	--	-31,400	+5,400	No Change
Operational Tempo (ops per aircraft)	1,364	1,364	1,705	1,364





ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT STATEMENT

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



Draft EIS Resource Subjects

Resource subjects analyzed in detail for potential environmental impacts are:

- Air Quality
- Noise
- Land Use
- Biological Resources
- Cultural Resources
- Hazardous Materials and Waste
- Safety
- Water Resources

Resource subjects determined to have negligible effects and not analyzed in detail within the Draft EIS are:

- Airspace
- Geological Resources
- Infrastructure and Transportation
- Socioeconomics





ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT STATEMENT

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



Air Quality

- Temporary (2031 and 2032) air emissions produced from construction.
- Operational air emission changes would begin in 2033.
- Net increase of VOC, NO_x, SO_x, and greenhouse gases emissions.
 - ❖ Already good air quality of the region and effective dispersion of pollutants emitted at high altitudes would limit the significance of impacts.
 - ❖ Not expected to contribute to an exceedance of an air quality standard or threshold.
- Net decrease of CO and particulate matter emissions.





ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT STATEMENT

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



Noise and Land Use

- The Air Force calculated the day-night average sound level (DNL) for current or No Action conditions and for the three action alternatives.
- Aircraft noise above 65 decibels (dBA) DNL is considered incompatible with residential land use.
- The acreage and population within the 65 dBA DNL noise zones for each action alternative would increase from current conditions.
- The 65 dBA DNL noise zone for Alternative 2 would encompass the largest area and greatest population of the three action alternatives.





ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT STATEMENT

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



Noise and Land Use (continued)

Acreage and Population within the 65+ dBA DNL Noise Zones

	Alternative 1	Alternative 2	Alternatives 3	Current/ No Action
On-Installation				
Acreage	3,546	3,706	3,685	3,186
Population	816	1,888	1,661	413
Off-Installation				
Acreage	5,763	6,762	6,623	4,292
Population	429	588	571	276





ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT STATEMENT

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



Noise – No Action vs. Alternative 1

No Action
Noise Zones

Alternative 1
Noise Zones





ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT STATEMENT

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



Noise – No Action vs. Alternative 2

No Action
Noise Zones

Alternative 2
Noise Zones





ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT STATEMENT

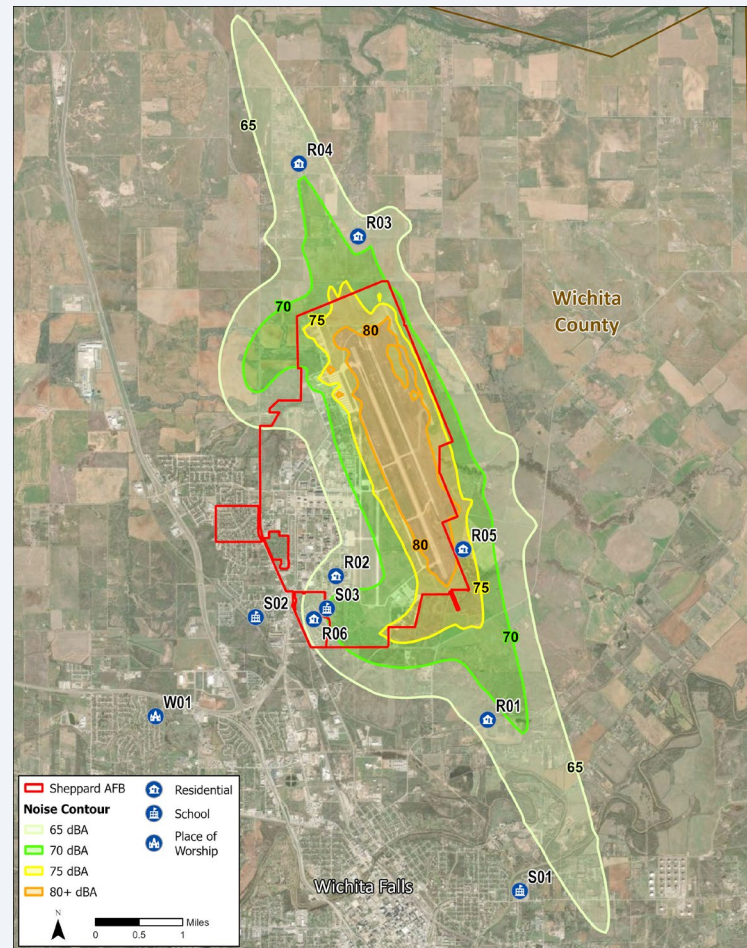
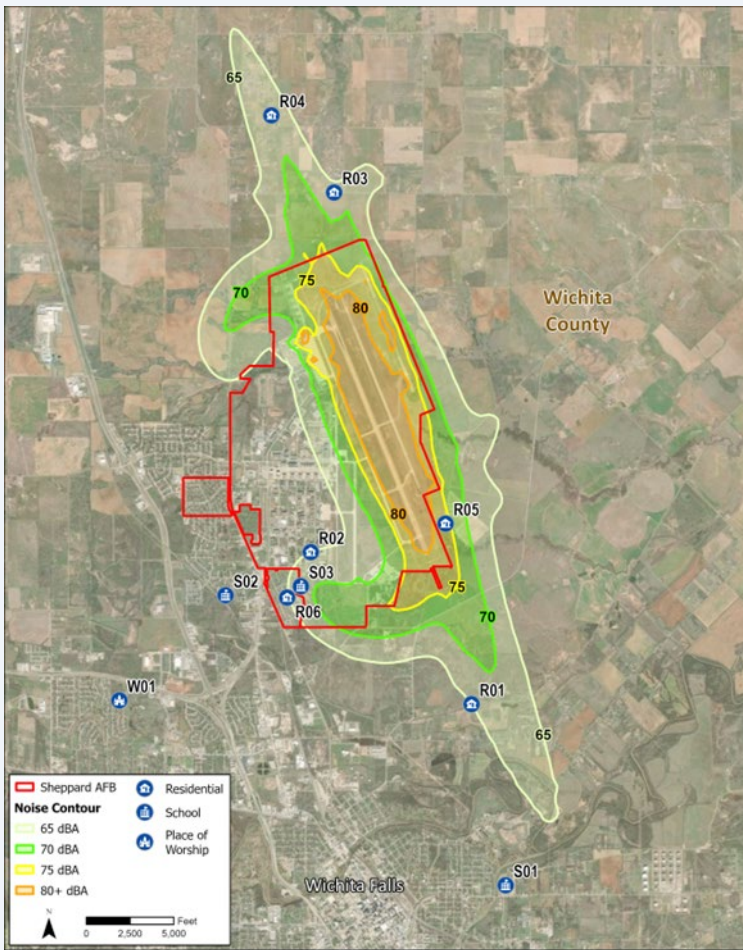
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Noise – No Action vs. Alternative 3

No Action
Noise Zones

Alternative 3
Noise Zones





ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT STATEMENT

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



Noise and Land Use Compatibility

- Residential land uses are incompatible in noise zones of 65 dBA DNL or greater.
- All three action alternatives would expand the 65 dBA DNL noise zones, potentially exposing additional acreage and population to incompatibility.
- Expansion would not be a significant impact because most newly exposed areas are open, recreation, agriculture, or low-density residential use.
- The Air Force would consider the following mitigation measures:
 - ❖ Prepare an Air Installations Compatible Use Zones (AICUZ) Study update to address any increases of land area within the greater than 65 dBA DNL noise zone.
 - ❖ Continue to coordinate with local governments to analyze compatible use inside and outside of the 65 dBA DNL noise zone.
 - ❖ Encourage municipalities to promote the most compatible land use by updating local zoning ordinances and building construction standards, especially for high-noise areas.





ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT STATEMENT

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



Noise and Land Use – Conclusions

- Draft EIS contains more detailed analysis.
- Includes analysis of the following for each alternative:
 - ❖ Speech interference
 - ❖ Classroom learning interference
 - ❖ Sleep disturbance
 - ❖ Hearing loss
 - ❖ Damage to structures.
- Addresses noise levels in special use airspace, including at Falcon Range on Fort Sill.
- **Bottomline:** No significant impacts on the noise environment or land use compatibility are anticipated from all three alternatives.





ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT STATEMENT

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



Biological Resources

- Biological resources evaluates impacts on vegetation, wildlife, and special status species.
 - ❖ Alternatives 1, 2, and 3 would have short-term, not significant impacts on vegetation from removal for construction. Majority of construction would occur in highly urban areas with minimal existing vegetation.
 - ❖ Wildlife impacts from construction would not be significant.
 - ❖ Long-term, not significant impacts on wildlife from aircraft strikes could occur from T-7A operations. The Bird/Wildlife Aircraft Strike Hazard (BASH) Plan would be updated and implemented to minimize potential strikes.
 - ❖ Alternatives 1, 2, and 3 would have “no effect” on special status species with potential for occurrence on Sheppard AFB or flight in the SUA. The Air Force consulted with USFWS under Section 7 of the Endangered Species Act.





ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT STATEMENT

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



Cultural Resources

- Of the buildings proposed for modification, none are eligible for the National Register of Historic Places.
- No Native American cemeteries, burials, or sacred sites have been identified during past surveys at Sheppard AFB.
- Some projects would involve ground disturbance.
 - ❖ These projects are not anticipated to impact archaeological resources.
- The Air Force consulted with the Texas SHPO and Native American tribes under Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act.
 - ❖ The SHPO concurred with a finding of no effect on historic properties.
 - ❖ The Native American tribes did not identify any resources of tribal interest and do not require further consultation unless inadvertent discovery occurs.





ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT STATEMENT

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



Other Resources

- Other resource subjects that were analyzed in detail in the EIS:
 - ❖ Hazardous Materials and Wastes
 - ❖ Safety
 - ❖ Water Resources.
- Each resource subject was found to have no significant impacts.
- Most construction projects would occur within a floodplain.
 - ❖ “Mitigation by design” would be used to minimize floodplain impacts and flood damage.
- Further details are found in the Draft EIS.





ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT STATEMENT

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



The EIS Timeline

We are currently at the Draft EIS comment stage.

- Publication of the Notice of Availability (NOA) for the Draft EIS in the *Federal Register* occurred on December 19, 2025.
- Notification letters emailed to interested federal, state, and local parties.
- Draft EIS made available on project website and at Wichita Falls Public Library.
- The comment period is 45 days. Please submit comments by February 2, 2026.





ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT STATEMENT

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



The EIS Timeline (continued)

- After the public comment period ends, the Air Force will:
 - ❖ Review all comments received and consider them in preparing the Final EIS.
 - ❖ Respond to substantive comments in the Final EIS.

Substantive comments offer information regarding the alternatives or are pertinent to the assessment of impacts or NEPA process.

- The Final EIS is scheduled to be completed in 2026.





ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT STATEMENT

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



Providing Comments

- **Mail:** Ms. Chinling Chen, AFCEC/CIE
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Headquarters Air Education and Training Command Public Affairs
100 H Street East, Suite 4
Randolph AFB, TX 78150
- **Email:** chinling.chen@us.af.mil
- **Online on the Project Website:** <https://sheppard.T-7anepadocuments.com>
- **Comment Form:** Available for printing on project website.



To ensure timely consideration of your comments in the Final EIS, please submit comments by February 2, 2026.





ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT STATEMENT

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



THANK YOU

for participating in this public comment process!

