

## **5.9 FISH, WILDLIFE, AND PLANTS**

Section 7 of the Endangered Species Act (ESA), as amended, applies to Federal agency actions and sets forth requirements for consultation to determine if a proposed action could potentially affect a Federally-endangered or threatened species. If an agency determines that an action may affect a Federally-threatened or endangered species or critical habitat, Section 7(a)(2) of the ESA requires consultation with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) or the National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS), as appropriate, to ensure that any action the agency authorizes, funds, or carries out is not likely to jeopardize the continued existence of any Federally-listed endangered or threatened species, or result in the destruction or adverse modification of critical habitat.

A Biological Assessment is to be prepared to determine whether a proposed action is likely to adversely affect listed species or designated critical habitat, jeopardize the continued existence of species that are proposed for listing, or adversely modify a proposed Critical Habitat. The preparation of a Biological Assessment is mandatory for major construction activities.

In compliance with the ESA and Ohio Revised Code Chapter 1518, as amended, agencies overseeing Federally-funded projects are required to obtain from the USFWS and the Ohio Department of Natural Resources (ODNR) information concerning any species listed, or proposed to be listed on the Endangered Species List, which may be present in the area of the proposed development. The impact of the project on any such species must be evaluated and appropriate measures to avoid or compensate for these impacts must be enacted. The Detailed Study Area (DSA) was evaluated for the potential for existence of Federal and State of Ohio protected plant or animal species, and their respective habitats.

### **5.9.1 EXISTING CONDITIONS: 2006**

The Port Columbus International Airport (CMH or Airport) is located in Franklin County within a highly urbanized area. Although this part of the County has been largely altered by development, many species of native plants continue to exist in remnant habitats on or around the Airport. Within the DSA, many of the existing biotic communities, defined as vegetative associations and their associated wildlife, are limited man-made habitats, such as previously disturbed fields and ditches used for stormwater conveyance.

Information was requested from the USFWS and the ODNR concerning rare, threatened, or endangered species that might be present within the proposed project area. The proposed project area occurs within the range of the following Federal and state threatened or endangered species: Scioto madtom (*Noturus trautman*), northern riffleshell mussel (*Epioblasma torulosa rangiana*), clubshell mussel (*Pleurobema clava*), Indiana bat (*Myotis sodalis*), bald eagle (*Haliaeetus leucocephalus*), snuffbox mussel (*Epioblasma triquetra*), elephant-ear mussel (*Elliptio crassidens*), northern brook lamprey (*Ichthyomyzon fossor*), blacknose shiner (*Notropis heterolepis*), golden-winged warbler (*Vermivora chrysoptera*), spotted darter (*Etheostoma maculatum*), one Federal candidate, rayed bean mussel (*Villosa fabalis*), and two state species of concern, the four-toed salamander

(*Hemidactylium scutatum*) and the smooth green snake (*Opheodrys vernalis*). The ODNR has no records of any rare or endangered species in the project area or within a one mile radius of the project area.<sup>1</sup>

### **5.9.1.1 Vegetation**

As part of the Biological Assessment, information was gathered for biotic habitats/communities. Within the DSA, there were four types of vegetative communities identified: open water, forests, old-field, and wasteground. Each of these habitats are briefly described below and the locations shown on **Exhibit 5.9-1, Existing Biotic Habitat**.

#### **OPEN WATER HABITATS**

There are three ponds located in the DSA. These ponds (Ponds 1, 2, and 3) are water hazards on the Airport Golf Course, which is located east of the Airport on Hamilton Road. They are classified as palustrine, excavated, unconsolidated bottom systems with an intermittently exposed hydrologic regime (PUBGx). The ponds appear to be hydrologically isolated from Big Walnut Creek. Pond 1 has a few small patches of cattails (*Typha* sp.) and willows (*Salix* sp.) around its edge. Ponds 2 and 3 are completely unvegetated with gravel and riprap along the banks. Ponds 1, 2, and 3 have areas of 1.13, 1.40, and 0.45 acres respectively.

#### **FORESTS**

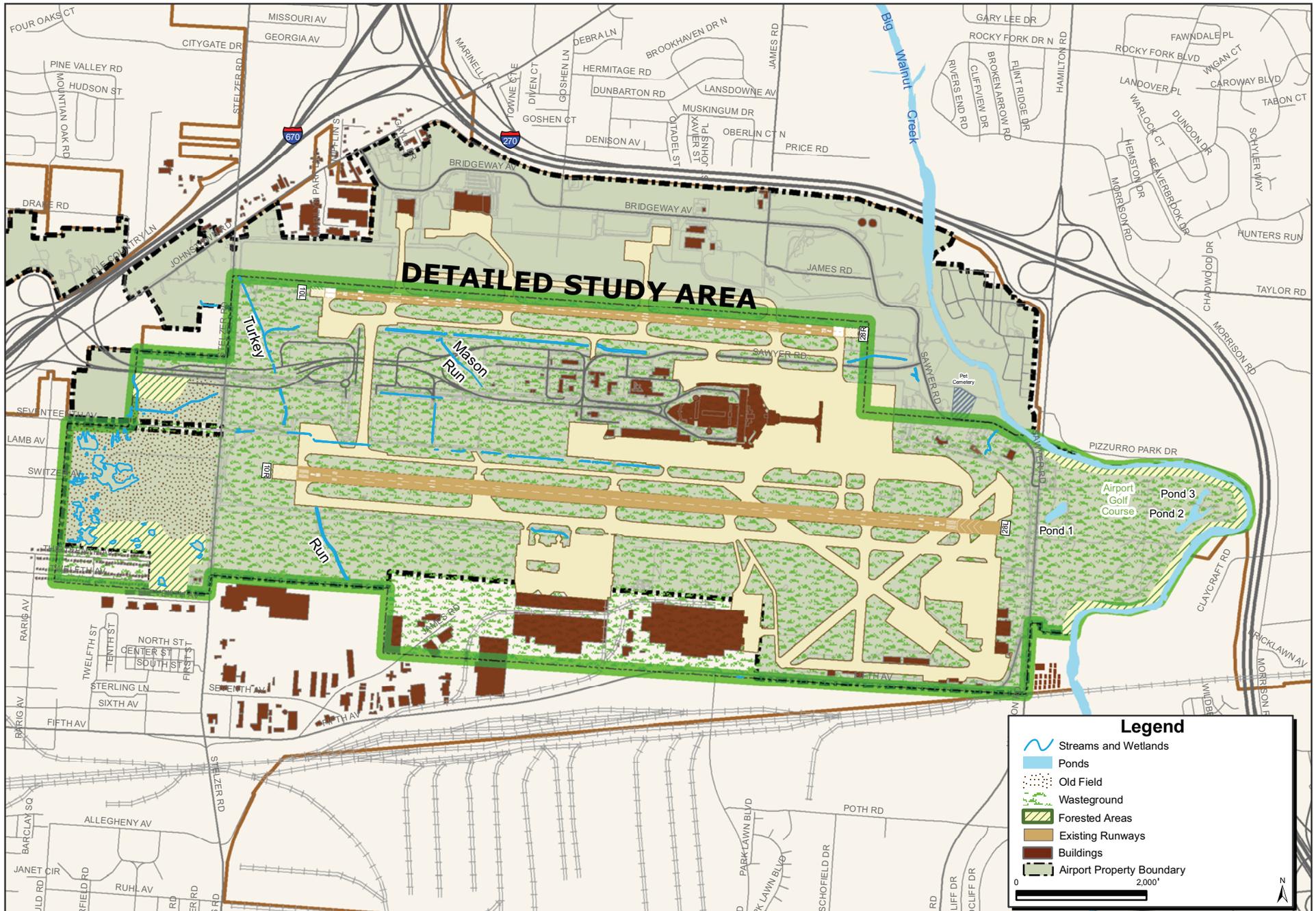
There are three main forested areas within the DSA. Two are located west of Stelzer Road and are dominated by silver maple (*Acer saccharinum*), sugar maple (*Acer saccharum*), common privet (*Ligustrum vulgare*), arrow-wood (*Viburnum dentatum*), and European buckthorn (*Rhamnus frangula*). The third area borders the Airport Golf Course and Big Walnut Creek, east of the Airport. The upper slopes are dominated by sugar maple (*Acer saccharum*) and northern red oak (*Quercus rubra*) while the lower slopes are dominated by sycamore (*Platanus occidentalis*) and green ash (*Fraxinus pennsylvanica*). Understory plants included common privet (*Ligustrum vulgare*), bush honeysuckle (*Lonicera maacki*), and in some places, pawpaw (*Asimina triloba*). The forested areas located to the west of Stelzer Road have areas of approximately 29 acres. The area bordering the Airport Golf Course has an area of approximately 17 acres.

#### **OLD-FIELD**

An old-field community occurs on the west side of Stelzer Road. Dominants varied but included reedtop (*Agrostis gigantea*), Canada thistle (*Cirsium arvense*), tall fescue (*Festuca elatior*), birdsfoot trefoil (*Lotus corniculatus*), everlasting pea (*Lathyrus latifolius*), old-field panic grass (*Panicum accuminatum* var. *fasciculatum*), and common goldenrod (*Solidago canadensis*). A total of approximately 90 acres of old-field exists on the west side of Stelzer Road.

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<sup>1</sup> Letter dated August 10, 2006 from Debbie Woischke of the Ohio Department of Natural Resources. (See Appendix K).



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## **WASTEGROUND**

Much of the DSA is mowed and consists of maintained right-of-ways and fields in and around residential, industrial, and commercial properties. These areas are collectively referred to as wasteground.

The wasteground in the project area is dominated by a variety of weedy species including oxeye daisy (*Chrysanthemum leucanthemum*), chicory (*Cichorium intybus*), wild carrot (*Daucus carota*), northern crabgrass (*Digitaria sanguinalis*), quack grass (*Elytrigia repens*), tall fescue (*Festuca elatior*), English plantain (*Plantago lanceolata*), Kentucky Bluegrass (*Poa pratensis*), yellow foxtail grass (*Setaria glauca*), birdsfoot trefoil (*Lotus corniculatus*), red clover (*Trifolium pratensis*), and white clover (*Trifolium repens*). There is a total of approximately 1,592 acres of wasteground within the DSA.

### **5.9.1.2 Wildlife**

The project area and the immediate surrounding areas offer relatively limited habitat to a number of animal species due to the heavily urbanized nature of the region. The majority of these species are typical for urban areas. A complete list of current and previously observed fauna and those expected to occur within the project area are provided in Appendix K, *Biological Resources*. Below is a list of the species observed during the field survey:

- raccoon (*Procyon lotor*);
- groundhog (*Marmota monax*);
- house sparrow (*Passer domesticus*);
- starling (*Sturnus vulgaris*);
- northern cardinal (*Cardinalis cardinalis*); and
- blue jay (*Cyanocitta cristata*)

### **5.9.1.3 Threatened and Endangered Species**

A biological assessment was initiated in accordance with Section 7(c) of the ESA, as amended, to evaluate the potential presence of these species within the proposed Airport expansion areas. Extensive field surveys conducted in 2006 found no State or Federally-listed plant or animal species in the project area. During that survey, approximately 21 suitable roost trees and foraging habitat for the Indiana bat were present within the second-growth forest areas of the project area along Big Walnut Creek. However, no individuals were observed during the survey. It is not anticipated that the trees along Big Walnut Creek will be removed for the proposed project. Should there be a need to trim the trees located in this area, further coordination will be conducted with the USFWS, in order to determine if potential impacts to the Indiana bat would occur as a result of this activity. In order to verify that there would be no impacts to the bald eagle, the CRAA will contact the ODNR, prior to construction to obtain an updated status of the bald eagle's activity in the area. Concerning the clubshell mussel, northern riffleshell mussel, rayed bean mussel, and Scioto madtom individuals or habitats, the USFWS determined that, "Due to the project type, size, and location, the project should not impact these species or their habitat."<sup>2</sup> The ODNR also believes that because of the location of

<sup>2</sup> Letter dated September 18, 2006 from Mary Knapp of the US Fish and Wildlife Service. (See Appendix K)

the project, it is unlikely that there will be an impact on the snuffbox mussel, elephant-ear mussel, golden-winged warbler, spotted darter, the four-toed salamander, and the smooth green snake. Due to the mobility of the northern brook lamprey and blacknose shiner, the ODNR also believes there will be no impact to these species due to the Proposed Project. The report detailing the methodologies and findings of the survey is provided in Appendix K. Consultation under Section 7(c) of the ESA is complete with the USFWS.

**5.9.2 FUTURE CONDITIONS: 2012**

The survey of potential rare, threatened, or endangered species identified in Section 5.10.1, *Existing Conditions*, provides baseline data to compare impacts between all of the future alternatives. **Table 5.9-1** summarizes the potential habitat impacts for each 2012 alternative.

**Table 5.9-1  
2012 VEGETATION TYPES AND APPROXIMATE IMPACTS  
Port Columbus International Airport**

<b>Vegetation Type</b>	<b>2012 Alternative A</b>	<b>2012 Alternative C2a</b>	<b>2012 Alternative C2b</b>	<b>2012 Alternative C3a</b>	<b>2012 Alternative C3b</b>
Open Water	0.0 acres	0.0 acres	0.0 acres	0.0 acres	0.0 acres
Forests	0.0 acres	17 acres*	17 acres*	15 acres*	15 acres*
Old-Field	0.0 acres	7 acres	7 acres	7 acres	7 acres
Wasteground	0.0 acres	465 acres	465 acres	465 acres	465 acres
Wetlands	0.00 acres	0.33 acres	0.33 acres	0.33 acres	0.33 acres
Streams	0.0 linear ft.	1,005 linear ft.	1,005 linear ft.	1,005 linear	1,005 linear
<b>TOTAL</b>	0.0 acres 0.0 linear ft.	488.33 acres 1,005 linear ft.	488.33 acres 1,005 linear ft.	486.33 acres 1,005 linear	486.33 acres 1,005 linear

Note \*: Trees would not be cleared, only trimmed.

Source: ASC Group, 2007.

**Alternative A:  
2012 No Action**

Alternative A includes no new construction or changes in operating procedures. Therefore, this alternative would not result in the loss of any biotic or critical habitat supporting a Federal or State endangered or threatened species or conversion of wetlands, open waters, or streams.

**Alternative C2a:  
2012 Relocate Runway 10R/28L 800 Feet to the South – Noise Abatement  
Scenario A**

Alternative C2a would not impact any State or Federally-threatened or endangered species or critical habitat because none have been identified in the project area. This alternative would require the removal of 0.33 acres of wetlands and 1,005 linear feet of intermittent streams. However, these areas showed no signs of being suitable habitat for any of the endangered or threatened species that could be present in the area. Impacts to other habitats include clearing approximately 464 acres of wasteground and seven acres of old-field. Due to height restrictions required by 14 Code of Federal Regulations (CFR) Part 77 for the proposed replacement runway, 17 acres of trees may need to be trimmed or removed in the southern forested area west of Stelzer Road. As necessary, trees along Big Walnut Creek on or near the Airport Golf Course would be trimmed to comply with 14 CFR Part 77 requirements. No trees along Big Walnut Creek would be removed. In response to the USFWS request, if tree trimming/removal is required, the work would be done in accordance with the most recent guidelines to minimize impacts to potential Indiana bat habitat.

**Alternative C2b:  
2012 Relocate Runway 10R/28L 800 Feet to the South – Noise Abatement  
Scenario B**

Alternative C2b includes the same relocation of Runway 10R/28L 800 feet to the south as Alternative C2a, along with operational changes proposed in the 2007 Part 150 Noise Compatibility Study update (2007 Part 150 Study).<sup>3</sup> The proposed operational changes would not change the area of physical impact. Therefore, the potential impacts to threatened and endangered species and critical habitat will remain the same as discussed for Alternative C2a.

**Alternative C3a:  
2012 Relocate Runway 10R/28L 702 Feet to the South – Noise Abatement  
Scenario A**

Alternative C3a would not impact any State or Federally-threatened or endangered species or critical habitat because none have been identified in the project area. This alternative would require the removal of 0.33 acres of wetlands and 1,005 linear feet of intermittent streams. However, these areas showed no signs of being suitable habitat for any of the endangered or threatened species that could be present in the area. Impacts to other habitats include clearing approximately 464 acres of wasteground and seven acres of old-field. Due to height restrictions required by 14 CFR Part 77 for the proposed replacement runway, 15 acres of trees may need to be trimmed or removed in the southern forested area west of Stelzer Road. As necessary, trees along Big Walnut Creek on or near the Airport Golf Course would be trimmed to comply with 14 CFR Part 77 requirements. No trees along Big Walnut Creek would be removed. In response to the USFWS request, if

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<sup>3</sup> The Final Part 150 Study Update for Port Columbus International Airport was submitted to the FAA for approval in November 2007. The FAA accepted the NEMs on December 5, 2007. The FAA issued a Record of Approval on the NCP on May 28, 2008.

tree trimming/removal is required, the work would be done in accordance with the most recent guidelines to minimize impacts to potential Indiana bat habitat.

**Alternative C3b:**

**2012 Relocate Runway 10R/28L 702 Feet to the South – Noise Abatement Scenario B (Sponsor’s Proposed Project)**

Alternative C3b includes the same relocation of Runway 10R/28L 702 feet to the south as Alternative C3a, along with operational changes proposed in the 2007 Part 150 Study. The proposed operational changes would not change the area of physical impact. Therefore, the potential impacts to threatened and endangered species and critical habitat will remain the same as discussed for Alternative C3a.

**5.9.3 FUTURE CONDITIONS: 2018**

In addition to 2012, the environmental consequences for 2018 are provided because that is the anticipated year for opening of the proposed passenger terminal. **Table 5.9-2** summarizes the potential habitat impacts for each 2018 alternative.

**Table 5.9-2  
2018 VEGETATION TYPES AND APPROXIMATE IMPACTS  
Port Columbus International Airport**

<b>Vegetation Type</b>	<b>2018 Alternative A</b>	<b>2018 Alternative C2a</b>	<b>2018 Alternative C2b</b>	<b>2018 Alternative C3a</b>	<b>2018 Alternative C3b</b>
Open Water	0.0 acres	0.0 acres	0.0 acres	0.0 acres	0.0 acres
Forests	0.0 acres	0.0 acres	0.0 acres	0.0 acres	0.0 acres
Old-Field	0.0 acres	0.0 acres	0.0 acres	0.0 acres	0.0 acres
Wasteground	0.0 acres	0.0 acres	0.0 acres	0.0 acres	0.0 acres
Wetlands	0.00 acres	0.32 acres	0.32 acres	0.32 acres	0.32 acres
Streams	0 linear ft.	0 linear ft.	0 linear ft.	0 linear ft.	0 linear ft.
<b>TOTAL</b>	0.0 acres 0 linear ft.	0.32 acres 0 linear ft.	0.32 acres 0 linear ft.	0.32 acres 0 linear ft.	0.32 acres 0 linear ft.

Source: ASC Group, 2007.

**Alternative A:**

**2018 No Action**

Alternative A includes no new construction or changes in operating procedures. Therefore, this alternative would not result in the loss of any biotic or critical habitat supporting a Federal or State endangered or threatened species or conversion of wetlands, open waters, or streams.

**Alternative C2a:  
2018 Relocate Runway 10R/28L 800 Feet to the South and Construct  
Midfield Terminal (T2) – Noise Abatement Scenario A**

Alternative C2a would not impact any State or Federally-threatened or endangered species or habitat because none have been identified in the project area. In addition to the 0.33 acres of wetlands for the relocation of Runway 10R/28L in 2012, this alternative would require the removal of 0.32 acres of wetlands for the construction of a proposed passenger terminal and parking garage (0.65 acre total). No additional intermittent streams would be removed for the construction of a proposed passenger terminal and garage.

**Alternative C2b:  
2018 Relocate Runway 10R/28L 800 Feet to the South and Construct  
Midfield Terminal (T2) – Noise Abatement Scenario B**

Alternative C2b includes the same construction projects (relocation of Runway 10R/28L 800 feet to the south and a proposed passenger terminal) as Alternative C2a, along with operational changes proposed in the 2007 Part 150 Study. The proposed operational changes would not change the area of physical impact. Therefore, the potential impacts to threatened and endangered species and critical habitat will remain the same as discussed for Alternative C2a.

**Alternative C3a:  
2018 Relocate Runway 10R/28L 702 Feet to the South and Construct  
Midfield Terminal (T2) – Noise Abatement Scenario A**

Alternative C3a would not impact any State or Federally-threatened or endangered species or habitat because none have been identified in the project area. In addition to the 0.33 acres of wetlands for the relocation of Runway 10R/28L in 2012, this alternative would require the removal 0.32 acres of wetlands for the construction of a proposed passenger terminal and garage (0.65 acre total). No additional intermittent streams would be removed for the construction of a proposed passenger terminal and garage.

**Alternative C3b:  
2018 Relocate Runway 10R/28L 702 feet to the South and Construct  
Midfield Terminal (T2) – Noise Abatement Scenario B (Sponsor's Proposed  
Project)**

Alternative C3b includes the same construction projects (relocation of Runway 10R/28L 702 feet to the south and a proposed passenger terminal) as Alternative C3a, along with operational changes proposed in the 2007 Part 150 Study. The proposed operational changes would not change the area of physical impact. Therefore, the potential impacts to threatened and endangered species and critical habitat will remain the same as discussed for Alternative C3a.

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