

6.3 LAND USE

In this section, the impacts of the proposed replacement airport on land uses are evaluated in accordance with FAA Order 1050.1E, *Environmental Impacts: Policies and Procedures* and FAA Order 5050.4A, *Airport Environmental Handbook*. This section also is an assessment of the consistency of the proposed replacement airport with the existing and future land use in southern Washington County, Utah and northern Mohave County, Arizona.

6.3.1 POTENTIAL DIRECT AND INDIRECT IMPACTS OF THE NO-ACTION ALTERNATIVE

The No-Action Alternative (i.e., continued operation of the existing airport) would result in no adverse impacts on local land use. It would also be generally compatible with the land use plans of government agencies in the area. Continued operation of the existing airport would have minimal effects on local land uses, roadways, or development plans for undeveloped land in the area.

6.3.2 POTENTIAL DIRECT AND INDIRECT IMPACTS OF THE PROPOSED REPLACEMENT AIRPORT

6.3.2.1 On-Airport Land Use

The City of St. George intends to develop the proposed replacement airport in accordance with the Airport Layout Plan to be approved by the FAA. It would build and maintain the replacement airport to comply with all FAA standards and requirements related to on-airport land use and airport safety.

With construction of the proposed replacement airport, operations at the existing airport would be transferred to the replacement airport. As described in **Section 5.6.1**, the City of St. George plans to redevelop the existing airport site into a multi-use development with a combination of residential, commercial, and open space uses. This type of development would be compatible with surrounding land uses and compatible with the overall General Plan for the City of St. George.

6.3.2.2 Off-Airport Land Use

Land Use Regulatory Agencies

Four jurisdictions have land use regulatory authority within the vicinity of the proposed replacement airport – St. George, Washington City, Washington County, and Mohave County. All four jurisdictions are currently coordinating through an airport vicinity land use planning process, intended to produce a unified land use planning and development plan and policies for the replacement airport area. In addition, each jurisdiction also has enacted a General Plan designating future land uses in the replacement airport area which are already generally compatible with the proposed development of the replacement airport.

The City of St. George has developed land use plans for the environs of the proposed replacement airport intended to promote the development of airport-compatible land uses. Thus, development of the proposed replacement airport would be fully compatible with the St. George General Plan. The City of St. George is also actively planning for reuse of the existing airport property (see **Appendix D**, in the Final EIS). It has already developed a conceptual redevelopment plan for the purposes of establishing a maximum potential value for the existing airport property involving the development of the property for a mix of residential and commercial uses.

On March 9, 2005, Washington City approved a General Plan update that identifies a Special Study Area in the vicinity of the proposed replacement airport. The Preferred Land Use Alternative described in the Washington City General Plan shows designations of industrial and open space land uses immediately north of the proposed replacement airport site,² but the area has been designated for continued study.

While both Washington County, Utah and Mohave County, Arizona have adopted General Plans for the unincorporated areas in each county, neither designates specific future land uses in the vicinity of the proposed replacement airport. Washington County's policy for the unincorporated area near the proposed replacement airport site is to withhold the approval of any permits for urban development, encouraging property owners to seek annexation to either St. George or Washington City in order to develop their land.

Mohave County designates the area in the proposed replacement airport environs for rural development – a land use designation that would permit only very low density.

In conclusion, development of the proposed replacement airport is compatible with the General Plans of the local land use regulatory agencies.

Public Land Management Agencies

As described in **Chapter Five, Section 5.2, Public Lands**, there are several state and Federal agencies charged with the management and protection of various land areas within the vicinity of the replacement airport site. These agencies include:

- Utah School and Institutional Trust Lands Administration (SITLA)
- Utah State Parks and Recreation (Utah State Parks)
- Nevada Department of Conservation and Natural Resources (NDCNR)
- the Arizona Trust Lands
- the Bureau of Land Management (BLM)
- U.S. Forest Service (USFS)
- National Park Service (NPS)

² *Washington City General Plan*. Prepared by Winston Associates. 2005.

The compatibility of development of the proposed replacement airport and its associated land use plan with representative resource and land management plans is discussed below.

Utah School and Institutional Trust Lands Administration (SITLA): SITLA is responsible for managing state-owned lands to maximize revenue production to help fund the Utah public education system. Revenues are derived through leasing land for various uses or through selling or developing land. SITLA has been coordinating with the City of St. George in the planning for the "South Block," a master planned, multiple-use development on a 10,000-acre tract south of the city, and west of the proposed replacement airport site. The South Block development could support a population of approximately 25,000 people, providing housing, employment, transportation, educational, social, and recreational facilities for residents.³ Development of the proposed replacement airport would have no adverse impacts on the proposed SITLA development project. Indeed, the proposed replacement airport is complementary to the SITLA project in that the relatively close proximity to the airport may prove to be an important factor in promoting the viability of commercial or office development within the South Block development.

Utah State Parks and Recreation (Utah State Parks): Utah State Parks engages in planning efforts to guide short and long-term site management for each park within the park system. Planning is conducted on a regular basis to protect and interpret each park's natural and cultural resource base; ensure safe, enjoyable visitor experiences; provide for new visitor opportunities; and develop and enhance facilities to meet visitor needs. All of the planning efforts seek and include input from visitors, interested user groups, local governments, and other park stakeholders. Planning efforts are customer driven, resource based, and stakeholder directed. The Utah State Parks' comprehensive plan, *Frontiers 2000*, along with the *State Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan (SCORP)*, last updated in 2003, serves as a strategic plan for the management, planning, and development of the state's 41 developed parks and seven management areas, comprising 114,000 acres of land and more than one million surface acres of water.⁴ The Utah State Parks system consists of three park types: recreation areas, heritage areas, and scenic or natural areas. Each of these areas maintains specific characteristics that area valued for a desired recreational experience and are managed as such to maintain the integrity and quality of the resource. Development of the proposed replacement airport would have no adverse impact on the Utah State Parks resources located within the initial area of investigation.

Nevada Department of Conservation and Natural Resources (NDCNR): The NDCNR plans, develops, and maintains a system of 24 parks and recreation areas for the use and enjoyment of residents and visitors. The department is also charged with the preservation of areas of scenic, historic, and scientific significance

³ Planning for Sustainability – Grown Scenarios for St. George's 10,000-acre South Block. SITLA

⁴ *State Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan 2003, State of Utah*; Department of Natural Resources, Utah Division of Parks and Recreation. May 7, 2003

in Nevada. The NDCNR maintains three overriding objectives: 1) to continue to manage, protect, operate and maintain existing and future units of the Nevada State Park System; 2) to acquire, plan for, and develop a well-balanced system of areas of outstanding scenic, recreational, scientific, and historical importance; and 3) to continue to manage and interpret the natural, cultural, and recreational resources of the State Park System.⁵ The State of Nevada owns 58 percent (77,308 acres) of the land managed by the NDCNR as state parks, while the remainder of the land under NDCNR management is owned by various Federal agencies, such as BLM and USFS. These lands include 29,801 acres of water and approximately 102,722 acres of land. Development of the proposed replacement airport would have no adverse impact on the NDCNR resources located within the initial area of investigation.

Arizona Trust Lands: The State of Arizona Public Land Agency serves the same role in Arizona as SITLA does in Utah. The agency manages considerable public land in the general vicinity of the proposed replacement airport. As their mission is to maximize revenue production from these lands, by helping to accommodate and facilitate continued development in the St. George/Washington City area, the development of the proposed replacement airport would be generally consistent with their interests. In the vicinity of the proposed replacement airport, however, the agency lacks any public water supply. It is extremely unlikely that this problem can be resolved in the foreseeable future to facilitate substantial urban development in this area. Thus the potential impact of the replacement airport on the revenue production interests of the Arizona Trust Lands is likely to be small or negligible for the foreseeable future. At the same time, the proposed replacement airport is unlikely to cause any adverse impacts that would compromise any revenue-producing potential that these lands currently possess, such as leasing for grazing or similar non-intensive uses.

Bureau of Land Management (BLM): The BLM has two field offices that are responsible for management of Federally-owned lands in the vicinity of the proposed replacement airport. The St. George Field Office is responsible for management of BLM lands on the Utah side of the state line, and the Arizona Strip Field Office is responsible for the land on the Arizona side. Both field offices have adopted management plans for the land under their jurisdiction. The management plans of both field offices recommend the development of Special Management Areas that include more specific plans, such as Areas of Critical Environmental Concern (ACECs), Resource Conservation Areas (RCAs), and Special Recreation Management Areas (SRMAs).⁶

The management plan prepared by the Arizona Strip Field Office calls for the designation of a total of 445,347 acres of land as Special Management Areas. Within these lands, the plan recommends 59,347 acres designated as ACECs,

⁵ *Nevada's 2003 Statewide Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan – Assessment and Policy Plan*; Nevada Division of State Parks, Department of Conservation and Natural Resources. March 2004.

⁶ *Arizona Strip District; Dixie Resource Area Proposed Resource Management Plan and Environmental Impact Statement*; U.S. Department of Interior, Bureau of Land Management; December 1990.

159,000 acres as RCAs, and 227,000 acres as SRMAs. These designations would provide protection to cultural resources, threatened and endangered species, forest areas, watersheds, grazing, recreation, geologic features, and flora and fauna habitats.

With one possible exception, the proposed replacement airport would create no adverse impacts that would impede the implementation of the BLM's management plan for its lands. The exception is the Little Black Mountain Petroglyph Site located approximately 1.5 miles southeast of the proposed replacement airport site. The Arizona Strip Field Office has stated that this is a significant historic and cultural resource and proposes preserving approximately 200 acres associated with the Petroglyph Site. While the Little Black Mountain Petroglyph Site is well beyond any area that would be disturbed by construction of the replacement airport, it would be exposed to frequent aircraft overflights after the replacement airport is in operation. The Petroglyph Site is remote from any urban development and improved roads and has low ambient noise levels. Thus, the BLM is concerned about the potential for future aircraft activity in the area to disturb the quality of the visitor experience at the site. Impacts to the Little Black Mountain Petroglyph Site are evaluated in **Section 6.6, Department of Transportation Act, Section 4(f)/303(c) Properties and Resources**.

The revised Resource Management Plan prepared by the St. George Field Office⁷ for the area formerly referred to as the Dixie Resource Area, recommends the protection of approximately 639,005 surface acres. The approved plan is nearly identical to the one set forth in the *Dixie Resource Area Proposed Resource Management Plan and Final Environmental Impact Statement* published in September 1998.

The revised Dixie Resource Area Resource Management Plan included the following provisions:

- *"A commitment to collaborate with affected interests, including local and state governments, Indian tribes, organizations, other Federal agencies, and the private sector, in order to actively address issues of mutual concern..."*
- *"Preservation and protection of the desert tortoise and its habitat will be accomplished by implementing the goals and objectives of the Washington County Habitat Conservation Plan and Red Cliffs Desert Reserve within the Upper Virgin River Recovery Unit. In addition, the Desert Tortoise Northeastern Mojave Recovery Unit, which includes Beaver Dam Slope, will be managed as an Area of Environmental Concern (ACEC) and have consistent land use prescriptions across state lines designed to protect and help recover tortoise populations".*
- *"Management of the Virgin River and its drainages... as it relates to water quality, water conservation, floodplain management, and protection of related resources".*

⁷ St. George Field Office (Formerly Dixie Resource Area); Record of Decision and Resource Management Plan; US Department of Interior, Bureau of Land Management; March 1999.

- "Ten areas were designated as ACECs: Upper Beaver Dam Slope, Beaver Dam Wash, Santa Clara/Gunlock, Santa Clara River/Land Hill, Red Mountain, Red Bluff, Lower Virgin River, Warner Ridge/Fort Pearce, Little Creek Mountain, and Canaan Mountain".
- "Sensitive areas such as special status plant and animal species habitat, developed recreation sites, recreation opportunity spectrum primitive areas, riparian areas, floodplains, watershed protection areas (including municipal watersheds), Visual Resource Management (VRM) Class II areas, crucial deer winter habitat and elk calving areas, severe erosion soils, designated wilderness, and cultural sites will be afforded a higher level of protection than under current management".
- "25.7 miles of rivers or river segments found suitable for congressional designation as wild rivers under the Wild and Scenic Rivers Act: Deep Creek/Crystal Creek, North Fork of the Virgin River above Zion National Park, Oak Creek/Kolob Creek, that portion of LaVerkin Creek/Smith Creek from above Zion National Park to the north boundary of the private parcel in Section 18, T 40 S, R 12 W, and that portion of Segment B of the Virgin River contained wholly within the Beaver Dam Mountains Wilderness Area".
- "Standards for rangeland health from BLM Utah's approved Standards for Rangeland Health and Guidelines for Grazing Management will be applied to all pertinent decisions made on public lands."

Both BLM field offices also manage numerous wilderness areas throughout the initial area of investigation. The BLM's overall management plan calls for the continued preservation of these lands in their natural condition. A potential indirect impact of the proposed replacement airport could be an increase in aircraft activity over these wilderness areas, potentially increasing noise levels. This potential concern is addressed in **Chapter Seven, Cumulative Impacts**.

U. S. Forest Service (USFS): The USFS is responsible for the management of the Dixie National Forest. In the *Land and Resource Management Plan (Forest Plan)*⁸; the Record of Decision (ROD) provided for several provisions for preservation and management of the Dixie National Forest. These provisions included: coordinated multiple-use management of outdoor recreation, range, timber, watershed, wildlife and fish, minerals, and wilderness resulting in sustained yields of goods and services for the benefit of Utah and the American people.

The *Forest Plan* prescribes general management practices for the Dixie National Forest and identifies specific, resource management practices; projected levels of production of goods and services; and locations where various types of resource management activities are expected to occur. In addition, the *Forest Plan* provides broad direction for dealing with applications and permits for occupancy and use of National Forest System lands by the public and for management of impacts from

⁸ *Record Of Decision, USDA Forest Service, Dixie National Forest, Final Environmental Impact Statement and Land and Resource Management Plan; Washington, Iron, Garfield, Kane, Wayne, and Piute Counties, Utah.* USDA Forest Service, Intermountain Region; Ogden, Utah. September 2, 1986..

mineral activities on the Dixie National Forest. The intention is to achieve multiple-use goals and objectives with optimum economic efficiency in an environmentally sound manner to produce goods, services, and amenities providing long-term public benefits.

The ROD on the *Forest Plan* provides direction in the following management areas:

Recreation: New developed recreational sites would be built at Deer Lake, Pine Valley, and Blue Spring Point to meet increased use and enhance dispersed recreation. The Dixie National Forest would also rehabilitate and "harden" about 50 developed recreation site units per decade to protect investments. Downhill ski area capacity would be expanded by the private sector in the Brian Head and proposed Crystal Mountain areas. The *Forest Plan* provides for frequent maintenance of the more heavily used road and trail facilities to accommodate user needs near wilderness areas and for winter recreation. Construction of 11 trailhead facilities and maintenance of 320 miles of trails would help disperse use and increase the quality of outdoor experiences. It also provides for sufficient parking and trailhead capacity.

Wilderness: All wildernesses (Box-Death Hollow, Ashdown Gorge, and Pine Valley Mountain) will emphasize semi-primitive wilderness settings. Management of the Pine Valley Mountain Wilderness will be more intensive because it is heavily used and has many trails. More trails and trailheads will be constructed to disperse use over more of the areas.

Fish and Wildlife: Habitat management would stress mitigation of land use activities to maintain viable fish and wildlife populations. The development and construction of 165 habitat improvement projects and structures would be initiated annually during the planning period.

Range: The continuation of current grazing practices by current numbers of livestock is planned. Suitable range will be maintained in good condition, and 110,000 acres of poor condition range are expected to be improved to at least fair condition.

Timber: Timber sales for mountain pine beetle salvage or prevention were to be completed by 1990. The *Forest Plan* allows for the continued offering of 26 million board feet (MBF) of timber with a high percentage of that volume coming from mixed conifer and spruce species in designated timber harvest areas.

Soil and Water: Aggressive action would be taken to treat the watershed restoration backlog. Plans are in place to complete 725 acres of large-size projects erosion control and watershed management projects. Unforeseen damaged watershed areas would be promptly treated.

Minerals: Production of oil and gas from National Forest lands is expected to remain at constant levels through the planning period. Declining oil field production near Upper Valley is expected to be replaced by new discoveries.

Both BLM and USFS manage numerous wilderness areas throughout the initial area of investigation. Each of these management plans call for the continued preservation of these lands in their natural condition. As stated above, potential indirect impact of the proposed replacement airport could be an increase in aircraft activity over these wilderness areas, potentially increasing noise levels. This potential concern is addressed in the section discussing potential impacts on Section 4(f)/303(c) Lands and in **Chapter Seven, Cumulative Impacts**.

National Park Service (NPS): The NPS is responsible for the management of several areas in the Initial Area of Investigation, including Zion National Park, Cedar Breaks National Monument, Pipe Springs National Monument, and Lake Mead National Recreation Area. The NPS' Congressional mandate requires the management of national parks and monuments to conserve the cultural and natural resources, including wilderness values, and to promote the public enjoyment of these resources.

As described in the letter received from the NPS, dated September 16, 2004 (see **Appendix N** of the Final EIS), the four NPS units located within the initial area of investigation have been protected and are managed to preserve their inherent resources which include archaeological resources, unique geologic formations, plant and animal habitats, scenery, viewsheds, and soundscapes. The management plans for these areas include measures to preserve and/or restore natural quiet and natural sounds, particularly in areas designated as wilderness (see pages 5-22 thru 5-23d of the Final EIS for a description of the goals of each respective management plan).

Based on the results of the noise analyses described in **Chapter 6, Chapter 7, Appendix B, Appendix T, and Appendix U**, the noise generated by aircraft operating from the proposed replacement airport would make minor contributions to the aviation noise levels already present within the areas managed by the NPS located within the initial area of investigation. The noise levels anticipated to result from implementation of the proposed replacement airport alternative do not result in a significant change in the soundscape environments present in these managed areas nor would a substantial impairment of any activity, resource, use, or attribute within these areas occur.

The City of St. George intends to work with the commercial carriers at SGU to mitigate aircraft noise generated from the replacement airport through the development of voluntary agreements to fly to the north of or to the south of Zion National Park. In addition, FAA will establish an approach procedure for the replacement airport that would be designed to keep aircraft as high as possible and west of Zion National Park, without negatively affecting final approach minimums. This approach procedure is illustrated in **Exhibit 1.3** in the Draft EIS and reproduced as an attachment to **Appendix X** of this Final EIS. Additional details on the voluntary measures to reduce aircraft noise resulting from operations at the replacement airport site are described in **Appendix X, Monitored Noise Abatement Initiatives**, in the Final EIS.

The FAA has concluded that the very minor increases in direct and cumulative noise, resulting from the proposed replacement airport, do not approach a substantial impairment of the values inherent to these NPS units (see **Chapter 8**, in the Final EIS, for a discussion related to the Section 4(f)/303(c) Determination). Construction and operation of the proposed replacement airport would not result in the physical alteration of these properties. Therefore, the FAA finds that implementation of the proposed replacement airport is consistent with the goals of the management plans for these NPS units.

6.3.3 LAND USE ASSURANCE

The City of St. George, the future owner and operator of the proposed replacement airport, has provided assurance that it is and would continue to be in compliance with 49 U.S.C. §47107(a)(10). This assurance relates to existing and planned land uses and involves the adoption of zoning laws and other measures to the extent reasonable to restrict the use of land adjacent to or in the immediate vicinity of the airport, to activities and purposes compatible with normal airport operations, including landing and takeoff of aircraft. A letter confirming this assurance is contained in **Appendix L** (in the Draft EIS), *Agency Coordination and Public Involvement*.

6.3.4 DETERMINATION OF CONSISTENCY WITH LOCAL PLANNING

The initial efforts set in place by the City of St. George and Washington County have paved the way for the development of the proposed replacement airport that is consistent with plans currently in effect for both jurisdictions.