Finding of No Significant Impact

Robert LaFleur Municipal Airport, Waterville, Maine
Easement Acquisition and Obstruction Clearing Project

1.0 Background

The City of Waterville, in cooperation with the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA), is proposing to acquire property rights and clear tree obstructions that penetrate the Federal Aviation Regulations (FAR) Part 77 approach and transitional surfaces at the Waterville Municipal Airport (Airport). Based upon a preliminary assessment of potential impacts the FAA has determined that an Environmental Assessment (EA) was needed to satisfy the requirements of National Environmental Policy Act. Based on the results of the assessment (see attached EA), the FAA has determined that the Project would not cause significant environmental impacts.

2.0 Purpose and Need for the Project

The purpose of the Easement Acquisition and Obstruction Clearing Project (Project) is to acquire necessary property rights and clear trees obstructing the airspace surrounding Waterville Municipal Airport. The Airport is scheduled to reconstruct Runway 14-32 in the summer of 2012. As part of the design effort, a preliminary airspace obstruction analysis was performed to identify trees that pose current, and possible future, obstructions to the runway approach airspace. Pursuant to the requirements of FAR Part 77 (Objects Affecting Navigable Airspace) standards, and direction from FAA and the State of Maine, the Airport has procured easements on all private properties and been granted permission on state and city land to proceed in removing trees determined to currently be within the approach airspace. These obstructions pose a significant safety threat for aircraft approaching the Runway 14-32 surface and must be removed prior to the reopening of Runway 14-32 upon completion of the reconstruction Project. In addition, accepting FAA Airport Improvement Program funds for the Airport, the City of Waterville has assured the FAA that the airspace required to protect airport operations of Runway 14-32 would be adequately cleared and maintained prior to runway reopening.

3.0 Proposed Action

The proposed action (i.e., Project) involves the removal or topping of approximately 52 trees that have been determined to be current airspace penetrations within the approach zone above six parcels that collectively cover 77.60 acres. Parcels include three privately-owned properties (A1, A2, and A3) and three city-owned properties (B1, B2, and B3). The project involves negotiating easements with private property owners and will be arranged by the City of Waterville. Below is a further breakdown of the estimated current tree removal likely to be needed on each parcel to maintain airport safety:

- Parcel A1 = 4 trees within a 24.67 acre parcel located west/northwest of a subdivision.
- Parcel A2 = 1 tree in the front yard of a 0.33 acre single-family residence.
- Parcel A3 = 20 trees within a 22.47 acre parcel abutting the northwest side of Interstate 95.
Parcel B1 = 20 trees within a 21.36 acre parcel within Interstate 95 right-of-way.
Parcel B2 = 3 trees within a 1.43 acre parcel at the end of runway 14.
Parcel B3 = 4 trees within a 7.34 acre parcel at the end of runway 32.

Tree cutting and removal will be performed in a manner that causes the least amount of environmental disturbance. Within the six parcels that collectively cover 77.60 acres, approximately 52 trees will be removed or topped collectively within an approximately 1.3 acre area. All trees requiring cutting will be marked, stumps or the lower portions of the trees will be left in place, no soil disturbance, grading or grubbing will take place, and no fill material or use of temporary mats (or similar measures) will occur in wetland areas. Hand crews will use chain saws to remove or top trees and will travel on foot within the areas identified for tree removal.

4.0 Alternatives Analysis

No-Action Alternative
Trees currently within the airport airspace pose a safety threat to incoming and outgoing aircraft on Runway 14-32 and must be removed before the runway can be re-opened. Although the no-action alternative would result in no environmental impacts, failure to remove the trees that pose airspace obstructions would prevent the re-opening of Runway 14-32, and would result in a reduction in safety during cross-wind conditions and loss of potential revenue for the City.

Proposed Action
Removal of the trees that pose airspace obstructions would likely cause some very minor environmental impacts, but is necessary for the re-opening of Runway 14-32 to comply with airport safety requirements. Due to the airport configuration, the only alternative to the proposed action is the “No-Action” alternative.

5.0 Impact Assessment

The attached EA, dated May 7, 2012, presents the baseline environmental conditions of the Project area and addresses the effect of the proposed project on the human and natural environment and is made part of this finding. The following provides a brief highlight of the impacts anticipated. A more thorough analysis is presented in the EA.

Approximately 52 trees will be cut from an approximately 1.3 acre area, which will include an estimated four trees in parcel A1, one tree in parcel A2, 20 trees in parcel A3, 20 trees in parcel B1, three trees in parcel B2, and four trees in parcel B3. Hand crews will be used to cut trees during normal daylight work hours, and tree removal will take place using mid-sized equipment and in manner that minimizes ground disturbance. There will be no grubbing or filling and environmental resources and structures will be avoided to the extent possible.

Land Uses/Department of Transportation Act: Section 4(f)
One parcel is located within property that is zoned as a City of Waterville resource protection area. Tree removal will involve only four trees within a densely forested area. Removal would not impair or alter the existing land use of the area and is in line with the intent of the ordinance.
to retain open space character within the zone; particularly since the resource zone also includes a golf course directly adjacent to the parcel.

**Fish, Wildlife and Plants**

Tree clearing activities would result in openings in the forest canopy and a reduction in forest height-size class within the removal area. Understory vegetation in these areas would also experience some short-term disturbance during tree removal, and may experience changes in species composition and density as a result of the new openings in the forest canopy. However, given that the 52 trees proposed for removal would be spread out over six parcels covering 1.3 acres, the impacts are expected to be minimal and similar to natural events (e.g., wind throw, disease/decay, lightning strikes, etc) that would occur in a mature forest over time.

Wildlife species within removal areas would experience short term disturbance from the activity and noise associated with construction, and slow-moving, immobile and denning or nesting wildlife could experience direct mortality. Any species dependent upon the specific trees removed could also be negatively impacted. To minimize impacts, the fewest amount of trees necessary to ensure airport safety would be removed and removal will be performed using light equipment and hand crews to minimize site disturbance. Further, tree removal will take place within or near large parcels of forest and wildlife would have alternate tree sites available.

Based on a review of background materials and consultation with natural resource agencies the project does not pose a threat to any state or federally-listed, proposed, or candidate species, protected significant wildlife habitats, or rare or exemplary natural communities. None of the agencies contacted require any further consultation regarding the Project.

**Wetlands and Waterbodies**

No tree removal activities are proposed within 25 feet of streams or waterbodies, and only one wetland complex will experience any impacts from the Project. Within the 24.67 acre parcel, four trees are proposed for removal, impacting less than 0.02 acres of forested wetland canopy habitat. Tree stumps would be left in place and no wetland soil would be impacted. Based on consultation with state and federal agencies, tree removal activities are minimal and would require only the filing an application with the Maine Department of Transportation for a minor revision to the airports existing Site Location of Development Permit and Natural Resources Protection Act permit.

### 6.0 Finding of No Significant Impact

After careful and thorough consideration of the facts contained herein, the undersigned finds that the proposed Federal action is consistent with existing national environmental policies and objectives as set forth in section 101 of the NEPA and other applicable environmental requirements and will not significantly affect the quality of the human environment or otherwise include any condition requiring consultation pursuant to section 102(2)(C) of NEPA. As a result the FAA will not prepare and Environmental Impact Statement for this Project.

APPROVED: [Signature] DATE: May 22, 2012

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