



PROJECT OVERVIEW

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Over-the-Horizon Radar

The U.S. Department of the Air Force is preparing an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) to evaluate the potential impacts from the Proposed Action to acquire land for, and construct and operate facilities associated with Homeland Defense (HLD) Over-the-Horizon Radar (OTHR) systems in the Northwest region of the United States. The United States requires long-range early detection capability for airborne threats approaching the borders of North America to counter adversarial emerging technologies.

Background

- Most radars are limited by the curvature of the Earth, allowing potential threats to fly “under the radar” without early detection.
- OTHR bounces high-frequency radio signals off the ionosphere, which starts about 50 miles above the Earth’s surface.
- The descending signals rebound off objects below, then back off the ionosphere before returning to the receiver.
- HLD OTHR is a top air domain awareness priority for the Commander of the North American Aerospace Defense Command and U.S. Northern Command.



Purpose of the Proposed Action

The purpose of the Proposed Action is to acquire land for, construct, and operate HLD OTHR systems to provide persistent long-range early detection capability in the Northwest region to protect North America from existing and future threats. The proposed Northwest HLD OTHR would provide enhanced regional long-range early detection capability of airborne threats that may be obscured from conventional line of sight radar systems by the curvature of the Earth.

Need for the Proposed Action

The Proposed Action is needed because our adversaries continue to develop and deploy highly advanced weapons systems capable of disrupting or defeating military and civilian targets in North America. These threats are difficult to detect and can strike with limited warning, which reduces the time and response options available to our national leaders and increases the risk of miscalculation and escalation during periods of heightened tension, crisis, and conflict.

The Proposed Action is needed urgently in the Northwest region to fulfill the mission to provide early detection of airborne threats approaching North America.



NATIONAL ENVIRONMENTAL POLICY ACT

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What is the National Environmental Policy Act?

The **National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA)** is our national charter for making informed decisions while considering environmental impacts. NEPA requires all federal agencies making a proposal that may significantly impact the environment to consider:

- A range of reasonable alternatives
- Potential environmental or human health consequences
- Public and government agency input

What is Public Scoping?

NEPA and Air Force regulations require tribal, government, agency, and public participation throughout the **environmental impact analyses process**. Although input is gathered throughout the Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) process, there are two main points of public engagement, the first being public scoping.

During public scoping, the Air Force is actively seeking feedback from federal, state and local agencies, federally recognized tribes, and the public in development of the EIS. The public scoping phase provides opportunities to learn about and comment on the project and provides the Air Force with the opportunity to identify issues of interest or concern to frame the environmental analysis.

What is an Environmental Impact Statement?

An **EIS** is a document that is developed that enables decision-makers to have a comprehensive view of major environmental issues and requirements associated with the Proposed Action and Alternatives. An EIS is required under NEPA and must:

- Identify and describe the affected environment
- Evaluate the potential environmental consequences from a range of reasonable alternatives
- Identify environmental permits and specific mitigation measures to prevent or minimize environmental impacts, if required

At the end of the EIS process, a Record of Decision (ROD) is issued that identifies the selected alternative based upon the analysis provided within the EIS.

NEPA is a federal statute requiring the identification and analysis of potential environmental impacts of proposed federal actions before those actions are taken. NEPA mandates a structured approach to environmental impacts analysis that requires federal agencies to use an interdisciplinary and systematic approach in their decision-making process. This process evaluates potential environmental consequences associated with a Proposed Action and considers alternative courses of action. The intent of NEPA is to protect, restore, or enhance the environment through well-informed federal decisions.





PROPOSED ACTION AND ALTERNATIVES

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Proposed Action

The U.S. Department of the Air Force would construct and operate two Homeland Defense (HLD) Over-the-Horizon Radar (OTHR) systems in the Northwest region of the United States. These systems would consist of two transmitting (Tx) facilities and two receiving (Rx) facilities. The construction and operation of these facilities would provide persistent long-range early detection capability in the Northwest region.

The Air Force would acquire land currently owned and managed by the Oregon Military Department (OMD) and seek to withdraw land managed by Bureau of Land Management (BLM) for siting and construction of these facilities. A total of 2,622 acres would be acquired from OMD, and 4,987 acres of federal land would be withdrawn from BLM management.

The Proposed Action Would Include:

- Construction of infrastructure support for the antenna equipment, including water supply, power generation, and fuel dispensing facilities.
- Construction of multiple single-story buildings.
- Some smaller buildings would be prefabricated and delivered to the sites.

The Proposed Action would also include the operation and maintenance of the radar and associated support facilities. Once operational, the proposed HLD OTHR systems would be managed by Mountain Home AFB.

The HLD OTHR Rx and Tx sites would be operated 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. Lodging and food service would be available on site.



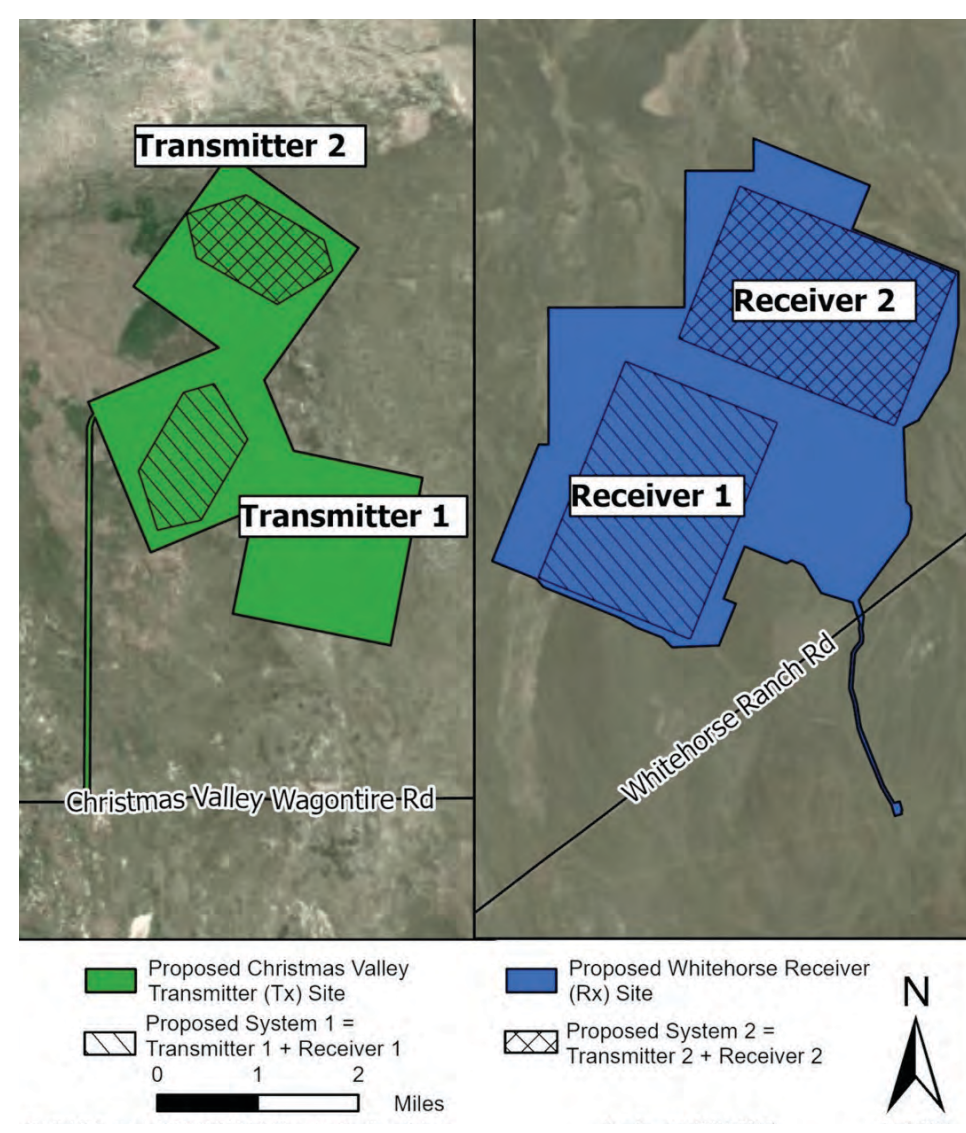
Alternative 1 | Proposed Action

Under Alternative 1, the Air Force would acquire land for, and construct and operate HLD OTHR in the Northwest region of the United States. To meet the mission requirements, new construction by means of acquiring land; infrastructure support for antenna equipment; construction of administrative, maintenance, and crew rest buildings as well as infrastructure and utilities are required. These systems do not exist at any other site in the Northwest region.

No Action Alternative

Under the No Action Alternative, the Air Force would not construct and operate the proposed HLD OTHR systems in the Northwest region, and no land would be acquired for such systems at this time. Without HLD OTHR, airborne threats could approach North America without early detection, resulting in reduced decision time for military and national leaders to deter, de-escalate, or defeat threats, placing North American homeland security at risk. The lands proposed for the HLD OTHR would continue to be managed by BLM and OMD under the applicable laws, regulations, and land use plans.

The No Action Alternative is evaluated in the EIS in accordance with NEPA regulations to provide a benchmark for the comparison of potential impacts of the Proposed Action.





RESOURCE AREAS

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Within the Environmental Impact Statement (EIS), in addition to potential cumulative impacts, the following resource areas are analyzed by evaluating the potential impacts for the Proposed Action and the No Action Alternative.



Air Quality



Water Resources



Geological Resources



Cultural Resources



Biological Resources



**Land Use, Recreation,
and Visual Resources**



Noise



**Infrastructure,
Transportation, and Utilities**



Health and Safety



**Hazardous Materials
and Waste**



Socioeconomics



SUPPORTING STUDIES

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Additional supporting studies are being conducted to provide the best information available for the analysis included in the EIS.

Wetland Delineation

In accordance with Executive Order (E.O.) 11990, Protection of Wetlands, federal agencies performing activities located in or affecting wetlands, and or “providing federally undertaken, financed, or assisted construction” must ensure that their activities do not result in a net loss of wetlands. Compliance with E.O. 11990 necessitates knowledge of the types and locations of wetlands.

A wetland and waters delineation was conducted at the Whitehorse Ranch and Christmas Valley sites in 2024 to identify all wetlands or other Waters of the United States. The delineation was conducted in accordance with the 1987 U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE) *Wetlands Delineation Manual*, including the regional supplement for the Arid West.

The Air Force has provided the delineation report to U.S. Army Corps of Engineers and requested a formal jurisdictional determination that will be included in the project documentation.

Habitat Assessment Survey

Field surveys were conducted in 2024 to determine the presence of suitable habitat for five state-listed and sensitive species: sage thrasher (*Oreoscoptes montanus*), burrowing owl (*Athene cunicularia*), ferruginous hawk (*Buteo regalis*), pygmy rabbit (*Brachylagus idahoensis*), and Swainson's hawk (*Buteo swainsoni*). At the Whitehorse Ranch Rx site, surveys also determined the presence of suitable habitat for the kit fox (*Vulpes macrotis*) and white-tailed jackrabbit (*Lepus townsendii*). Incidental observations of wildlife and their sign were documented, especially those of the target species and their prey.

Visual Resources Inventory

A visual resource management classification system to identify the existing visual character of the landscape and define the allowable extent and type of modification to the landscape was implemented in 2024. The viewshed analysis is consistent with the requirements outlined in *Bureau of Land Management (BLM) Manual 8400*.

Minerals Resource Analysis

For the BLM lands proposed for withdrawal, a mineral resource analysis will be prepared and include information on general geology, known mineral deposits, past and present mineral production, mining claims, mineral leases, and evaluation of future mineral potential and present and potential market demands.

Cultural Resources Survey

The proposed project is subject to Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act (NHPA) and its implementing regulations (36 Code of Federal Regulations Part 800). The area of potential effects (APE) consists of the 2,622-acre proposed Christmas Valley site and the 4,987-acre proposed Whitehorse Ranch site.

Field work is ongoing at both sites in consultation with tribes and the Oregon State Historic Preservation Office. The survey reports will be used to inform the EIS and in NHPA, Section 106 consultation.

Environmental Baseline Survey (EBS)

The Air Force will complete a Phase I EBS in accordance with Air Force regulations to document the physical and environmental condition of the properties.



HOW TO PROVIDE A SCOPING COMMENT

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Your participation is important!

On April 18, 2025, the Air Force announced the intent to develop an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS), which began the public scoping period. During the scoping period, you may provide comments on the project, alternatives, resources to be analyzed, and other information related to the scope of the EIS.

Comments will be accepted at any time during the environmental impact analysis process; however, to ensure the Air Force has sufficient time to consider public scoping comments during preparation of the Draft EIS, please submit comments within the 45-day scoping period.

WAYS TO PROVIDE A COMMENT

Public scoping comments can be submitted in the following ways

- 1 **Submit written comment in person**
at one of the public scoping meeting
- 2 **Regular mail to**
OTHR NW EIS
3527 S Federal Way, Ste 103 #1026
Boise, ID 83705
- 3 **Submit via the project website at**
www.othrnweis.com

PRIVACY ADVISORY

Public input allows the Department of the Air Force to make better-informed decisions. Letters or other written or verbal comments provided may be published in this Environmental Impact Statement. Providing personal information is voluntary. Private addresses will be compiled to develop a stakeholder's inventory. However, only the names of the individuals making comments and specific comments will be disclosed. Personal information, home addresses, telephone numbers, and email addresses will not be published in the Final Environmental Impact Statement.