

6.0 OTHER CONSIDERATIONS REQUIRED BY NEPA

This section addresses irreversible and irretrievable commitments of resources, unavoidable impacts from implementing the Proposed Action, and short-term uses versus long-term productivity based on the technical analyses presented in **Section 4.0, *Environmental Consequences***.

6.1 IRREVERSIBLE OR IRRETRIEVABLE COMMITMENTS OF RESOURCES

NEPA requires that environmental analyses include identification of any irreversible and irretrievable commitments of resources that would be involved if the Proposed Action is implemented. Irreversible and irretrievable resource commitments are related to the use of nonrenewable resources and the effects that the uses of these resources have on future generations. Irreversible effects primarily result from the use or destruction of a specific resource (e.g., energy and fossil fuel) that cannot be replaced within a reasonable timeframe. Irretrievable resource commitments involve the loss in value of an affected resource that cannot be restored as a result of the action (e.g., extinction of a threatened or endangered species or the disturbance of a cultural site).

The Proposed Action would be limited to the reconfiguration of existing airspace and establishment of new airspace for current and anticipated future F-16 pilot training; no ground disturbing activities would occur. Training operations would involve consumption of nonrenewable resources, such as jet fuel and material used in defensive countermeasures; however, none of these uses would be expected to significantly decrease the availability of minerals or petroleum resources. With no ground disturbing activities, no irreversible or irretrievable effects are expected for natural, land, or cultural resources.

6.2 UNAVOIDABLE ADVERSE IMPACTS

NEPA requires a description of any significant impacts resulting from implementation of a proposed action, including those that can be mitigated to a less than significant level. Avoidance, minimization, or mitigation of adverse effects to natural, cultural, and other environmental resources are implemented to the greatest extent possible and practicable; however, all impacts may not be completely avoided and/or mitigated. Based on the analysis presented in **Section 4.0, *Environmental Consequences***, implementing the Proposed Action or alternatives would result in the following unavoidable environmental impacts:

- An aircraft mishap could introduce hazardous materials into the environment; mishap impacts would be mitigated by SOPs that identify potential hazardous materials, protect responding personnel and the environment, and provide guidelines for the ultimate cleanup and disposal of the crash residues.
- Wildfires from flare usage could impact wildlife and their habitat. The risk of wildfires from flare usage would be mitigated by operational constraints, including the prohibition of flares during periods of “Very High” or “Extreme” National Fire Danger Ratings. During periods of “High” fire danger, aircraft would not use flares below 18,000 feet MSL.

Chapter 7 describes the best management practices and mitigation measures under consideration for this Proposed Action.

6.3 RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN SHORT-TERM USE OF MAN'S ENVIRONMENT AND MAINTENANCE AND ENHANCEMENT OF LONG-TERM PRODUCTIVITY

NEPA requires an analysis of the relationship between a project's short-term impacts on the environment and the effects that these impacts may have on the maintenance and enhancement of the long-term productivity of the affected environment. Impacts that narrow the range of beneficial uses of the environment are of particular concern. Choosing one option may reduce future flexibility in pursuing other options or committing a resource to a certain use may eliminate the possibility for other uses of that resource.

The Proposed Action would be limited to the reconfiguration of existing airspace and establishment of new airspace for current and anticipated future F-16 pilot training; no ground disturbing activities would occur. As such, there would be no short-term construction-related impacts or changes to land use as a result of implementing the Proposed Action. The Proposed Action would irreversibly dedicate energy resources (i.e., fuel for planes) for an extended period of time. These resources would not be available for other uses; however, these impacts would be considered negligible, as the resources associated with the Proposed Action are designated for this particular use.

The majority of activities addressed in this EIS would be categorized as long term actions. For example, although the use of training areas for individual training activities may be of short duration, the affected and proposed airspaces would continue to receive repeated use for the foreseeable future. Wildlife and special-status species inhabiting areas beneath the airspace may be temporarily disturbed by the new aircraft activity; however, noise levels would not be anticipated to exceed 57 DNL. The greatest change in DNL would occur at Loco Hills, New Mexico, where the estimated DNL from aircraft operations would be 56 DNL. While this represents a large change in DNL value from the baseline conditions, it would be near to the 55 DNL threshold set by USEPA for which adverse noise effects would not be expected to occur. Implementation of the Proposed Action is not expected to result in the types of impacts that would reduce environmental productivity, affect biodiversity, or permanently narrow the range of beneficial uses of the environment.

Land use below the affected airspace would experience projected DNL levels well below the 65 DNL threshold for land use restrictions. Additionally, with no ground disturbing activities proposed, cultural resources underlying the airspace would not be affected.