

**HEADQUARTERS, JOINT READINESS TRAINING CENTER (JRTC) AND FORT POLK  
FORT POLK, LOUISIANA**

**FINDING OF NO SIGNIFICANT IMPACT (FNSI)**

**EXPANSION AND OPERATION OF GERONIMO DROP ZONE  
IN SUPPORT OF THE DUAL ROW AIRDROP SYSTEM OPERATIONS  
AT JRTC AND FORT POLK, LOUISIANA**

1. The findings and conclusions reached in this document are based on a thorough review of the impacts and analysis considered and disclosed in the Environmental Assessment (EA) attached to this document. The EA, including its data analysis and conclusions, are incorporated in this Final FNSI by reference.
2. **PROPOSED ACTION:** The JRTC and Fort Polk are proposing to expand Geronimo Drop Zone (GDZ) to support Dual Row Airdrop System (DRAS) missions. The Proposed Action would expand GDZ 526 yards divided equally between the north and south ends of the GDZ. The purpose of the Proposed Action is to expand GDZ to support DRAS missions. The current footprint of GDZ does not support the requirements for a DRAS mission. Therefore, limiting training opportunities and not supporting the mission of JRTC and Fort Polk. Expansion of GDZ would allow military units to train on a broader range of air delivery techniques.

The need for the Proposed Action is to allow JRTC and Fort Polk the capability to ensure safe, efficient, and DRAS mission-ready capabilities for home station and rotational aircraft or future units that could be stationed at JRTC and Fort Polk. The current available length of GDZ does not meet the C-17 length requirements in Air Force Instruction 13-217 (AFI-13-217).

3. **ALTERNATIVES CONSIDERED:** To address the purpose and need, the JRTC and Fort Polk considered and analyzed two alternatives in the EA. Four alternatives met the purpose and need of the Proposed Action. However, only Alternative 1 (Proposed Action) and Alternative 2 (No Action Alternative), which is required to be analyzed, were carried forward for analysis in the EA.

**Alternative 1 (Proposed Action):** This alternative considers the 526-yard expansion of GDZ. The expansion of GDZ would occur on the north and south ends of the existing drop zone. Implementation of this action would fully meet the purpose and need for the Proposed Action.

**Alternative 2:** Alternative 2 is the No Action Alternative. Consideration of the No Action Alternative is mandated in the Council on Environmental Quality (CEQ) 40 Code of Federal Regulations (CFR) Parts 1500-1508 and Environmental Analysis of Army Actions 32 CFR Part 651.34. The No Action Alternative serves as a baseline or reference point against which the potential effects of the Proposed Action are evaluated.

Three other alternatives, in addition to the Proposed Action and No Action Alternatives, were considered but eliminated from further consideration. These alternatives and the reason for elimination from detailed analysis are provided below:

**Southern Expansion Alternative**

Under this alternative, the proposed expansion would occur only on the south end of the existing GDZ. The drop zone would be expanded 526 yards by 3,500 feet to the south. This alternative meets the purpose and need for the project. However, the alternative would result in additional adverse impacts on wetlands and red-cockaded woodpecker (RCW, *Picoides borealis*) foraging habitat, RCW Habitat Management Units (HMUs), and Louisiana Pinesnake (LPS, *Pituophis ruthveni*) HMUs and was thus removed from further consideration.

**Northern Expansion Alternative**

Under this alternative, the proposed expansion would occur only on the north end of the existing GDZ. The drop zone would be expanded 526 yards by 3,500 feet to the north. This alternative meets the purpose and need for the project. However, the alternative would result in additional adverse impacts on streams, RCW foraging habitat, RCW HMUs, and LPS HMUs and was thus removed from further consideration.

**Stump Grinding Alternative**


This alternative is the same as the Proposed Action except all stumps in the project area (84 acres) would be ground to ground level. This alternative meets the purpose of and need for the project. However, the costs and time associated with this alternative would be prohibitive in nature. Therefore, this alternative has been removed from further consideration.

4. **ENVIRONMENTAL CONSEQUENCES:** Potential impacts to soils, water resources, and biological resources were considered and analyzed for Alternative 1 (Proposed Action) and Alternative 2 (No Action Alternative). Based upon the analysis of baseline conditions; proposed activities; potential environmental effects; continued environmental stewardship; and monitoring measures and programs, no direct, indirect or cumulative significant impacts on the environment would be expected to occur under the implementation of Alternative 1 (Proposed Action) or Alternative 2 (No Action Alternative).
  
5. **PUBLIC COMMENT:** The EA and Draft FNSI were made available for public review from 8 February through 11 March 2019. No public comments were received; however, one comment was received from the United States Fish and Wildlife Service and has been addressed in the EA. Additional information regarding this decision may be obtained by contacting JRTC and Fort Polk Public Affairs Office listed below.

Fort Polk Public Affairs Office  
7033 Radio Road, Building 4919  
Fort Polk, Louisiana 71459-5342  
(337) 531-7203

6. **CONCLUSIONS:** I have carefully reviewed the attached EA and the potential environmental consequences of each of the Alternative actions. Based on this review, I have determined that the Proposed Action will have no significant impacts on the environment.

7. **DECISION:** In light of the preceding conclusions, I have decided to implement Alternative 1 (Proposed Action) as described in this EA. This will allow for the expansion and operation of GDZ to safely support a DRAS mission as described in the EA and the continued implementation of the environmental stewardship monitoring measures and programs. Any protective or mitigation measures for the Louisiana pine snake that are determined during the informal consultation with the United States Fish and Wildlife Service in accordance with Section 7 of the ESA will be incorporated into the project design prior to the start of construction.



**PATRICK D. FRANK**  
**BRIGADIER GENERAL**

Commanding

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

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