



NOTICE OF INTENT AND NOTICE OF PUBLIC SCOPING UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE AIR FORCE



YOU ARE INVITED TO PARTICIPATE IN PUBLIC SCOPING!

Environmental Impact Statement addressing T-7A Recapitalization at Sheppard Air Force Base, Texas

The U.S. Department of the Air Force (DAF) is conducting public scoping for its proposal to recapitalize the T-38C Talon flight training program at Sheppard Air Force Base (AFB) with T-7A Red Hawk aircraft. This proposal is the Proposed Action and supports the Secretary of the Air Force's strategic basing decisions to recapitalize existing T-38C pilot training installations. Sheppard AFB would be the fifth installation to be analyzed for possible recapitalization. The purpose of this proposal is to complete the T-7A recapitalization program by recapitalizing Sheppard AFB to prepare pilots to operate more technologically advanced modern aircraft. Recapitalization is needed because the current training practices with the older T-38C aircraft do not adequately prepare pilots for the technological advancements of fourth and fifth generation aircraft.

Recapitalization entails introduction of T-7A aircraft and flight operations at Sheppard AFB and associated airspace to replace all T-38C aircraft assigned to the installation; nighttime (between 10 p.m. and 7 a.m.) flight operations; temporary changes to the number of personnel and dependents in the Sheppard AFB region; and construction and upgrade of operations, support, and maintenance facilities. DAF is considering three alternative approaches to implement the Proposed Action as well as the No Action Alternative. For Alternative 1, Sheppard AFB would receive 108 T-7A aircraft and perform sufficient operations for sustaining pilot training while simultaneously phasing out the T-38C aircraft and phasing in the T-7A aircraft. Alternative 2 also would result in 108 T-7A aircraft being delivered to Sheppard AFB; however, T-7A operations would be performed at an operational level approximately 25 percent greater than Alternative 1 to cover a potential scenario in which DAF requires a surge or increase in pilot training operations above current plan. For Alternative 3, Sheppard AFB would receive 131 T-7A aircraft. 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 Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) provides analysis to evaluate future capacity needs. The No Action Alternative would not implement T-7A recapitalization at Sheppard AFB.

ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT STATEMENT. Pursuant to the National Environmental Policy Act, DAF is preparing an EIS, which will assess the potential environmental consequences of the Proposed Action and its alternatives for T-7A recapitalization at Sheppard AFB. 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. 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 including the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, the Texas Historical Commission, 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. This Notice of Intent also initiates public review of the proposed action and alternatives, which have the potential to be located in a floodplain. 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.

PUBLIC SCOPING MEETING. DAF encourages interested local, state, and federal elected officials and agencies, as well as interested members of the public and others, to participate in public scoping for the proposal and assist DAF in identifying issues to evaluate in the EIS. Two in-person public scoping meetings will be held. DAF will hold public scoping meetings on July 30, and July 31, 2024 to provide the public with the opportunity to learn more about this proposal. Both meetings will be held in Cannedy Hall of the Wichita Falls Museum of Art at Midwestern State University (MSU) located on Eureka Circle on the MSU campus in Wichita Falls, Texas. Information provided at the meetings will be available on the project website (<https://sheppard.t-7anepadocuments.com>). The public scoping meeting will open at 4:00 and end at 7:00 p.m. Central Time. Attendees will have the opportunity to provide written comments at these meetings.

The project website provides posters, an informational brochure, other meeting materials, and a capability for the public to provide public scoping comments. Scoping materials are also available in print at the Wichita Falls Public Library (600 11th Street, Wichita Falls, Texas). Requests for printed scoping materials may be made to Ms. Chinling Chen at the addresses below. For printed material requests, the standard U.S. Postal Service shipping timeline will apply.

PUBLIC COMMENT. DAF welcomes comments, suggestions, and relevant information on the proposal. Please submit comments by visiting <https://sheppard.t-7anepadocuments.com/>, emailing chinling.chen@us.af.mil, or sending via postal mail to Ms. Chinling Chen, AFCEC/CIE; Attn: Sheppard AFB T-7A Recapitalization EIS (Project #00099); Headquarters AETC Public Affairs; 100 H. East Street, Suite 4; Randolph AFB, TX 78150.

To ensure DAF has sufficient time to consider public input in the Draft EIS, please submit comments no later than August 12, 2024.

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