

Final Finding of No Significant Impact:

BRAC Construction and Operation of Armed Forces Reserve Center at Malmstrom Air Force Base, Great Falls, Montana

The U.S. Army Reserve (USAR) prepared an Environmental Assessment (EA) that evaluated the potential environmental and socioeconomic impacts associated with construction of an Armed Forces Reserve Center (AFRC) and associated facilities on Malmstrom Air Force Base (AFB) in Great Falls, Montana. These facilities would be constructed to accommodate up to 100 reservists and associated operational vehicles and equipment transferred from the Galt Hall USAR Center, also located in Great Falls, Montana. These actions reflect the recommendations of the Defense Base Closure and Realignment (BRAC) Commission required by the National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2002 (Public Law 107-107).

Three sites on Malmstrom AFB were evaluated in the EA, in addition to the no action alternative. No other sites that may be viable and that meet the project purpose and need and the BRAC Commission recommendations were identified. The attached EA was prepared pursuant to 32 Code of Federal Regulations Part 651 and U.S. Council on Environmental Quality regulations (Title 40, U.S. Code, Parts 1500-1508) for implementing the procedural requirements of the National Environmental Policy Act.

Description of the Proposed Action and Alternatives

Construct an Addition to the Existing Montana ARNG Facility (Preferred Alternative)

The preferred alternative is to construct a 19,964-square-foot (ft²) AFRC, a 2,851-ft² Organizational Maintenance Shop (OMS), a 366-ft² unheated storage facility, and 750 square yards (yd²) of parking for organizational vehicles and equipment to support up to 100 USAR soldiers being relocated to Malmstrom AFB.

The proposed AFRC and associated facilities would be constructed on the existing Montana Army National Guard (ARNG) facility complex. The western fence line would be extended approximately 160 feet to accommodate the site layout and necessary Anti-Terrorism/Force Protection (AT/FP) setback requirements. The ARNG complex is located on Malmstrom AFB property and is accessible through a dedicated gate that is separate from the Malmstrom AFB security gate, allowing access without passing through Malmstrom AFB security. The ARNG entrance is approximately 0.5 mile south of the Malmstrom AFB Main Gate. Three permanent buildings are located on the 9.5-acre ARNG property.

Approximately 100 ARNG soldiers currently report one weekend per month to the ARNG facility. Eight staff are stationed at the ARNG facility year-round. Up to 100 USAR soldiers would be assigned to the new AFRC on Malmstrom AFB, along with equipment and light-wheeled training vehicles. Reservists would report to the site one weekend per month for training, not to coincide with the ARNG training weekend. Five staff would be stationed at the new AFRC on a year-round basis at the new facility.

The preferred alternative assumes that certain components of the ARNG facility would be used by both the ARNG and the USAR, including the assembly area, the simulation training room, and the parking area. The addition/alteration plan would include an extra 23,181 ft² of facility space to augment the space in the existing structures and to meet the space requirement of the USAR. Additional parking and a military equipment parking area would augment the existing paved area on the ARNG facility within an extended fence line. The existing parking and driveways would be moved to accommodate the new site layout and AT/FP setback requirements.

Alternative 1 – New Construction Adjacent to Former Rapid Engineer Deployable Heavy Operational Repair Squadron Engineer Area

The USAR proposes to construct an approximate 25,000-ft² AFRC, a 3,115-ft² OMS, a 458-ft² unheated storage facility, and 750 yd² of parking for organizational vehicles and equipment to support up to 100 USAR soldiers being relocated to Malmstrom AFB. Under this alternative, new construction would occur; no buildings are currently located on the approximately 10-acre site. Alternate Site 1 is located adjacent to the former Rapid Engineer Deployable Heavy Operational Repair Squadron Engineer (RED HORSE) area and is in the east-central portion of the Malmstrom AFB airfield. Troops, vehicles, training, and operation of the facility would be similar to those identified for the preferred alternative.

Alternative 2 – New Construction at Grazing Site

The proposed construction and operation would be similar to that discussed for Alternative 1 but in a different location. Alternate Site 2, the Grazing Site, encompasses approximately 9.5 acres and is used for horse grazing. No buildings exist on this site. Alternate Site 2 is located in the southeastern quadrant of the installation. Troops, vehicles, training, and operation of the facility would be similar to those identified for the preferred alternative; however, reservists accessing the site would be required to travel along 0.4 mile of unpaved roadway.

No Action Alternative

Under the no action alternative, the USAR would not construct a new AFRC or associated facilities on Malmstrom AFB. Implementation of the no action alternative would result in units continuing to occupy aging, over-utilized buildings at Galt Hall that are not properly configured to allow the most effective training to complete mission requirements. This would continue to have a negative impact on training and retention of reservists. The no action alternative would conflict with the Commission recommendations.

Environmental Consequences

Consequences of the Preferred Alternative

The preferred alternative would require alteration of the existing ARNG facility. There would be minor short-term construction-related impacts on geology and soils, air quality, and water resources (stormwater management). There would be a temporary (short-term) moderate construction noise-related impact on nearby residents and recreational users at the Gateway FamCamp. Appropriate project Best Management Practices (BMPs) and design

measures would be used to reduce these effects. Specific BMPs for stormwater management facility design would include stormwater controls sufficient to ensure no net increase in peak flow rates and total volume of runoff from the project site for all storm events up to and including the 10-year/2-hour and the 10-year/24-hour storm events.

Further, there would be a negligible long-term impact related to hazardous materials, health, and safety, from the use of petroleum products and solvents for proposed AFRC operations. Compliance with installation Hazardous Materials Management Plans and Occupational Safety and Health Administration and installation health and safety requirements would mitigate potential impacts. Other negligible effects would apply to operational air quality emissions. Discontinuing the use of outdated facilities and equipment, however, would offer a negligible benefit to air quality.

There would be minor, permanent (long-term) impacts on biological resources (common flora and fauna), land use of the camping area immediately west of the ARNG fence line that would be converted to industrial use, the visual setting of the area, noise levels during training weekends, utilities and services, and traffic flow one weekend per month. Furthermore, due to the increase in impermeable surface under the preferred alternative, there would be a long-term effect on stormwater management, as it has the potential to flow toward the Whitmore Ravine; however, with the implementation of appropriate BMPs, this impact would be minor.

There could be a short-term beneficial effect on employment and the economy during the construction phase of the project. This short-term employment benefit would likely extend to minority and low-income households, as well.

There would be no impact on wetlands, agriculture, grazing, cultural resources, housing supply, or children. The site is not within a floodplain or coastal zone and would not affect prime farmlands. There would be no impact on any other resources evaluated in this EA.

Table 1 summarizes project design features that would be implemented during project construction to further reduce environmental impacts.

TABLE 1
 Project Design Features to be Implemented with the Proposed Action to Reduce Environmental Impacts
BRAC Construction and Operation of Armed Forces Reserve Center, Malmstrom AFB, Montana

Resource Area	Proposed Design Features
Air Quality	Use of sprinkling/irrigation, vegetative cover, and mulching as dust abatement measures during construction.
Noise	Timing of construction activities to occur during normal daytime hours when nearby residents would be active and/or away from homes. Signage placed in the adjacent Gateway FamCamp to warn recreational users of nearby construction zone.
Soils	Use of silt fencing, fiber rolls, and sediment traps, and revegetation of disturbed areas as soon as possible to minimize impacts to soils.

TABLE 1

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Resource Area	Proposed Design Features
Stormwater	Use of construction and post-construction BMPs/controls to prevent offsite or downstream impacts from stormwater. Facility design would include stormwater controls sufficient to ensure no net increase in peak flow rates and total volume of runoff from the project site for all storm events up to and including the 10-year/2-hour and the 10-year/24-hour storm events.
Surface Water	Use of construction and post-construction BMPs/controls to minimize potential for secondary impacts from erosion and sedimentation resulting from stormwater runoff.

Consequences of Alternative 1

Implementation of Alternative 1 would have the same impacts as those identified for the preferred alternative, with the following exceptions: Similar to the preferred alternative, the potential noise-related impact from Alternative 1 would be moderate and short-term during daytime construction, and minor and long-term during training weekends. However, the impact would be slightly less than that identified for the preferred alternative because the closest potentially sensitive receptor is Pow Wow Park, approximately 600 feet northeast of Alternate Site 1, whereas the preferred alternative has the potential to affect the nearby Gateway FamCamp, recreational users, residents, and schools. Also similar to the preferred alternative, the impact on land use would be minor and long-term; however, the impact would be slightly higher under Alternative 1 because existing open space would be developed. The impact on transportation would be slightly less under Alternative 1: negligible and long-term as traffic would blend with onbase traffic flows.

All other impacts would be the same as those identified for the preferred alternative.

Consequences of Alternative 2

Implementation of Alternative 2 would have the same impacts as identified for Alternative 1, with the following exceptions: Alternative 2 would have a minor long-term impact on agricultural resources. Alternative 2 would result in an approximately 2 percent reduction in grazing land on Malmstrom AFB. Alternative 2 would also require visiting reservists to travel along 0.4 mile of unpaved road before reaching the site, which could result in an increased need for road repair and a long-term source of additional fugitive dust.

Similar to the preferred alternative, the potential noise-related impact from Alternative 2 would be moderate and short-term during construction, and minor and long-term during training weekends. However, the impact would be slightly less than that identified for the preferred alternative because the closest potentially sensitive receptor is a stables and riding arena located approximately 300 feet west of Alternate Site 2, whereas the preferred alternative has the potential to affect the nearby Gateway FamCamp, recreational users, residents, and schools. Likewise, the impact on water resources (stormwater management) would be less than identified for the preferred alternative and Alternative 1 because

stormwater from Alternate Site 2 would flow south away from Whitmore Ravine and the Missouri River. This impact would be long-term and negligible.

All other impacts would be the same as those identified for Alternative 1.

Consequences of the No Action Alternative

There would be no impact on any resources evaluated in this EA from the no action alternative.

Public Comment

Copies of this EA and Finding of No Significant Impact were made available to the public for review and comment. Copies of this EA and Finding of No Significant Impact have been distributed to Native American tribes in the area and regulatory agencies and made available to the public for review and comment. Agency coordination letters were provided to both the United States Fish and Wildlife Service and the Montana Department of Fish, Wildlife, and Parks. Both agencies responded stating no concern with the proposed action. The Montana State Historic Preservation Office also provided concurrence with a Finding of No Historic Properties Affected. These letters are included in Appendix A of the EA. No issues were identified by tribal parties consulted and no public comments were received.

Conclusion

Based upon the environmental impact analysis, it has been concluded that no significant environmental, socioeconomic, or cumulative impacts would result from the proposed action, whether implemented under the preferred alternative, Alternative 1, or Alternative 2. Therefore, it is not necessary to prepare an Environmental Impact Statement to address the proposed action, and a Finding of No Significant Impact has been issued.



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16 Jul 09

Date