DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION

FEDERAL AVIATION ADMINISTRATION

FINDING OF NO SIGNIFICANT IMPACT

Environmental Assessment for Runway 7-25 Obstruction Removal

West Liberty Airport, West Liberty, Kentucky

I. Introduction/Background

West Liberty Airport (9I3) is located at 50 Airport Way in West Liberty, Morgan County, Kentucky. The proposed action involves the removal of individual trees that have been identified as obstructions to the approach surfaces of Runway 7-25. The project study areas cover approximately 9 acres total, divided between two non-contiguous locations (3.95 acres on the Runway 7 end and 4.98 acres on the Runway 25 end).

This project requires Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) funding, which is a federal action subject to review under the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA). An Environmental Assessment (EA) was prepared in accordance with NEPA, FAA Order 1050.1F[1], Environmental Impacts: Policies and Procedures, and FAA Order 5050.4B, NEPA Implementing Instructions for Airport Actions. This Finding of No Significant Impact (FONSI) provides the FAA's environmental determination, approval, and conditions for agency actions necessary to implement the FAA Proposed Action. This FONSI is based on information and analyses contained in the July 2026 Environmental Assessment for 9I3 Runway 7-25 Obstruction Removal (EA), which is incorporated by reference.

II. Proposed Action

The Proposed Action entails the removal of identified vegetative obstructions located off airport property on privately owned properties. The Proposed Action involves the following main components:

- Tree felling of 22 trees on the Runway 7 end and 9 trees on the Runway 25 end by hand using chainsaws.

[1] FAA published Order 1050.1G, FAA National Environmental Policy Act Implementing Procedures, on its website on June 30, 2025, and published a notice of the rescission of FAA Order 1050.1F in the Federal Register on July 3, 2025 (90 FR 29615), announcing that the new order was effective immediately. Projects requiring FAA compliance with NEPA that commenced after the date of that notice must comply with FAA Order 1050.1G, while those projects already underway by that date may follow FAA Order 1050.1F. For projects such as the project that is the subject of this Finding of No Significant Impact that will be completed under FAA Order 1050.1F, any direction in FAA Order 1050.1F that is inconsistent with Executive Order (EO) 14173, Ending Illegal Discrimination and Restoring Merit-Based Opportunity, EO 14154, Unleashing American Energy, or the Supreme Court's decision in Seven County Infrastructure Coalition v. Eagle County (2025) is superseded and will not be followed.

- Felled trees will be left in place or removed, and stumps will be ground to match the existing ground elevation.
- Installation of FAA-compliant obstruction lighting on one utility pole identified as an obstruction on the Runway 7 end.

Federal Action: The FAA's funding of the proposed project utilizing funds from the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act (IIJA), as well as approval of the project, are federal actions subject to NEPA. The sponsor prepared an appropriate environmental assessment with FAA oversight. This FONSI represents the FAA's findings regarding the significance of environmental effects and accepts the EA as a Federal document.

III. Purpose and Need

The purpose of the Proposed Action is to remove obstructions that are penetrating the 20:1 Threshold Siting Surface (TSS) and Part 77 Approach Surface (AS). The Airport needs to remove these obstructions to provide safe approaches for landing aircraft and to ensure compliance with Code of Federal Regulation (CFR) Part 77 airspace regulations. Furthermore, obstructions identified as structures (e.g., utility poles) need to be lighted to comply with FAA safety regulations.

IV. Alternatives

NEPA requires consideration of a reasonable range of alternatives. The EA evaluated the Proposed Action (Preferred Alternative) and the No Action Alternative.

Other reasonable alternatives were dismissed early in the screening process:

- **Full Runway Protection Zone (RPZ) Acquisition:** Dismissed because acquiring the full RPZ to gain complete control for obstruction clearing would incur greater environmental impacts, such as residential and business relocations, as well as property acquisition.
- **Tree Topping:** Dismissed as it is not considered a prudent alternative due to the natural regrowth of the trees.

Therefore, the Preferred Alternative and No Action Alternative were retained for further evaluation in the EA.

V. Environmental Impacts

The EA analyzed all relevant environmental categories in accordance with FAA Order 1050.1F, FAA Order 5050.4B, and FAA 1050.1 Desk Reference except as noted. The federal and state agencies were contacted at the start of the NEPA process and agency coordination, and consultations were conducted during the preparation of the EA. The EA documented that Proposed Action would not affect Coastal Resources; Department of Transportation Act Section 4(f) and 6(f) Resources; Farmlands; and Wild and Scenic Rivers. Impacts to other resource categories are discussed below.

V A. Air Quality (pp. 3-4)

Morgan County is in attainment for all National Ambient Air Quality Standards (NAAQS). The Proposed Action will only slightly increase temporary construction-related vehicles and chainsaw/stump grinding emissions for a limited period. The project will not alter aircraft activity or ground vehicle operations, resulting in no significant air quality impacts.

V B. Biological Resources (pp 4-7)

A habitat assessment was completed, and the USFWS Information for Planning and Consultation (IPaC) tool identified potential habitat for protected species. Direct impacts to 31 mature trees will decrease available habitat; however, the FAA established a "no effect" determination for the Gray Bat, Pink Mucket, and Snuffbox Mussel, and a "may affect, not likely to adversely affect" (NLAA) determination for the Northern Long-eared Bat, Indiana bat, Tricolored Bat, and Virginia Big-eared Bat. The USFWS concurred with these findings on May 1, 2026. The project will not jeopardize the continued existence of the Eastern Hellbender, Salamander Mussel, or Monarch Butterfly.

V C. Hazardous Materials, Solid Waste, and Pollution Prevention (pp.9-10)

The Proposed Project does not include the generation of hazardous waste. The only related material is the use of small fuel containers for the refueling of chainsaw equipment during tree removal, which will have no significant effect on hazardous materials.

V D. Historical, Architectural, Archeological, and Cultural Resources (pp. 10-11)

There are no resources 50 years or older within the viewshed of the Proposed Project, and no sites listed on the National Register of Historic Places (NRHP). Consultation with the State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO) resulted in a concurrence of "no historic properties affected" on October 8, 2025. If buried archeological materials are uncovered, work will halt, and the SHPO and FAA will be notified.

V E. Noise and Noise-Compatible Land Use (pp.12)

The project will not result in changes to aircraft operations, nighttime operations, runway use, or aircraft fleet mix. Temporary construction noise from chainsaws and heavy trucks may briefly affect adjacent landowners during tree cutting, but this is anticipated to be of short duration and not significant.

V F. Visual Effects (including light emissions) (pp. 13-14)

Six residences have direct views of the trees to be removed; however, some trees will remain within their viewsheds. The installation of obstruction lighting on one utility pole will be visible to three residences along Trooper Lane, but this lane is already illuminated by a streetlight, meaning no significant light emission impacts are anticipated.

V G. Water Resources (pp. 14-15)

One ephemeral to intermittent drainage feature (OW 1) was identified in the study area. Because the Proposed Project involves only hand-cutting of trees and no fill placement or ground disturbance, the drainage feature will not be impacted.

VI. Environmental Mitigation

No mitigation is required for the Proposed Project.

VI A. Permits and Certifications

No permits are required for the tree removal because there is no ground disturbance proposed.

VII. Public Involvement

The following agencies were consulted during the preparation of the EA:

- Kentucky Heritage Council (KHC)
- Kentucky Office of State Archaeology (KOSA)
- U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE)
- U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS)
- Kentucky Energy and Environment Cabinet, Office of Kentucky Nature Preserves
- Kentucky State e-Clearinghouse

Landowner access request letters and certified coordination letters were sent to affected landowners between July 2025 and January 2026. The Draft EA was made available for a 30-day public comment period beginning June 4, 2026, and ending July 4, 2026. Notices were published on a dedicated project website and in the *Licking Valley Courier*. Hard copies were made available at West Liberty City Hall. No public comments or requests for a public hearing were received during the notification period.

FEDERAL FINDING OF NO SIGNIFICANT IMPACT

After careful and thorough consideration of the facts contained herein, the undersigned finds that the proposed Federal action is consistent with existing national environmental policies and objectives as set forth in Section 101 of the National Environmental Policy Act of 1969 (NEPA) and other applicable environmental requirements and will not significantly affect the quality of the human environment or otherwise include any condition requiring consultation pursuant to Section 102(2)(C) of NEPA.

Approved: RANS D BLACK Digitally signed by RANS D BLACK Date: 2026.07.28 20:33:20 -05'00' Date: _____