

Notice of Intent to Prepare an Environmental Impact Statement for the U.S. Navy Transition of Seven FA-18E/F Squadrons to F-35C Squadrons, and to Announce a Public Scoping Period

Project Identification Number: EISX-007-17-USN-1756899588

SUMMARY: Pursuant to the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA), the Department of the Navy (DON) announces its intent to prepare an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) to analyze the potential environmental effects associated with transitioning seven existing FA-18E/F squadrons at one of the Navy's master jet bases (Naval Air Station [NAS] Lemoore, California or NAS Oceana, Virginia) to F-35C Lightning II Joint Strike Fighter squadrons. The DON is initiating a 30-day public scoping process to receive comments on the scope of the EIS including potential alternatives or impacts and on relevant information, studies, or analyses with respect to the Proposed Action. In accordance with Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966, the DON is also seeking comments to assist in identifying historic properties potentially affected by the project and the nature of those potential impacts.

DATES: The 30-day public scoping period begins on December 5, 2025, and ends on January 4, 2026. Comments must be postmarked or submitted electronically via the website no later than 11:59 p.m. PST on January 4, 2026, for consideration in the Draft EIS. The DON will also publish the public scoping period announcements in local newspapers and in press releases.

ADDRESSES: The DON invites all interested parties to submit scoping comments on the F-35C Transition EIS. Information regarding the project, public involvement, and how to submit comments is available at the DON project website address <https://www.nepa.navy.mil/F35C>. Comments may be received:

- Electronically via the project website by 11:59 p.m. PST, January 4, 2026
- By mail, postmarked no later than January 4, 2026 to the following address:
Naval Facilities Engineering Systems Command, Atlantic, Attn: EV21JB, F-35C EIS Project Manager, 6506 Hampton Boulevard, Building A, Norfolk, VA 23508

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: U.S. Fleet Forces Command, 1562 Mitscher Avenue, Suite 250, Norfolk, VA 23551-2487, Attn: Mr. Theodore Brown, Installations and Environment Public Affairs Officer, 757-836-4427, or visit the project website: <https://www.nepa.navy.mil/F35C>.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION: The Navy's Continental United States (CONUS)-based strike-fighter squadrons operating the FA-18E/F are located at NAS Lemoore, California and NAS Oceana, Virginia. The Navy proposes to transition seven squadrons from FA-18E/F to F-35C at one of these two locations.

NAS Lemoore is located in the central portion of California's San Joaquin Valley, in both Kings County and Fresno County, California. As the Navy's largest Master Jet Base, NAS Lemoore's mission includes supporting the Navy's west coast carrier strike fighter squadrons. Currently, NAS Lemoore is home to 40 F-35C aircraft (four squadrons of 10 aircraft each) and 140 FA-18E/F aircraft (14 total squadrons of 10 aircraft each). NAS Lemoore began transitioning FA-18 aircraft to F-35C aircraft after the preparation of the Navy F-35C West Coast Home Basing EIS (Record of Decision signed on October 1, 2014). The 2014 EIS analyzed the home basing of the first

shipment of F-35C aircraft. Seven Pacific Fleet FA-18E/F squadrons (70 total aircraft) based at NAS Lemoore were to progressively transition to the new F-35C aircraft beginning in 2015. Furthermore, the 2014 EIS addressed the establishment of an F-35C Fleet Replacement Squadron (FRS) consisting of approximately 30 F-35C aircraft to meet the requirements for training Navy Aviators.

NAS Oceana, the Navy's East Coast Master Jet Base, is located in Virginia Beach within the Hampton Roads Region of southeastern Virginia. NAS Oceana supports the Navy's East Coast carrier strike fighter squadrons and is the homebase for 160 FA-18E/F aircraft, comprising 16 squadrons of either 10 or 12 aircraft each.

The purpose of the Proposed Action is to enhance strike fighter capabilities at the Navy's master jet bases. The need for the Proposed Action is to enhance the Navy's ability to satisfy its national defense requirements under section 8062 of title 10 United States Code (U.S.C.) by replacing the aging FA-18E/F fleet with state-of-the-art F-35C strike fighters.

The DON will evaluate the potential environmental effects to, but not limited to, the following environmental resources: air quality, water resources, geological resources, cultural resources, biological resources, land use, visual resources, airspace, noise, infrastructure, transportation, public health and safety, hazardous materials and wastes, and socioeconomics.

The scoping process is helpful in identifying public concerns and local issues to consider during the development of the Draft EIS. Federal, state, and local agencies; federally recognized tribes; and interested persons are encouraged to provide substantive comments to the DON on environmental resources and areas of concern that the commenter believes the DON should consider. All comments, provided in writing during the scoping period, submitted via the DON website, or mailed, will be taken into consideration during the development of the Draft EIS.

The project website <https://www.nepa.navy.mil/F35C> provides information on the Proposed Action, the NEPA process, and project schedule. Additional opportunities for public comment will occur after the release of the Draft EIS. The DON intends to publish the Draft EIS in the fall of 2026 and publish the Final EIS and sign a Record of Decision in the fall of 2027.

Dated: December 5, 2025