

DRAFT

FINDING OF NO SIGNIFICANT IMPACT (FONSI)

Name of the Proposed Action

Environmental Assessment (EA) for Geothermal Energy Development at Mountain Home Air Force Base (MHAFB), Idaho

Purpose of and Need for the Proposed Action

The purpose of the Proposed Action is to enable installation energy security and strategic flexibility in energy sources at MHAFB. Specifically, the purpose is to provide MHAFB the ability to generate 100 percent of its power through the development of a renewable energy (RE) source. An RE source would provide MHAFB the ability to be self-sufficient in maintaining resilient, reliable, uninterrupted, and adequate power to meet installation demand for mission-critical facilities and operations year-round without dependence on commercial or backup sources. The Proposed Action would act also as a pilot project for other U.S. Air Force (USAF) installations.

The Proposed Action is needed to comply with USAF and Department of Defense (DoD) energy priorities and goals to improve resiliency, optimize demand, and assure supply as prescribed by the USAF Office of Energy Assurance and 10 United States Code 2911. The Proposed Action would secure baseline power for MHAFB, outlined by the DoD Operational Energy Strategy, and support federal, DoD, and USAF requirements for sustainable and RE use at the installation level.

Description of the Proposed Action and Alternatives

Proposed Action. USAF proposes to construct and operate a geothermal power facility on MHAFB that would provide the installation with resilient and self-sufficient power year-round. The total area for construction and operation of the permanent geothermal facility and supporting infrastructure would be approximately 35 acres. The power facility would be capable of generating 100 percent power for MHAFB, up to 15 megawatts, and MHAFB would remain connected to the Idaho Power transmission lines currently servicing the installation. The Proposed Action includes the following activities:

- Facility construction, including:
 - Power plant (turbines, air-cooled condensers, substation, water quality lab, and hydraulic station)
 - Geothermal production wells and well pads
 - Injection wells and well pads
 - Aboveground pipelines
 - Support infrastructure to include reclamation and maintenance facilities, storage yard, access roads, test well pond, and utilities connections
- Facility operations

Alternative 1- Northwest. USAF would conduct all activities described under the Proposed Action in the northwest corner of the installation.

Alternative 2- Northeast. USAF would conduct all activities described under the Proposed Action in the northeast corner of the installation.

No Action Alternative. USAF National Environmental Policy Action regulations require consideration of the No Action Alternative. The No Action Alternative serves as a baseline against which the impacts of the Proposed Action and other potential action alternatives can be evaluated. Under the No Action Alternative, USAF would not develop geothermal power capabilities on MHAFB, and would continue to rely on Idaho Power for power requirement. The No Action Alternative would not meet the purpose of and need for the Proposed Action and would not provide MHAFB the ability to be self-sufficient in maintaining resilient, reliable, uninterrupted, and adequate power to meet installation demand for mission-critical facilities and operations year-round without dependence on commercial or backup sources.

Summary of Environmental Effects

The analysis of environmental effects focused on the following environmental resources: air quality, biological resources, geology and soils, hazardous materials and wastes, health and safety, infrastructure and utilities, noise, socioeconomics, transportation, and water resources. A cumulative effects assessment was also conducted. Details of the environmental effects can be found in the *Environmental Assessment for Geothermal Energy Development at Mountain Home Air Force Base, Idaho*, which is hereby incorporated by reference. The analysis in the EA for each of the environmental resource areas identified negligible to moderate adverse effects under the Proposed Action. Potential environmental effects are not expected to be significant.

Conclusion

Based on the description of the Proposed Action as set forth in the EA, all activities were found to comply with the criteria or standards of environmental quality and were coordinated with the appropriate federal, state, and local agencies. The Draft EA and this Finding of No Significant Impact (FONSI) were made available to the public for a 30-day review period. Agencies were coordinated with during the EA development process, and their comments were incorporated into the analysis of potential environmental effects performed as part of the EA.

Finding of No Significant Impact

Based on the information and analysis presented in the attached EA, which was prepared in accordance with the requirements of the National Environmental Policy Action, the Council on Environmental Quality regulations, implementing regulations set forth in 32 Code of Federal Regulations § 989 (*Environmental Impact Analysis Process*), as amended, and based on review of the public and agency comments submitted during the 30-day public comment period, I conclude that neither Alternative 1 or Alternative 2 would have significant environmental impacts, either cumulatively or with other projects at or near MHAFB, Idaho, that preparation of an Environmental Impact Statement is unnecessary, and that signing this FONSI completes the environmental impact analysis process.

SIGNATURE BLOCK

Date

Attachment: *Environmental Assessment for Geothermal Energy Development at Mountain Home Air Force Base, Idaho.*