

DRAFT
ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT
for
Apron Expansion, Hangar Construction, and Landside
Improvements
at
AUGUSTA REGIONAL AIRPORT
AUGUSTA, GEORGIA
Prepared for
FEDERAL AVIATION ADMINISTRATION

August 2025

This Environmental Assessment becomes a Federal document when evaluated, signed, and dated by the responsible FAA official.

Responsible FAA Official

Date

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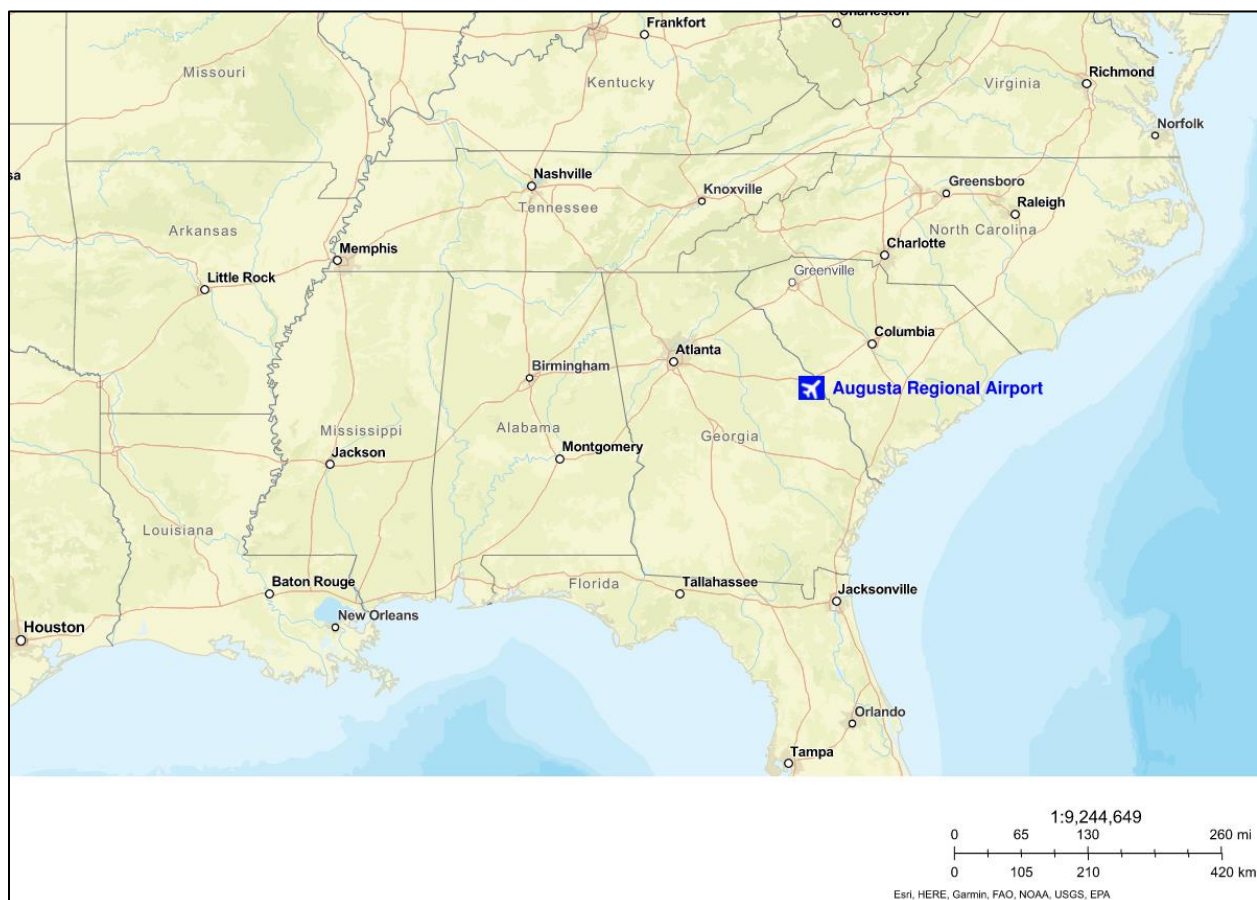
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Chapter 1.0 Purpose and Need

1.1 Introduction

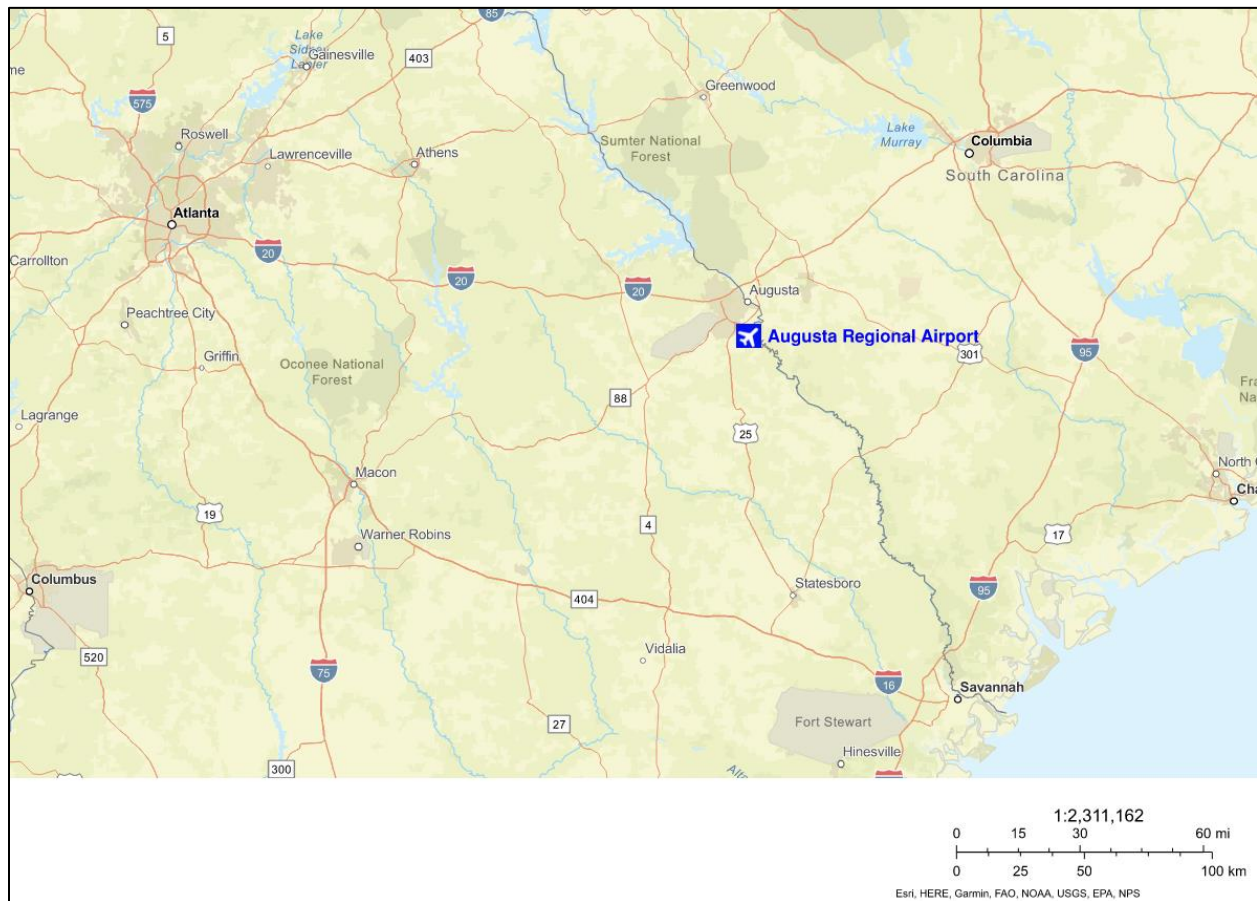
The Augusta Regional Airport (AGS or Airport) is a commercial service airport that serves the Augusta, Georgia region and surrounding communities in eastern Georgia and western South Carolina. Owned by the City of Augusta and operated by the Augusta Aviation Commission, the Airport is within Richmond County on the Georgia-South Carolina border (**Figure 1.1 Location Map**). Locally, AGS is six miles south of downtown Augusta, approximately 150 miles southeast of Atlanta, and approximately 130 miles northwest of Savannah (**Figure 1.2 Vicinity Map**).

Figure 1.1 Location Map



Source: USEPA NEPAassist Tool with labeling by Mead & Hunt, 2023

Figure 1.2 Vicinity Map



Source: USEPA NEPAassist Tool with labeling by Mead & Hunt, 2023

The Airport supports operations by all classes of aircraft, including small general aviation (GA) aircraft, corporate business jets, military aircraft, and commercial service passenger aircraft. The two airlines currently serving the Airport are Delta Air Lines (daily service to Atlanta) and American Airlines (daily service to Charlotte, North Carolina; Dallas, Texas; and Washington, D.C.). The City of Augusta is best known for serving as the host city for the annual Masters Golf Tournament at Augusta National Golf Club in April, which generates a significant number of commercial and general aviation aircraft operations and passenger enplanements at the Airport during the week of the tournament.

Two paved runways support aircraft operations at AGS. Runway 17/35, the primary runway, is 8,001 feet long by 150 feet wide and oriented in a north-south direction. Runway 8/26 is the crosswind runway and is 6,002 feet long and 75 feet wide, oriented in an east-west direction. The Airport is 1,411 acres in size and includes a passenger terminal building, hangars, a fixed base operator (FBO), an Airport Traffic Control Tower (ATCT), and an Aircraft Rescue and Fire Fighting (ARFF) facility (**Figure 1.3 Existing Airfield Configuration**). For additional maps and information on the Airport including its history, existing facilities, and its role in the community and region, see **Chapter 3.0 Affected Environment & Environmental Consequences**.

Figure 1.3 Existing Airfield Configuration



The Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) classifies AGS as a primary non-hub commercial service airport in the National Plan of Integrated Airport Systems (NPIAS). Designation in the NPIAS is indicative of the Airport's significance in the national air transportation system. At the state level, the GDOT Aviation Programs Office classifies the Airport as a Level III commercial service airport. Level III is the highest classification of airports in the state aviation system and represents commercial service or general aviation airports that have a regional business impact. These airports have longer runways (minimum of 5,500 feet), precision approaches, and a greater level of amenities for serving the public.

1.2 Project Purpose and Need

The purpose (or goal) of the proposed project is to increase safety and efficiency of aircraft operations by increasing the available hangar and apron space at the Airport and provide adequate and safe vehicle access to these facilities. The need (or the problem being addressed) is to improve overall airport safety by accommodating aircraft traffic visiting AGS more efficiently in the future and particularly during the week of the Masters Golf Tournament, when aircraft parking and storage is at a premium. During that week, the Airport's crosswind runway, Runway 8/26, and its parallel taxiway are closed and used for aircraft parking and storage. **Figure(s) 1.4 (and 1.5)** illustrate a typical number of aircraft stored on the crosswind and parallel taxiway during this week. Expansion of the Hangar N1 apron and construction of the three hangars will help alleviate some of this congestion and improve safety during the peak week of usage. AGS and the Developer will advertise the hangars for tenant leases during the remainder of the year. Adequate vehicle access is needed to transport passengers to and from the proposed facilities in a safe and efficient manner.

Figure 1.4 Aircraft Parking Overflow



Source: Augusta Regional Airport

Figure 1.5 Aircraft Parking Overflow



Source: Augusta Regional Airport

1.3 Proposed Improvements

In addition to the design and construction of an apron expansion and single-story hangar facilities at AGS, the proposed project also includes landside site improvements including vehicle parking, an access road from the existing Cargo Road leading to each of the hangar parking areas and connecting with Doug Barnard Parkway, a sanitary sewer line parallelling the new access road serving the proposed hangars that would extend beyond Doug Barnard Parkway, a waterline loop connection installed within the Doug Barnard Parkway right-of-way, and the construction of a detention pond for stormwater management near the north eastern project boundary. Site evaluations will be conducted on two parcels of land identified on the ALP for future aeronautical use, though no specific improvements are proposed on the parcels at the time of this EA.

A more detailed description and graphic presentation of the proposed improvements are provided in **Chapter 2.0 Alternatives Considered**. The potential impacts and benefits of these improvements will be described as a part of the Preferred Alternative in **Chapter 3.0 Affected Environment & Environmental Consequences**.

1.4 Required Environmental Review

Federal financial participation in projects through the *Airport and Airway Improvement Act of 1982*, requires environmental review under the *National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) of 1969* (42 U.S.C. §§ 4321 et

seq.). In addition, the FAA must approve the ALP elements associated with the proposed action evaluated under NEPA. An Environmental Assessment (EA) is a document prepared under NEPA that evaluates the effects of a proposed action on the surrounding natural, social, and economic environments.

This EA is prepared under the requirements of NEPA (42 U.S.C. §§ 4321 et seq.), *Airport and Airway Improvement Act of 1982*, Pub. L. No. 97-248, tit. V (codified at 49 U.S.C. §§ 47101 – 47146), FAA Order 1050.1F, *Environmental Impacts: Policies and Procedures*, and FAA Order 5050.4B, *National Environmental Policy Act Implementing Instructions for Airport Actions* (April 2006).^{1, 2}

The intent of this EA is to provide the environmental documentation necessary to assist local, state, and federal officials and stakeholders in the evaluation of the proposed action at AGS. This EA evaluates the proposed action and alternatives (including a No Action alternative) that may meet the purpose and need identified in the EA. The analysis also identifies and discusses measures to avoid, minimize, and mitigate possible environmental impacts. If the FAA concludes that the proposed action will not cause significant impacts, a Finding of No Significant Impact (FONSI) and Record of Decision (ROD) may be issued. If it is determined that a significant impact may result from the proposed action, the FAA may need to prepare a federal Environmental Impact Statement (EIS).

1.5 Requested Federal Action

Federal actions for this proposed project include (1) the approval of portions of the Airport Layout Plan (ALP) that depict those portions of the proposed project subject to FAA review and approval pursuant to 49 U.S.C. § 47107(a)(16) and 2) the approval necessary to proceed with processing the congressional funding earmarked for the proposed project.

1.6 Projected Time Frame of Improvements

The proposed project time frame, pending approval of the EA and funding, is anticipated to be:

- Draft EA: August 2025
- Final EA: October 2025
- Anticipated Construction Begins: October 2025

¹ On June 30, 2025, FAA rescinded FAA Order 1050.1F and issued FAA Order 1050.1G, FAA National Environmental Policy Act Implementing Procedures, to update FAA's NEPA implementing procedures. See Notice of Rescission of FAA Order 1050.1F, Availability of FAA Order 1050.1G, Request for Comments, 90 FR 29,615 (July 3, 2025). Because the preparation of this EA was already underway when this revision to FAA Order 1050.1 took place, and because this revision does not change the analysis of environmental effects for this proposed action, this EA continues to rely on FAA Order 1050.1F.

² FAA Order 1050.1F requires agency NEPA documents to contain an analysis of the Proposed Action's impacts as they relate to Environmental Justice, as well as the Proposed Action's overall "Cumulative Impacts." With respect to Environmental Justice, it is no longer the policy of the federal government to conduct environmental justice analysis and it is no longer a legal requirement to do so, pursuant to Executive Order 14,173, *Ending Illegal Discrimination and Restoring Merit-Based Opportunity*. With respect to "Cumulative Impacts," the underlying basis for its inclusion in FAA Order 1050.1F was its inclusion in the Council for Environmental Quality's now-rescinded NEPA-implementing regulations. As explained by CEQ in its February 19, 2025, memorandum, *Implementation of the National Environmental Policy Act*, NEPA, as amended, does not employ the term "cumulative effects" or "cumulative impacts." CEQ instead directs agencies to consider "reasonably foreseeable" effects regardless of whether or not those effects might be characterized as 'cumulative,' consistent with NEPA. 42 U.S.C. § 4332(2)(C)(i). See also Seven Cnty. Infrastructure Coal. v. Eagle Cnty., Colo., 605 U.S. ___, 145 S. Ct. 1497 (2025). In accordance with this direction, the FAA will no longer characterize effects as "cumulative" in its NEPA documents.

Chapter 2.0 Alternatives Considered

2.1 Introduction

As the lead federal agency, the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) is responsible for complying with the policies and procedures of NEPA; FAA Order 1050.1F, *Environmental Impacts: Policies and Procedures*; and other related environmental laws, regulations, and orders applicable to federal actions.

An environmental review process requires that reasonable alternatives for the proposed action be identified and evaluated, although there is no requirement for the inclusion of any specific number or range of alternatives. This also aids the FAA in fulfilling its additional duty to identify the agency's preferred alternative as defined in Chapter 6 of FAA Order 1050.1F. For alternatives that were considered but eliminated from further study, an explanation of why such alternatives were eliminated from further consideration in accordance with FAA Order 1050.1F is required. The environmental document must include an analysis of the No Action Alternative as a baseline against which to compare the impacts of the Proposed Action and any alternatives being considered.

FAA Order 1050.1F requires a discussion of alternatives that are reasonable and meet the purpose and need of the proposed action. The alternatives discussion should include:

- A list of alternatives considered, including the Proposed Action and the No Action Alternatives.
- A concise statement explaining why any initial alternative considered was eliminated from further study because they were not considered reasonable or did not meet the purpose and need.
- A statement identifying a Preferred Alternative if one has been identified.

This chapter documents a build option that may reasonably meet the purpose and need of the proposed project at the Augusta Regional Airport (AGS or Airport), as explained in **Chapter 1.0 Purpose and Need**. Preliminary costs for the build alternative are provided in 2024 dollars; however, comprehensive costs will be developed during the final design.

The following alternatives are presented and discussed in this chapter:

- No Action Alternative
- Build Alternative or the Proposed Project:
 - Construction of three hangars, an administration and support building, additional apron space, a detention pond, an access roadway, parking, and the installation of necessary utilities.

2.2 No Action Alternative

The No Action Alternative assumes that no work would be undertaken to construct additional facilities. As such, the No Action Alternative does not meet the project's purpose and need of providing additional apron and hangar space throughout the year and especially during the influx of traffic during the first week of April associated with The Masters Golf Tournament.

Although the No Action Alternative does not meet the project's purpose and need, it does serve as a baseline for comparison of environmental impacts associated with the build alternatives and is, therefore, retained and carried forward for analysis.

2.3 Build Alternative – Construction of Proposed Facilities

The proposed project's location optimizes the Developer's ability to accommodate aircraft operations more efficiently through a more direct access to the Airport's existing airside facilities (e.g., the primary runway and its parallel taxiway, connector taxiway, and apron). Landside access to Doug Barnard Parkway is also easily provided in the proposed project's location.

The proposed airside improvements include: 1) the design and construction of an administrative building with an attached hangar, collectively known as Hangar N1, to accommodate an owner's area and various support spaces; 2) the expansion of the existing N1 hangar apron, which was completed in 2023; 3) the construction of a detention pond located at the north end of the expanded apron; and, 4) the construction of two standalone hangars of similar size located to the north of Hangar N1. Parking lots would be constructed for each of the three hangars.

Proposed landside site improvements include: 1) an access road from the existing Cargo Road leading to each of the hangar parking areas and connecting with Doug Barnard Parkway; 2) a sanitary sewer line will be installed along the proposed access road serving the proposed hangars that would extend west of Doug Barnard Parkway approximately 700 feet, connecting with an existing line along Dixon Airline Road; and, 3) a waterline loop connection from the west side of Doug Barnard Parkway to the east side, remaining entirely within the existing roadway's right-of-way. The project area with proposed developments is shown on **Figure 2.1, AGS Development Area Overview** below.

The build alternative includes two parcels of land identified on the ALP for future aeronautical use. By including these parcels in this EA, the Airport could obtain information on the current environmental conditions and assess the suitability of the parcels for aeronautic projects that may be considered for project proposals in the future. Because no projects have been proposed on either of the two parcels at the time of this EA, the development of the two parcels is not yet ripe for decision. As such, review by the FAA would be required for any specific project subsequently proposed on either of the two parcels shaded in brown on **Figure 2.1**, or any other area identified on the ALP as future aeronautical development, at which time the FAA will ascertain potential changes to the ALP and determine the appropriate level of environmental review.

Construction of the proposed project will be addressed in two phases as follows:

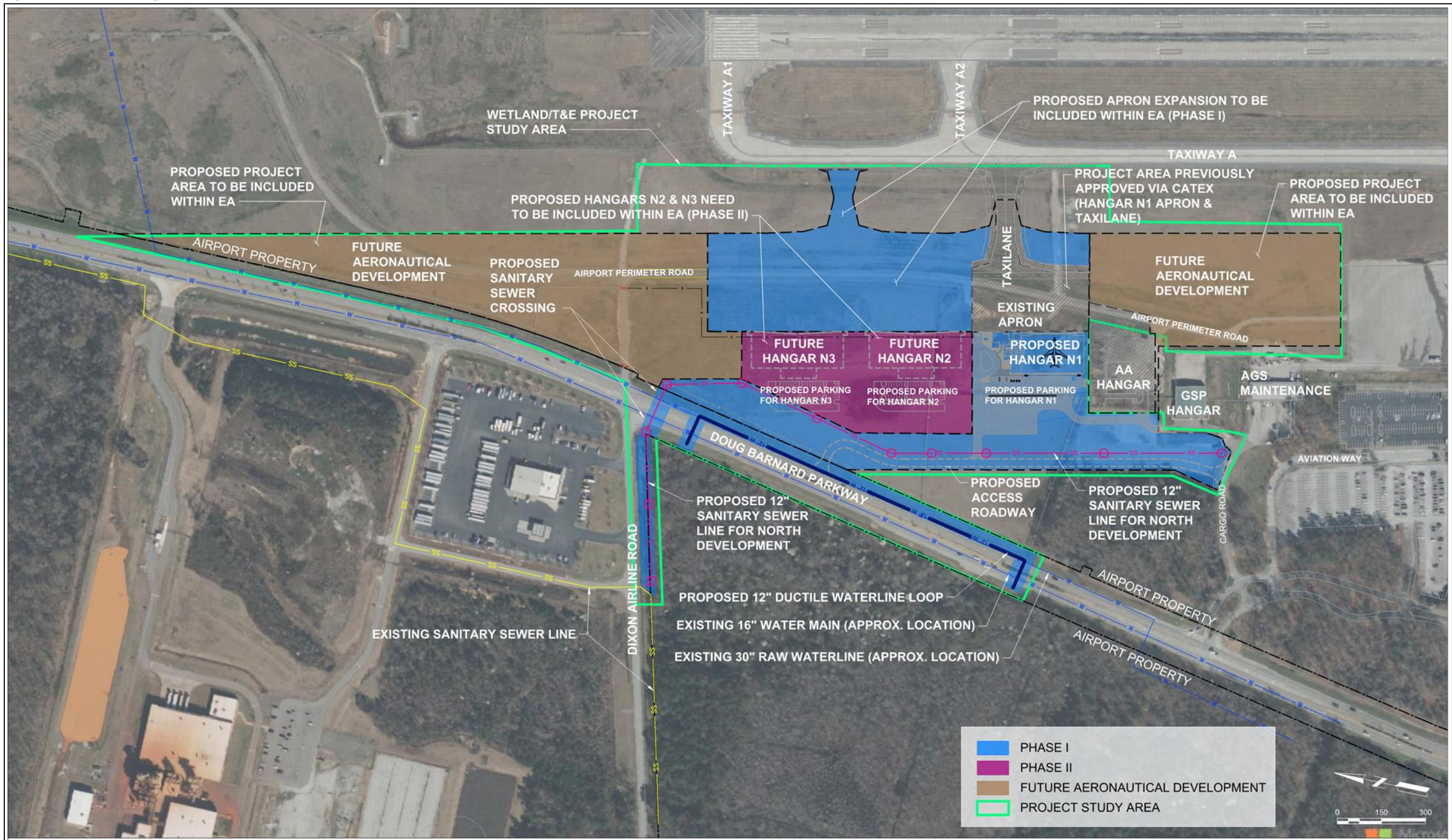
Phase I – Hangar and apron expansion

- Construct approximately 360,000 square feet of ramp space to the north and east of the existing Hangar N1 apron, west of Taxiway A
- Construct a 7,834-square foot terminal with attached 29,177-square foot hangar (Hangar N1)
- Construct an automobile parking and drop off area of approximately 64,700 square feet
- Modify the existing access taxiway and construct a second access taxiway
- Construct a temporary entrance drive from Cargo Road to the Hangar N1 parking area
- Construct an access road connecting Cargo Road to Doug Barnard Parkway
- Install sanitary sewer line along the access road from Cargo Road to Doug Barnard Parkway, including a crossing of Doug Barnard Parkway and extending approximately 700 feet to the west along Dixon Airline Road
- Construct a detention pond located at the north end of the expanded apron
- Install waterline loop within the Doug Barnard Parkway right-of-way.

Phase II - Hangar building with landside site improvements.

- Construct two hangars (Hangars N2 and N3) of approximately 43,000 square feet each
- Construct automobile parking areas of approximately 26,800 square feet for each proposed hangar
- Construct entrance drives from the access road to each parking area

Figure 2.1 AGS Development Area Overview



Source: Mead & Hunt, 2025

Chapter 3.0 Affected Environment & Environmental Consequences

3.1 Introduction

This chapter of the Environmental Assessment (EA) describes the existing environmental conditions of the potentially affected geographic area or areas (i.e., the Affected Environment) and the environmental resource categories that may be affected by the Build Alternative and the No Action Alternative (i.e., the Environmental Consequences). The potentially affected geographic area, known as the project study area is presented in **Figure 2.1 AGS Development Area Overview**. The project study area for this EA is generally a boundary of 55 acres at the northwest area of Airport property to the west of the approach end of Runway 17. This project study area is used to determine direct impacts for most resource categories but is increased for some resource categories as needed.

Each resource category presented in this chapter includes a summary of the regulatory setting. For resource categories considered but determined to not be affected by the proposed project (see **Section 3.3**), a description is provided as to why no effects are anticipated. For resource categories determined to be potentially affected by the proposed project (see **Section 3.4**), this chapter also presents a significance threshold analysis relative to the Build Alternative and the No Action Alternative, as well as any suggested mitigation measures to avoid or minimize such impacts, where appropriate.

For a detailed discussion of the Build Alternative, see **Chapter 2.0 Alternatives Considered**. For additional details and justification of why the project is needed, see **Chapter 1.0 Purpose and Need**.

3.1.1 Reasonably Foreseeable Actions in the Affected Environment

Reasonably foreseeable actions in the affected environment include those on- or off-airport that a proponent would likely complete and that have been developed with enough specificity to provide meaningful information to decision makers and the interested public. In some cases, the minor impact of separate projects can have substantial effects when considered with the Build Alternative over time.

According to the Airport Capital Improvement Program (ACIP), the Airport is planning various improvement projects in the coming years. The following are examples of projects planned at AGS through federal fiscal year (FY) 2029:

- 2024 – Phase I of the Southeast Development Apron (Design)
- 2024 – Taxiway F Reconstruction (Construction)
- 2025 – Vertiport / Electric Aircraft Hangar Development (Design)
- 2025 – Commercial Terminal Expansion / Improvements – Phase II (Design)
- 2026 – Phase I of the Southeast Development Apron (Construction)

- 2026 – Phase II of the Southeast Development Apron (Design / Construction)
- 2027 – Taxiway A4/G2 (Construction)
- 2027 – Taxiway E Hot Spot Removal (Design)
- 2027 – Taxiway A Realignment (Design)
- 2028 – Commercial Terminal Expansion / Improvements – Phase II (Construction)
- 2028 – Taxiway E Hot Spot Removal (Construction)
- 2028 – Taxiway A Realignment (Construction)
- 2029-2033 – East Side Parallel Taxiway G (Construction)

For a list of projects planned through FY2028, see **Appendix E – Reasonably Foreseeable Actions**.

The Augusta Regional Transportation Study (ARTS) conducts other federal or federally assisted transportation improvement activities in the region surrounding the project area. ARTS is a bi-state Metropolitan Planning Organization covering the Augusta-Richmond County, Georgia and Aiken County, South Carolina urbanized areas that functions within the Augusta-Richmond County Planning & Development Department and works in cooperation with the Georgia Department of Transportation and the South Carolina Department of Transportation.

According to ARTS' Transportation Improvement Program (FY 2024-2027 for Georgia and FY 2021-2027 for South Carolina), most of the projects proposed for completion in the Augusta-Richmond County, Georgia and Aiken, South Carolina region during the next several years are outside a five-mile radius surrounding AGS. The following proposed projects, all of which have a construction start date to be determined, are within a five-mile radius of AGS:

- Bridge Replacement – State Route 4/US 1 over Rocky Creek in Augusta-Richmond County
- Bridge Replacement – State Route 10/US 1 over Norfolk Southern Railroad in Augusta-Richmond County
- Bridge Replacement – State Route 56 over Butler Creek in Augusta-Richmond County

Given the minor project related impacts and limited study area, it is unlikely the above-describe actions, when viewed in consideration with the Build Alternative, would affect any resource categories. All future actions on- or off-airport property will be subject to avoidance and minimization studies and will undergo agency review and permitting, as required.

3.1.2 Best Management Practices Minimizing Environmental Impacts

To help identify measures to first avoid, then minimize, and lastly mitigate impacts of the Build Alternative, the Augusta Regional Airport (Airport or AGS), the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA), and various other regulatory agencies with jurisdiction or permitting authority over a particular resource category in the project study area provided guidance and Best Management Practices (BMPs). The evaluation of these measures revealed that none of them are necessary to keep impacts below any level of significance and therefore are not required mitigation for the implementation of the Build Alternative. **Table 3.3 Best Management**

Practices of the Build Alternative near the end of this chapter summarizes the BMPs associated with the Build Alternative.

3.2 Airport History

AGS was first opened in 1941 as a pilot training facility for the United States Army Air Corps and became a commercial service airport in 1950 following the federal government's transfer of the property to the City of Augusta. The airfield was initially named Bush Field in memory of civilian flight instructor Don C. Bush, who was killed in an aircraft accident in 1941. By the late-1960s, the Airport had an 8,000-foot primary runway, a crosswind runway, a passenger terminal building, an Airport Traffic Control Tower (ATCT), and a hotel. The Airport was renamed in 2000 to its present designation.

As the Airport has grown over the years, continual infrastructure improvements have been made, including completion of a new passenger terminal building in 2008, which has resulted in the existing configuration of the airfield. Two airlines serve the Airport today: Delta Air Lines and American Airlines. Delta provides daily non-stop service to Atlanta while American provides daily non-stop service to Charlotte, Dallas, and Washington, D.C.

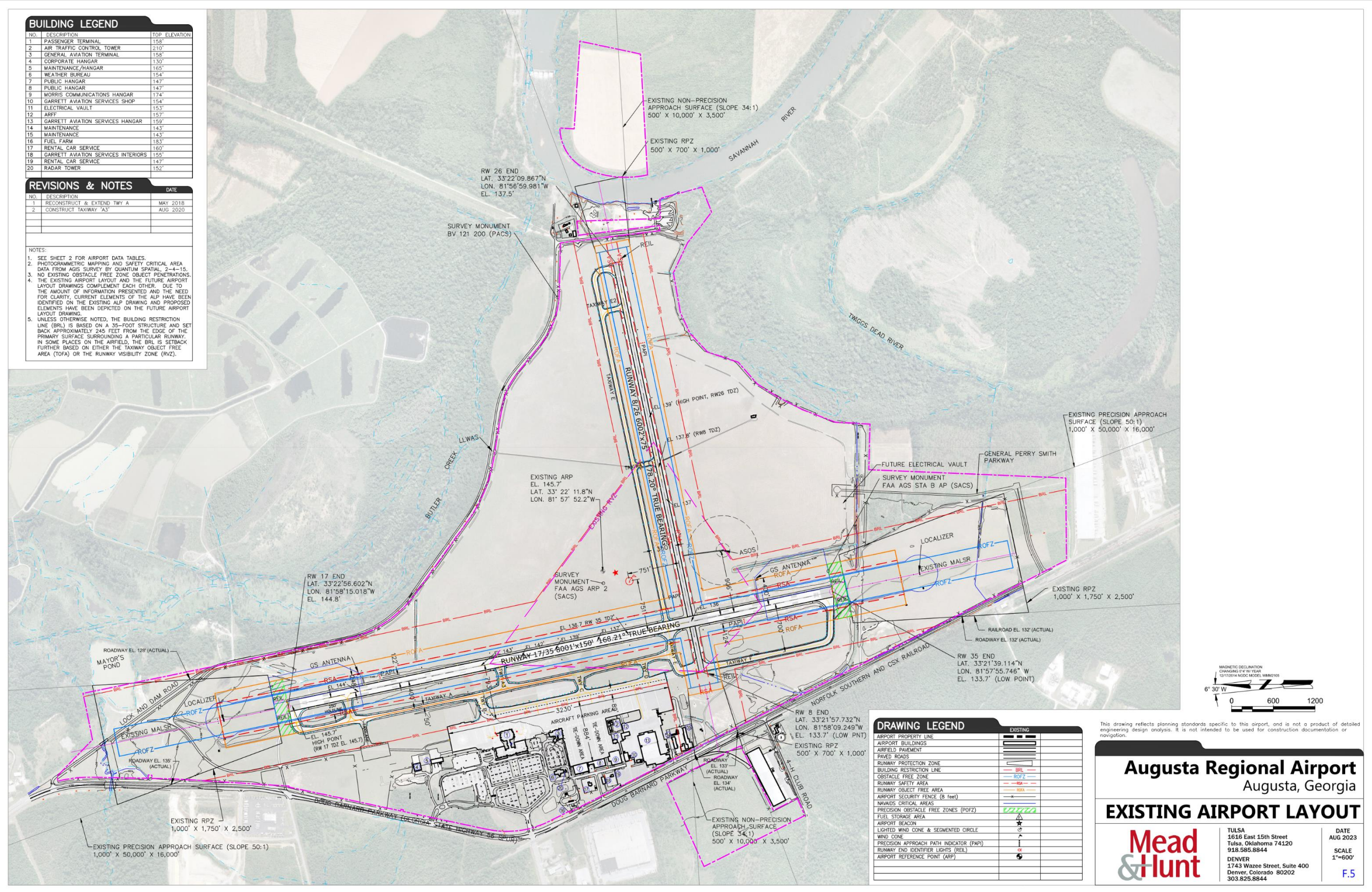
3.2.1 Existing Airport Facilities

Major facilities at AGS include runways, taxiways, aprons, hangars, navigational aids (NAVAIDs), a commercial airline terminal building, a fixed base operator (FBO), an ATCT, and other miscellaneous support facilities. See **Figure 3.1 Existing Airport Layout Plan** for a graphic representation of airport facilities and their locations on Airport property.

The Airport's existing runways are designated as 17/35 and 8/26. Runway 17/35 is oriented in a north-south direction while 8/26 is oriented east-west. Runway 17/35 is 8,001 feet long, 150 feet wide, and constructed of concrete. Runway 8/26 is 6,002 feet long, 75 feet wide, and constructed of asphalt. Both runways are reported to be in good condition on the FAA Form 5010-1, *Airport Master Record* (last inspection date of August 2023).

A network of taxiways provides access between the runways and apron areas. Taxiway A is a partial parallel taxiway for Runway 17/35, with Taxiways A1, A2, and A3 serving as connectors. Taxiways B, C, and D provide access between the apron areas and Taxiway A. Taxiway E is a full-length parallel taxiway for Runway 8/26 and is supported by Taxiways E1, E2, and E3. Lastly, Taxiway F serves as a partial parallel taxiway for Runway 17/35 at the approach end of Runway 35.

Figure 3.1 Existing Airport Layout Plan



Visual NAVAIDs at AGS include:

- Rotating beacon
- Wind indicator
- Segmented circle
- High Intensity Runway Lights (HIRL) for Runway 17/35
- Medium Intensity Runway Lights (MIRL) for Runway 8/26
- A 4-light Precision Approach Path Indicator (PAPI) at both ends of Runway 17/35 and Runway 8/26
- A medium intensity approach lighting system with runway alignment indicator lights (MALSR) at both ends of Runway 17/35
- Runway End Identifier Lights (REIL) at both ends of Runway 8/26

In addition to visual NAVAIDs, the Airport is also equipped with electronic NAVAIDs to help pilots navigate in inclement weather. Existing electronic NAVAIDs include an Instrument Landing System (ILS) approach for both ends of Runway 17/35 and Area Navigation (RNAV) Global Positioning System (GPS) approaches for both ends of Runway 17/35 and Runway 8/26.

Two aprons serve the commercial airline terminal building, FBO, and general aviation (GA) related facilities. The commercial airline terminal building is adjacent to the commercial service apron and has six aircraft gates, two of which are equipped with jet bridges that provide weather protected access for passengers. Augusta Regional Airport Aviation Services is the Airport's FBO, which is south of the commercial airline terminal building and adjacent to the GA apron. Augusta Regional Airport Aviation Services provides aviation services to GA users including:

- Ground handling
- Fuel sales.
- Pilot lounge
- Conference rooms
- Flight planning room
- Private shower
- Hangar leasing
- Ground Power Units
- Aircraft parking (ramp or tiedown)
- Courtesy vehicles
- Catering

Three GA hangars are along the west side of the GA apron, while the Airport's ATCT and Aircraft Rescue and Firefighting (ARFF) facility are on the south side of this apron.

A third apron used for additional GA aircraft parking is located south of the GA apron.

Immediately north, south, and west of the commercial airline terminal building are parking lots that provide parking spaces for passengers, rental car companies, Airport employees, as well as taxis and other commercial vehicles. A parking lot immediately west of the FBO provides parking spaces for general aviation users and Airport employees.



AGS Airport Traffic Control Tower

Source: The Augusta Chronicle

Vehicular access to AGS is provided via Doug Barnard Parkway, which runs in a north-south direction on the west side of the Airport. Doug Barnard Parkway intersects Interstate 520 north of AGS and Tobacco Road immediately west of the Airport's parking facilities. Tobacco Road provides access to State Route 56 west of the Airport.

3.3 Resources Considered But Not Affected By the Proposed Project

During the preparation of this EA, it was determined that the proposed project would have no effect on some environmental resource categories. The reasons for the proposed project having no effect on the resource categories are discussed in the following sections.

3.3.1 Coastal Resources

The *Coastal Zone Management Act of 1972* (16 U.S.C. §§ 1451-1466) established the Federal Coastal Zone Management Program to encourage and assist states in preparing and implementing management programs to "preserve, protect, develop, and where possible, to restore or enhance the resources of the nation's coastal zone." In addition, the *Coastal Barrier Resources Act of 1982* requires that no new federal expenditures or financial assistance may be made available for construction projects within the boundaries of the Coastal Barriers Resource System. Executive Order 13089, *Coral Reef Protection* requires federal agencies to "identify any actions that might affect coral reef ecosystems, protect and enhance the conditions of these ecosystems, and ensure that the actions carried out, authorized, or funded by federal agencies will not negatively impact or degrade coral reef ecosystems."

AGS is more than 100 miles inland from the Atlantic Ocean and, according to mapping available from the GADNR Coastal Resources Division (see **Appendix A – Agency & Tribal Coordination**), is not included in the Coastal Zone Management Area of the Georgia Coastal Management Program. Therefore, impacts

to coastal resources are not expected from implementation of either the Build Alternative or the No Action Alternative.

3.3.2 Farmlands

The *Farmland Protection Policy Act of 1981* (FPPA) described in 7 U.S.C. §§ 4201-4209 was enacted to minimize the extent to which federal actions and programs contribute to the unnecessary and irreversible conversion of farmland to non-agricultural uses. Based on the U.S. Department of Agriculture's (USDA) Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) website providing guidance for implementing the FPPA, "farmland includes prime farmland, unique farmland, and land of statewide or local importance. Farmland subject to FPPA requirements does not have to be currently used for cropland. It can be forest land, pastureland, cropland, or other land, but not water or urban built-up land."³

Prime farmland has the best combination of physical and chemical characteristics for producing food, forage, fiber, and oilseed crops. Unique farmland is defined as land other than prime farmland that is used to produce specific high-value food and fiber crops such as citrus, tree nuts, olives, cranberries, fruits, and vegetables. Any federal action which may result in conversion of farmland to a non-agricultural use requires coordination with the U.S. Department of Agriculture's (USDA) Natural Resource Conservation Service (NRCS).

A review of farmland classification maps available from the NRCS indicated the presence of prime farmland in the southwest portion of the project area. However, the Build Alternative does not include land acquisition or conversion of farmland, so it is not subject to the FPPA. Therefore, no farmland will be affected by the proposed project.

3.4 Affected Resources

Three categories of resources could be affected by the Build Alternative. These categories are discussed in detail in the following paragraphs.

3.4.1 Air Quality

An air quality analysis is the measure of the condition of the air in terms of pollutant concentrations. Air quality is regulated by the United States Environmental Protection Agency (USEPA) under the Clean Air Act (CAA) described in 42 U.S.C. §§ 7401- 7671q. The USEPA regulates pollutants to permissible levels via standards called National Ambient Air Quality Standards (NAAQS). In addition to the USEPA, the Georgia Department of Natural Resources' (GADNR) Environmental Protection Division (GAEPD) addresses air quality in the project area. The USEPA has delegated authority to the GAEPD to implement federal air quality requirements in Georgia.

Areas which have concentrations of the criteria pollutants below the NAAQS are designated as "attainment areas." Areas with concentrations of these pollutants above the NAAQS are designated as "nonattainment areas."

³ U.S. Department of Agriculture, Natural Resources Conservation Service. "Farmland Protection Policy Act." Accessed August 18, 2025. (<https://www.nrcs.usda.gov/conservation-basics/natural-resource-concerns/land/cropland/farmland-protection-policy-act>).

3.4.1.1 Affected Environment

According to the USEPA's Green Book National Area and County-Level Multi-Pollutant Information, Richmond County is in attainment for all criteria pollutants.

3.4.1.2 Environmental Consequences

The proposed project is not an exempt or Presumed to Conform (PTC) action. As such, additional screening was conducted using criteria in the FAA Air Quality Handbook. The proposed project would not cause an increase in all aircraft operations of more than 14,000 annual operations, nor would it cause a projected increase of aircraft delays to exceed 340,000 minutes annually, nor would it cause an additional 25 million Vehicle Miles Traveled (VMT) from on-road vehicles each year. Additionally, construction of the Build Alternative would not result in the use of more than 125 pieces of construction equipment and/or ground service equipment in a year. Therefore, the General Conformity *de minimis* thresholds are not expected to be exceeded by the Build Alternative.

Temporary, short-term air quality impacts from construction, such as the creation of dust from ground disturbing activities and emissions from equipment operation, would result from implementation of the Build Alternative. Long-term impacts are not expected from the Build Alternative as the completed facilities will be used only for the storage of aircraft that will have no significant air quality impact. No impacts to air quality would result from implementation of the No Action Alternative.

Since there are no significant impacts anticipated, no specific mitigation is proposed. However, to further reduce the potential for temporary air quality impacts for both workers and the surrounding area, the following BMPs should be considered during construction activities under the Build Alternative where feasible:

- Use low-sulfur diesel fuel (less than 0.05 percent sulfur).
- Retrofit engines with an exhaust filtration device to capture diesel particulate matter before it enters the project area.
- Position the exhaust pipe so that the diesel fumes are directed away from the operator and nearby workers, thereby reducing the fume concentration to which personnel are exposed.
- Use catalytic converters to reduce carbon monoxide, aldehydes, and hydrocarbons in diesel fumes. These devices must be used with low sulfur fuels.
- Use climate-controlled cabs that are pressurized and equipped with high efficiency particulate air (HEPA) filters to reduce the operator's exposure to diesel fumes. Pressurization ensures that air is moved from the inside to the outside. HEPA filters ensure that any incoming air is filtered first.
- Regularly maintain diesel engines, which is essential to keeping exhaust emissions low, and follow the manufacturer's recommended maintenance schedule. For example, blue/black smoke indicates that an engine requires servicing or tuning.
- Reduce exposure through work practices and training, such as turning off engines when vehicles are stopped for more than a few minutes, training diesel operators to perform routine inspections, and maintaining filtration devices.
- Purchase new vehicles that are equipped with the most advanced emission control systems available.

- With older vehicles, use electric starting aids as block heaters to warm the engine to reduce diesel emissions.

3.4.2 Biological Resources

Biological resources include plants (vegetation), animals (wildlife), and the habitats where they occur. Habitats are the resources and conditions that support the continuous existence of plants or animals in any particular area. Together, biological resources form ecosystems, which are dynamic and respond over time to changes in the environment, whether natural or human induced. Biological resources provide aesthetic, recreational, and socioeconomic values to society, as well as being valuable in their own right. Accordingly, federal and state laws and statutes exist to protect certain species and habitats of special importance.

Major land cover types in the project study area with potential to provide habitat for wildlife include: an herbaceous plant-dominated land cover (herb cover), woody plant-dominated land cover (woody plant cover), and the built environment. In general, herb cover within the Airport has been substantially altered from its native state and does not provide suitable habitat for native wildlife. Within the remaining portion of the project area, woody plant cover is found outside developed parcels and transportation corridors and makes up a small section along Dixon Airline Road.

Early agency coordination with federal and state regulatory agencies with interest or jurisdiction over biological resources in the project area was conducted at the onset of this project. Their response letters are found in **Appendix A –Agency & Tribal Coordination**. Details on the biological resources in the project area, including U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) and GADNR consultation and additional analysis of each listed species are presented below.

3.4.2.1 Endangered & Threatened Species

The Endangered Species Act of 1973 (ESA, 16 U.S.C. §1531-1544) and subsequent amendments require the conservation of federally listed threatened and endangered plant and animal species, and critical habitats in which they are found. A species is considered endangered if it is in danger of extinction throughout all or a significant amount of its range. Threatened species are defined as those that are likely to become endangered in the foreseeable future. The USFWS administers the ESA primarily for land and freshwater species and designates critical habitat for species protected under the ESA. Section 7 of the ESA requires all federal agencies to consult with the USFWS, as applicable, before initiating any action that may affect a listed species or designated critical habitat. Candidate species, which may be listed as threatened or endangered in the future, are not provided any statutory protection under the ESA but conservation efforts are encouraged.

At the state level, the *Georgia Endangered Wildlife Act of 1973* (Georgia Wildlife Act) provides for the identification, inventory and protection of species that are rare, unusual, or in danger of extinction within the state. The Wildlife Resources Division of the GADNR administers and enforces this law.

3.4.2.1.1 Affected Environment

To determine the presence of threatened and endangered species and evaluate the potential impacts from the proposed project at the federal and state level, a qualified biologist conducted on-site species evaluation

and wetland and stream delineation in April of 2024 within the project study area. An additional site visit was conducted in October of 2024 to confirm the absence of Georgia Aster within the project study area as requested by further coordination with the USFWS.

The USFWS' Information for Planning and Consultation (IPaC) database and GADNR Wildlife Resources Division's Biodiversity Portal provided a list of federally and state listed species related to the proposed project (accessed January 2025) , which is presented in **Table 3.1 Endangered and Threatened Species**. The table includes the Bald Eagle, which is no longer protected under the ESA but is afforded protection under the *Bald and Golden Eagle Protection Act of 1940* (BGEPA). Details for each of the species included in **Table 3.1** are included in **Appendix B – Biological Assessment**. According to the IPaC database, there is no designated critical habitat protected under the ESA within the project study area. Site visits in April and October of 2024 confirmed this and found that the Build Alternative would have a biological conclusion of “No Effect” on all federally listed species.

Common Name	Status	Potential to Occur in Action Area	Effects Determination*
Relict Trillium	Federal - Endangered	Low	NE
Ocmulgee Skullcap	Federal - Endangered	Low	NE
Monarch Butterfly	Federal – Proposed Threatened	Low	NE
Bald Eagle	Protected under BGEPA*	Low	NE
Tricolored Bat	Federal – Proposed Endangered	Low	MANLAA
Georgia Aster	State - Threatened	Medium	NE
Rafinesque's Big-eared Bat	State – Rare	Low	MANLAA
Gray Bat	State – Endangered	Low	MANLAA
Northern Long-eared Bat	State – Endangered	Low	MANLAA
Indiana Bat	State – Endangered	Low	MANLAA
Bell's Roadside-Skipper	State - Conservation Concern	Medium	MANLAA
Golden-banded Skipper	State - Conservation Concern	Low	MANLAA
Frosted Elfin	State - Conservation Concern	Low	MANLAA
Painted Bunting	State - Conservation Concern	Medium	MANLAA
Aaron's Skipper	State - Conservation Concern	Low	MANLAA
Northern Yellow Bat	State - Conservation Concern	Low	MANLAA
Southeastern Bat	State - Conservation Concern	Low	MANLAA
Eastern small-footed Bat	State - Conservation Concern	Low	MANLAA
Little Brown Bat	State - Conservation Concern	Low	MANLAA

Source: U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) Information for Planning and Consultation (IPaC) Database;
Georgia Department of Natural Resources Wildlife Resources Division Biodiversity Portal, April 2024

Note: *NE = No Effect; MANLAA = May Affect, Not Likely to Adversely Affect; MALLA = May Affect, Likely to Adversely Affect;
N/A = Not Applicable

3.4.2.1.2 Environmental Consequences

For the state listed bats and if the tricolored bat becomes federally endangered, the Build Alternative 'May affect, but is not likely to adversely affect' these species of bats, and tree clearing will either be totally avoided, or the proposed project construction will follow a tree clearing moratorium between May 1 through July 15 and December 15 through February 15, as provided by Georgia USFWS.

A 'May affect, not likely to adversely affect' determination for Georgia Species of Conservation Concern is based on their suitable habitat and the nature of the project. Given these are not legally protected species, no concurrence was provided by GADNR and the potential for occurrence in the project study area and their effects determination is purely for planning purposes.

Implementation of the Build Alternative will have no significant impacts to federal or state species and no further action is required under Section 7(a)(2) of the ESA. Should a new species be listed, or new data shows impacts to listed species may occur, then consultation will be resumed. Only a small number of trees adjacent to Dixon Airline Road might be lost during installation of utilities. Conversion of AGS maintained grassland would occur with the Build Alternative. Other biological resources such as protected habitat will not be physically altered or destroyed.

3.4.2.2 Migratory Birds

The *Migratory Bird Treaty Act of 1918* (MBTA) described in 16 U.S.C. § 703 et seq. and its amendments are the main driver for the protection of migratory birds in the United States. Executive Order 13186, *Responsibilities of Federal Agencies to Protect Migratory Birds*, also obligates all federal agencies that engage in or authorize activities that might affect migratory birds, to minimize those effects and encourage conservation measures that will improve bird populations. Executive Order 13186 provides for the protection of both migratory birds and migratory bird habitats.

3.4.2.2.1 Affected Environment

In a biological sense, a migratory bird is an avian that has a seasonal and somewhat predictable pattern of movement. Generally, migratory birds are defined as all native birds in the United States, except those non-migratory species such as quail and turkey that are managed by individual states.

The USFWS' IPaC database identified 11 migratory birds likely to exist within the project study area (see **Appendix B – Biological Assessment**).

3.4.2.2.2 Environmental Consequences

Impacts to migratory birds that could result from the project include the inadvertent destruction of active nests (eggs and/or young) from construction equipment and grading activities. Migratory birds with active nests in these areas may also be harmed by construction equipment but are generally expected to fly away from danger. Birds are also likely to avoid building nests in active construction sites. Additionally, the construction of detention ponds for the Build Alternative will be in accordance with AC 150/5200-33C, *Hazardous Wildlife Attractants on or near Airports*, as to not become an attractant for migratory birds.

Prior to construction activities taking place in areas with potential bird nesting habitat and during the breeding season (i.e., March through August), the affected areas should be surveyed for nesting activity. This is to avoid impacting active nests or young. Site surveys were conducted in April and October of 2024 by a qualified biologist which revealed no potential habitat for migratory bird species. The No Action Alternative would have no impacts on migratory birds.

3.4.3 Climate⁴

In the U.S., the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) reported that commercial aviation accounted for 6.6% of total carbon dioxide (CO₂) emissions in 2013. Ongoing research aims to better understand aviation's specific climate impacts, though uncertainties exist regarding their timing and magnitude. Greenhouse Gases (GHGs), primarily from fossil fuel combustion, include CO₂, methane, nitrous oxide, and others, with CO₂ being the most significant due to its long atmospheric lifespan.

3.4.3.1 Affected Environment

According to the Georgia Environmental Protection Division (EPD) and the U.S. EPA, Georgia was responsible for 159 million metric tons of carbon dioxide equivalent (MMTCO₂e) emissions in 2021, accounting for 2.5 percent of total U.S. emissions that year. Since 2005, Georgia's total emissions have generally declined, largely due to reductions from the electric power industry as coal plants have been retired and replaced with natural gas, nuclear power, and renewable energy sources like solar. As emissions from the electric power sector have decreased, transportation has emerged as the largest emitting sector.

3.4.3.2 Environmental Consequences

The proposed action will result in short-term GHG emissions due to temporary construction activities and related vehicle travel by contractors. Construction emission sources for GHG emissions include exhaust emissions from off-road construction vehicles and on-road vehicles. The project will not change Airport operations, such as the number or type of aircraft operating at AGS or surface transportation patterns, and therefore, will not result in permanent changes or direct impacts to operational GHG emissions at the Airport.

It is expected that less than 125 pieces of standard construction equipment and ground service equipment will be used in the construction of the Build Alternative. Construction activity is anticipated to take approximately one year to complete. GHG emissions from the construction equipment will be a very small fragment of total annual Georgia emissions. Therefore, it is not anticipated that any significant effects to the climate will occur by implementing either the Build Alternative or the No Action Alternative.

3.4.4 Department of Transportation Act (DOT) Section 4(f) and Section 6(f)

Section 4(f) of the Department of Transportation Act (49 U.S.C. § 303) requires that the Secretary of Transportation not approve any program or project that requires the use of any publicly owned land unless there is no feasible and prudent alternative to the use of such land. Common Section 4(f) resources include:

⁴ Consistent with FAA Order 1050.1F, this EA includes an assessment of climate impacts, but it does not include an evaluation of social cost of carbon or a monetization of impacts of greenhouse gas emissions, in accordance with Executive Order 14154, *Unleashing American Energy*, and Office of Management and Budget guidance (OMB memorandum M-25-27, dated May 5, 2025).

- Public park
- Recreation area
- Wildlife and waterfowl refuge of national, state, or local significance
- Land from a historic site of national, state, or local significance as determined by the officials having jurisdiction

A Section 4(f) use would occur if the proposed action or alternative(s) would involve an actual physical taking of Section 4(f) property through purchase of land or a permanent easement, physical occupation of a portion or all of the property, or alteration of structures or facilities on the property.

A temporary occupancy of a Section 4(f) property for project construction-related activities is usually so minimal that it does not constitute a use within the meaning of Section 4(f). However, a temporary occupancy would be considered a use if:

- The duration of the occupancy of the Section 4(f) property is greater than the time needed to build a project and there is a change in ownership of the land,
- The nature and magnitude of changes to the 4(f) property are more than minimal,
- Anticipated permanent adverse physical impacts would occur and a temporary or permanent interference with Section 4(f) activities or purposes would occur,
- The land use is not fully returned to existing condition, or
- There is no documented agreement with appropriate agencies having jurisdiction over the Section 4(f) property.

Use, within the meaning of Section 4(f), includes not only the physical taking of such property, but also “constructive use.” The concept of constructive use is that a project that does not physically use land in a park, for example, may still, by means of noise, air pollution, water pollution, or other impacts, dissipate its aesthetic value, harm its wildlife, restrict its access, and take it in every practical sense. Constructive use occurs when the impacts of a project on a Section 4(f) property are so severe that the activities, features, or attributes that qualify the property for protection under Section 4(f) are substantially impaired. Substantial impairment occurs only when the protected activities, features, or attributes of the Section 4(f) property that contribute to its significance or enjoyment are substantially diminished.

Section 6(f) of the Land and Water Conservation Fund Act of 1965 (16 U.S.C. §§ 4601-4 et seq.) prevents conversion of lands purchased or developed with Land and Water Conservation Fund Act funds to non-recreation uses, unless the Secretary of the Department of the Interior (DOI), through the National Park Service (NPS), approves the conversion.

3.4.4.1 Affected Environment

There are two Section 4(f) resources near the project study area. The first is Mayor’s Fishing Hole, which is located approximately 1,500 feet north/northeast of the proposed project area, east of Runway 17/35 and Lock and Dam Road. The second is Phinizy Swamp Nature Park, which is located approximately 1,600 feet east of the project area, east of Runway 17/35 and Lock and Dam Road.

Additionally, according to the Land and Water Conservation Fund Coalition's Interactive Mapper (<https://lwcfc coalition.org/map>), the nearest LWCF funded property is Fleming Sports Complex located approximately 3.5 miles northwest of the project area. This location is well outside the expanded project study area boundary and is not expected to be affected by the proposed action.

3.4.4.2 Environmental Consequences

The implementation of the Build Alternative (i.e. temporary construction) or the No Action Alternative will not result in Section 4(f) or 6(f) impacts caused by physical use. It is also not expected to result in the constructive use of the two Section 4(f) resources identified above due to the temporary nature of the construction and the distance between the project study area and the resources. Furthermore, the proposed project, when completed, and the No Action Alternative will not lead to increases in existing or future aircraft activity or vehicle operations. Consequently, no Section 4(f) or 6(f) properties will be adversely affected through constructive use.

3.4.5 Hazardous Materials, Solid Waste, and Pollution Prevention

Hazardous materials are those which can pose a risk to health, safety, and property, including hazardous wastes and hazardous substances as well as other materials. Hazardous materials are regulated under several statutes, including the *Comprehensive Environmental Response, Compensation, and Liability Act* (42 U.S.C. §§ 9601-9675), the *Resource Conservation and Recovery Act* (RCRA) described in 42 U.S.C. §§ 6901-6992k, and the *Toxic Substance Control Act* (15 U.S.C. §§ 2601-2697). Solid waste is discarded material that falls into specific regulatory definitions; solid waste is regulated under RCRA. Pollution prevention refers to efforts to avoid, prevent, or reduce discharges and emissions of pollutants.

3.4.5.1 Affected Environment A Phase I Environmental Site Assessment (ESA) was completed in February 2024 in accordance with the American Society for Testing and Materials (ASTM) E1527-21, *Standard Practice for Environmental Site Assessments: Phase I Environmental Site Assessment Process*. The Phase I ESA provided findings of 11 separate sites, but only one site, Site N6, is located within the 0.125-mile buffer zone of the project study area. This site is described below and is shown in **Figure 3.2 Hazardous Material Sites**.

Site North 6 (N6)

Venator America LLC is associated with a spill in the database reports. Venator America LLC is located on the west side of Doug Barnard Parkway, northwest of the northern part of the proposed project property. A spill of an unknown amount of iron oxide occurred into a detention pond and began leaking into the outfall on 02/24/2021. The spill contaminated 1,000,000 gallons of untreated wastewater. Heavy storms caused the detention pond to overflow which resulted in contaminated water flowing into Butler Creek to the north. Previous agency analysis of the discharge determined the spill was below hazardous quantity. Extensive remediation activities were conducted for the detention pond, the ditch, and creek. An agency site visit on 07/21/2021 confirmed the status of the remediation and found that the pond was clean and revegetated. The ditch was also found to be clean. No additional evidence of contamination from the site was identified.

Figure 3.2 Hazardous Material Sites



Source: Phase I *Environmental Site Assessment – Augusta Regional Airport, Augusta Georgia*, prepared by Mead & Hunt, Inc., February 2024

3.4.5.2 Environmental Consequences

The FAA has not established a significance threshold for hazardous waste, solid waste, or pollution prevention. However, Exhibit 4-1 of FAA Order 1050.1F offers guidance to consider whether the proposed project could:

- Violate any laws or regulation regarding hazardous waste.
- Involve a contaminated site, or if actions within a contaminated site are appropriately mitigated.
- Produce an appreciable amount of hazardous waste.

- Generate a different quantity or type of solid waste that could exceed local capacity or use different methods of collection and disposal.

The contractor will be required to have a Spill Prevention, Control, and Countermeasure (SPCC) plan in place to be implemented if a spill occurs during construction. Solid waste generated from the construction of the proposed project is not anticipated to exceed the capacity of local landfills nor are hazardous materials and wastes expected to be generated from the operation of the proposed project. Additionally, any waste generated through proposed project improvements will be disposed of in compliance with all federal, state, and local regulations. Contractors will be required to dispose of all construction wastes in a certified landfill with capacity to accept the waste.

Construction activities associated with the Build Alternative could use materials that constitute hazardous substances such as fuel, oil, lubricants, paints, solvents, concrete-curing compounds, fertilizers, herbicides, and pesticides. The contractor would be required to follow regulations outlined in FAA AC 150/5370-1H, *Standard Specifications for Construction of Airports*. BMPs would be used throughout construction to reduce/minimize any short-term localized environmental impacts.

The operation of the Build Alternative would not produce any hazardous waste nor a significant amount of solid waste. The developer has stated that no aircraft maintenance, fueling, or the use of other lubricants and materials to support aircraft storage will be employed during operation of the facilities.

Hazardous materials impacts are not expected from implementation of either the Build Alternative or the No Action Alternative.

3.4.6 Historical, Architectural, Archaeological, and Cultural Resources

Historical, architectural, archaeological, and cultural resources include a variety of sites, properties, and facilities related to activities and societal and cultural institutions. Such resources express past and present elements of human culture and are important to a community. Section 106 of the *National Historic Preservation Act*, 54 U.S.C. § 300101 (Section 106), requires federal agencies to consider the effects their actions may have on these properties.

In addition to Section 106, another law related to the protection of cultural resources relevant to this Proposed Action is the *Archaeological and Historic Preservation Act of 1974*, “[p]rovides the survey, recovery, and preservation of significant scientific, prehistorical, historical, archaeological, or paleontological data when such data may be destroyed or irreparably lost due to a Federal, Federally licensed, or Federally funded project.”

3.4.6.1 Affected Environment

The project study area consists of mostly disturbed areas from past airport development of the existing airfield pavements, structures, access and perimeter roads, and as staging areas for past construction projects. The very northern portion of the project study area is primarily undisturbed grassland but has been maintained with regular mowings. No existing buildings or structures are present within the project study area.

3.4.6.2 Environmental Consequences

Preliminary information concerning additional improvements to AGS was submitted by the FAA to the Georgia Historic Preservation Division (HPD) in April 2024. HPD responded in May 2024 requesting a Phase I archaeological survey of the proposed project's area of potential effect, and an architectural history survey of the whole Airport as a potential historic district. An archaeological survey was prepared within the project study area proposed ground disturbance, and an architectural historic survey of the built environment was prepared within the Airport property. The architectural historic survey and archaeological survey can be found in **Appendix F -- Historic Resources Survey Report** and **Appendix G -- Archaeological Survey Report**, respectively.

During the architectural historic survey, two resources were surveyed and evaluated to assess whether they are eligible for listing in the National Register, and therefore, qualify as Historic Properties under Section 106. Those resources included the Georgia Aero Tech/Bush Field Historic District and Hangar 1. Ultimately both resources were found to not have significance under any National Register criteria.

The archaeological survey fieldwork identified one piece of mortar and some brick flecks which represented an isolated find. Per state standards, isolated finds are not considered eligible for listing in the NRHP (GCPA 2019:2).

For both the architectural historic and archaeological surveys it was recommended that no further archaeological consideration and no future historic preservation activities are needed for the Airport. HPD responded on May 22, 2025, with a concurrence of no adverse effect to historic properties within the project boundaries. See **Appendix A – Agency & Tribal Coordination** for correspondence from the HPD.

Historical, architectural, archaeological, and cultural resources impacts are not expected from implementation of either the Build Alternative or the No Action Alternative. No cultural resources, archaeological sites, or historic properties will be physically altered or destroyed.

3.4.7 Land Use

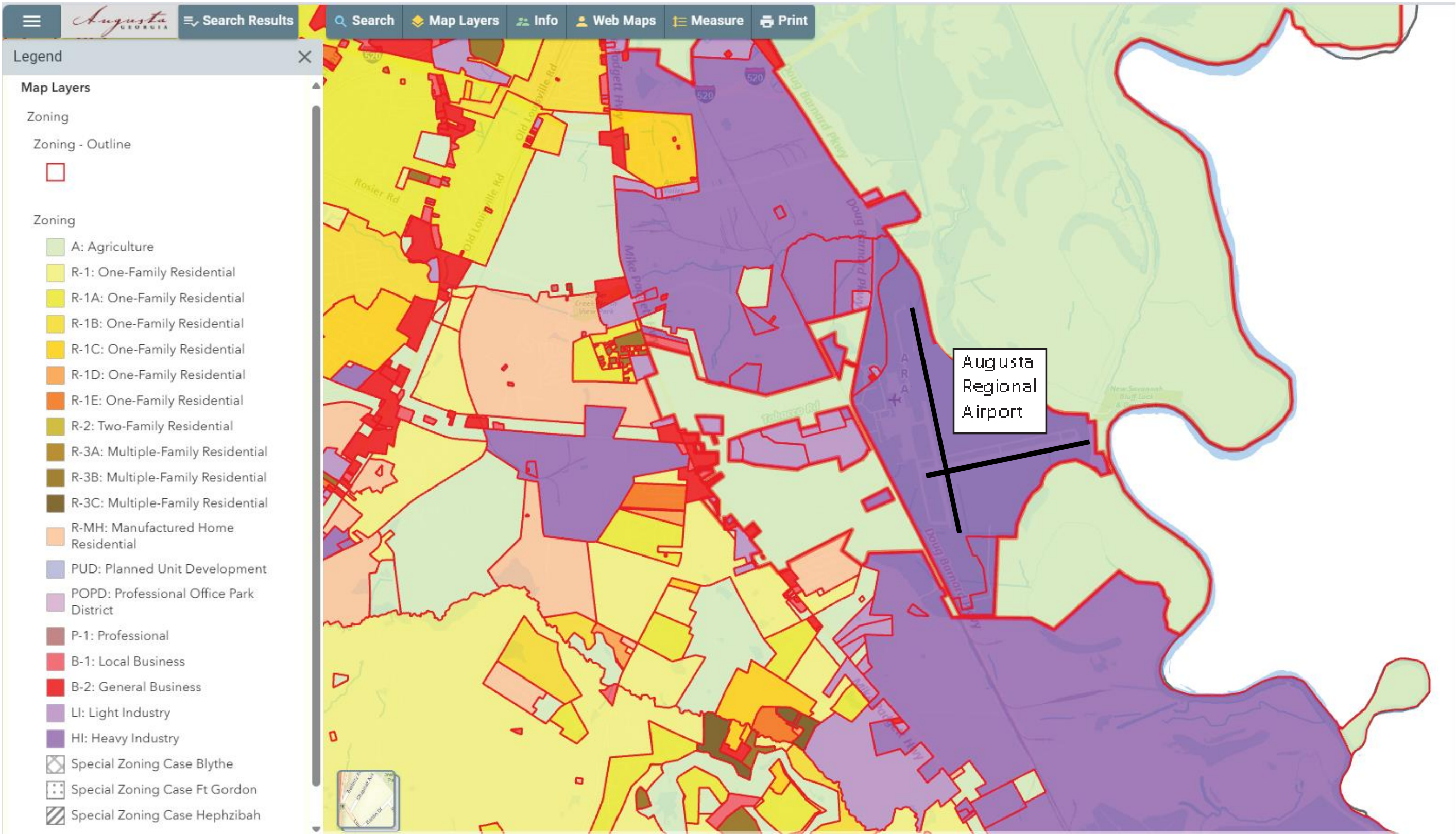
The FAA decision-making process must consider and disclose the potential impacts of a proposed action and its alternatives on the quality of the human environment for the area concerned. If an inconsistency exists, the FAA should describe the extent to which it would reconcile its proposed action with the existing land use plan. The FAA also requires airport operators to ensure that actions are taken to establish and maintain compatible land uses around their airports.

According to FAA Advisory Circular (AC) 150/5200-33C, *Hazardous Wildlife Attractants on or Near Airports*, the FAA requires that consideration be given to the potential increases in wildlife attractants that a project may create and that existing incompatible land uses near airports be assessed, such as solid waste landfills, crops, open water, and wetlands that may act as wildlife attractants.

3.4.7.1 Affected Environment

The authority to enact zoning codes lies at the local level. Planning and zoning around AGS are under the jurisdiction of Augusta-Richmond County, which is the consolidated city-county government formed between the City of Augusta and Richmond County. According to the Augusta-Richmond County zoning map (see **Figure 3.3 Augusta-Richmond County Zoning Map**), AGS is zoned as “HI: Heavy Industry.” Land adjacent to AGS is zoned as “HI” Heavy Industry,” “LI: Light Industry,” and “A: Agriculture.”

Figure 3.3 Augusta-Richmond County Zoning Map



Source: Augusta Richmond-Richmond County – Augusta Maps Online, 2025

3.4.7.2 Environmental Consequences

No land use classification changes would occur with either the Build Alternative or the No Action Alternative. No noise sensitive areas (residential, educational, health, religious, park or recreational, wildlife refuges, or cultural and historical) will be introduced or impacted. In compliance with 49 U.S.C. § 47017 (a)(10), the Airport has been proactive in restricting incompatible land uses adjacent to and within the immediate vicinity of AGS when feasible. The project area boundary will occur on existing Airport property and existing land use patterns will remain unchanged. The Build Alternative is considered compatible with the existing zoning and land uses of the surrounding area, as shown in **Figure 3.3 Augusta-Richmond County Zoning Map**.

Future land uses for Augusta are outlined in the *Comprehensive Plan: Envision Augusta*, which was last updated in October 2023. Land use types are categorized into six “character areas”, each with its own vision and guidelines for future land use decisions. AGS falls within the East Augusta boundaries for future land use considerations. The Comprehensive Plan outlines the vision for East Augusta, emphasizing the need for both residential and industrial development with a clear separation between the two. Additionally, the plan indicates that new industrial development will be concentrated near AGS. Based on the Comprehensive Plan and existing land uses near the Airport, compatible land uses such as light industrial, heavy industrial and agricultural activities will continue near the proposed project area and the Airport as a whole. Therefore, no adverse effect on planned land uses will result from either the Build Alternative or the No Build Alternative.

Neither the Build Alternative nor the No Action Alternative will increase wildlife attractants or introduce new wildlife that are hazardous to aircraft operations. No wetlands, open water, or habitat will be created from implementation of the Build Alternative.

In addition, neither the Build Alternative nor the No Action Alternative are expected to increase congestion, cause degradation of level of service, or permanently close any surface roads within, or adjacent to, the project area. Traffic from construction vehicles would be managed to avoid and minimize any impacts to local roads by defining haul routes and by scheduling the arrival and departure times of vehicles so that normal traffic patterns are not interrupted. Any potential construction impacts to surface transportation would be temporary in nature.

Based on the above information, and coordination with AGS, it is determined that the Build Alternative and the No Action Alternative are compatible with existing and planned land uses and zoning requirements. Since construction will occur on existing airport property, land use impacts associated with the Build Alternative will not be significant and no conflicts with local, county, or regional planning efforts are evident.

3.4.8 Natural Resources and Energy Supply

Executive Order 13834, *Efficient Federal Operations* directs projects to examine the potential changes in the demand for energy or natural resources that would have a significant measurable effect on local supplies due to the implementation of the Build Alternative or the No Action Alternative. Energy requirements associated with an airport usually fall into two categories: (1) those which relate to changed demands for stationary facilities and (2) those which involve the movement of air and ground vehicles.

Examples of these include airfield lighting, terminal building heating and cooling systems, and aircraft and passenger vehicles.

FAA guidance typically states that airport improvement projects do not generally increase the consumption of energy or natural resources to the point that significant impacts would occur unless it is found that implementation of a proposed project would cause demand to exceed supply.

3.4.8.1 Affected Environment

Existing electricity is supplied to AGS by Georgia Power and Augusta Richmond County provides water service to AGS and its tenants. AGS has an account with SCANA Energy for natural gas.

3.4.8.2 Environmental Consequences

Some natural resources will be used during construction of the Build Alternative such as fuel, water, aggregate, metals, and raw building materials. No fill would be required as there is adequate material on site. However, consumption of natural resources would be temporary and short-term and would not be of quantities that result in resource shortages in the area. BMPs to reduce energy consumption and ensure the most efficient use of fuel during construction activities will be employed, where applicable, and would include all vehicles and equipment be in good working order, checked for leaks, and repairs made immediately. Additionally, idling control measures to reduce energy consumption would be used, such as implementing an equipment shut-off policy, optimizing work schedules to minimize waiting time, and training equipment operators on proper idling techniques.

Upon completion, electric, water, and gas use required to operate the Build Alternative is not expected to increase significantly. The Build Alternative will not require the consumption of petroleum-based fuels or other natural resources in quantities that would surpass the existing consumption at AGS as the developer has stated no fueling of aircraft will be conducted at the proposed facilities.

3.4.9 Noise and Noise Compatible Land Use

According to FAA Order 5050.4B, *NEPA Implementing Instructions for Airport Actions*, “the compatibility of existing and planned land uses in the vicinity of an airport is usually associated with the extent of the noise impacts related to that airport.” An FAA noise analysis primarily focuses on how proposed airport actions would change the cumulative noise exposure of individuals to aircraft noise in areas surrounding the airport. As stated in FAA Order 1050.1F, the significance threshold for noise and noise compatible land use is any action that would increase noise by DNL⁵ 1.5 dB or more for a noise exposure level that will be exposed at or above DNL 65 dB level due to a DNL 1.5 dB or greater increase.

3.4.9.1 Affected Environment

Noise is considered unwanted sound that disturbs or interrupts routine activities. The existing AGS noise environment includes aviation noise made by aircraft during departure, arrival, flight, taxiing, and other activities. Non-aviation noise includes the movement of vehicles to and from the Airport. The compatibility

⁵ Day-Night Average Sound Level (DNL). The 24-hour average sound level, in decibels, for the period from midnight to midnight, obtained after the addition of ten decibels to sound levels for the periods between midnight and 7 a.m., and between 10 p.m., and midnight, local time.

of land use around an airport is typically determined based on the level of aircraft noise. The degree of annoyance that people suffer from aircraft noise varies depending upon their activities at any given time.

3.4.9.2 Environmental Consequences

Neither the Build Alternative nor the No Action Alternative will increase aircraft operations, result in changes to the aircraft fleet, or change existing flight patterns. Once operational, a slight shift in vehicular traffic patterns could result from the Build Alternative as AGS visitors are transported to and from their aircraft via different routes than they are currently. However, the increase is not expected to reach the threshold stated above and is not expected to be significant. Therefore, a noise analysis was not completed. Temporary construction noise will occur due to operations of heavy equipment and construction vehicles but will unlikely be distinguishable from background noise levels. Construction staging areas are not allowed near sensitive land uses. The nearest noise sensitive land use is a residence located approximately one mile west of the proposed project site. No impacts on existing and future land use compatibility will occur as the surrounding existing and planned land uses in the vicinity of the proposed project site are compatible with airport generated noise.

3.4.10 Socioeconomics and Children's Environmental Health and Safety Risks

Statutes related to socioeconomic impacts include the *Uniform Relocation Assistance and Real Property Acquisitions Policy Act of 1970* (42 U.S.C. § 61 et seq.). Executive Order 13045, *Protection of Children from Environmental Health Risks and Safety Risks*, and other federal guidance have been issued to address children's environmental health and safety risks.

Airport development projects can impact the socioeconomic conditions of the surrounding community. Such projects have the potential to impact neighboring populations, including children, and may do so disproportionately to the overall area population.

3.4.10.1 Socioeconomic Impacts

Socioeconomics is an umbrella term for a project's social or economic aspects or a combination of the two. A socioeconomic analysis evaluates how elements of the human environment, such as population, employment, housing, and public services, might be affected by a proposed project and alternative(s). The Uniform Relocation Assistance and Real Property Acquisitions Policy Act of 1970 is the main regulation governing socioeconomic. It includes provisions that must be followed if property acquisition or displacement of people would occur due to implementing a proposed project.

3.4.10.1.1 Affected Environment

The ten largest employers in Augusta-Richmond County are presented in **Table 3.2 Top 10 Largest Employers in Augusta-Richmond County, Georgia, 2021**. The data, which comes from 2021, the most recent year of data available, comes from the Augusta Economic Development Authority (AEDA). The AEDA is the single point of contact for economic development projects in August-Richmond County. As shown, the U.S. Army Cyber Center of Excellence & Fort Gordon is by far the largest employer with over 29,200 employees.

Table 3.2
Top 10 Largest Employers in Augusta-Richmond County, Georgia, 2021

Employer	Number of Employees
U.S. Army Cyber Center of Excellence & Fort Gordon	29,252*
Augusta University	6,775
NSA Augusta	6,000
Augusta University Hospitals	5,341
Richmond County School System	4,398
University Hospital	3,000
Augusta-Richmond County	2,840
VA Medical Centers	2,082
Doctors Hospital	1,837
Automatic Data Processing	1,542

Source: Augusta Economic Development Authority, 2021.

Note: *Includes military and civilian employees.

3.4.10.1.2 Environmental Impacts

No land acquisition is required to implement the Build Alternative, so no residential, business, or farm will be impacted. Additionally, neither the Build Alternative nor the No Action Alternative will disrupt established communities, disrupt orderly, planned development, or create appreciable changes in employment. Surface transportation patterns may be altered slightly with the construction of the access road and intersection with Doug Barnard Parkway. However, the changes are not anticipated to be significant as the proposed project will not increase AGS visitor's vehicle trips to and from the Airport but might change the location for a portion of the total vehicles accessing the Airport.

No significant socioeconomic impacts are expected from implementation of either the Build Alternative or the No Action Alternative.

3.4.10.2 Children's Environmental Health and Safety Risks Impacts

Executive Order (EO) 13045, Protection of Children from Environmental Health Risks and Safety Risks, is the primary regulation for the protection of children and requires federal agencies to "analyze their policies, programs, activities, and standards for any environmental health or safety risks that may disproportionately affect children" (FAA, 2020).

3.4.10.2.1 Affected Environment

The three nearest residential neighborhoods are located approximately 1.5 miles to the south, west, and northwest of the project study area. It is assumed the neighborhoods contain children as a review of the U.S. Census Bureau; American Community Survey data indicates that approximately 28 percent of the population within 2 miles of the project study area is under the age of 18.

3.4.10.2.2 Environmental Impacts

In most cases, the significance of impacts to children's environmental health and safety is dependent on the significance of impacts in other environmental categories. The Build Alternative has no significant

impacts to air quality, noise, or other resource categories that may influence the health of the surrounding population, including children. Areas affected by the Build Alternative do not include schools, parks, or other facilities that would otherwise be primarily accessed by children. In addition, as explained above, all construction under the proposed action would occur on Airport owned / publicly owned property. Based on this information, no disproportionate health or safety risks to children are expected. Children's environmental health and safety risks impacts from implementation of either the Build Alternative or the No Action Alternative are not anticipated.

3.4.11 Visual Effects (Including Light Emissions)

The FAA has not established a significance threshold for visual effects. Generally, the level of light emissions considered sufficient to warrant a special study is unusual, for example, occurring when a high-intensity strobe would be shining into a residential area or when apron, parking, or streetlights create a visual impact to pilots. Visual impacts analysis is generally necessary when the proposed action would affect, obstruct, substantially alter, or remove visual resources including buildings, historic sites, or other landscape features, such as topography, water bodies, or vegetation, that are visually important or have unique characteristics.

3.4.11.1 Affected Environment

The existing visual and lighting environments at AGS are typical of most airports. The visual environment consists of the terminal building, hangars, aprons, runways, taxiways, and off-airport industrial buildings. The lighting environment consists of approach lights to Runway ends 17 and 35, runway and taxiway edge lights, streetlights, and building lights.

3.4.11.2 Environmental Consequences

Lighting associated with the Build Alternative will be of similar usage to existing airport hangars, buildings, and surrounding off-airport buildings, so no significant lighting impacts are anticipated. The Build Alternative will not affect, obstruct, substantially alter, or remove visually significant resources. Additionally, impacts on resources that are visually important or have unique characteristics are not anticipated. There are no viewsheds in the project area therefore, impacts on resources are not anticipated.

3.4.12 Water Resources

FAA Order 1050.1F references the *Clean Water Act* (CWA) codified at 33 U.S.C. §§ 1251-1387, which provides the federal government with the authority to regulate activities related to water quality, including controlling discharges, preventing, or minimizing loss of wetlands, and protecting local aquifers or sensitive ecological areas. In essence, the quality of surface water and groundwater should not be degraded by the planned construction or operations associated with a proposed development.

Water resources are surface waters and groundwater that are important to the ecosystem and the human environment. Analysis of water resources includes checking for disruption as well as changes in quality. Because wetlands, floodplains, surface waters, groundwater, and other water resources are all connected within the overall system, this section encompasses an analysis of each

3.4.12.1 Wetlands

Wetlands are areas that support specific vegetation due to inundation or saturation by ground water. Wetlands provide benefits to the natural and human environments that include habitat, water filtration, storage, and recreation. The significance threshold provided in FAA Order 1050.1F for wetlands describe any action that would harm a wetland's ability to protect water supplies, sustain its hydrology, store floodwaters, support wildlife and natural resources, or if it triggers related development that causes these impacts, or conflicts with state wetland strategies.

There are several statutes, regulations, orders, and other requirements related to wetlands. The CWA regulates the discharge of pollutants into Waters of the U.S. (including wetlands) and establishes a program to regulate discharge of fill material into such waters. The CWA also requires projects not to violate water quality standards.

Surface waters or wetlands considered jurisdictional are regulated under the CWA; however, not all surface waters are under the authority of the CWA. The United States Army Corps of Engineers (USACE) makes jurisdictional determination case by case. Non-jurisdictional wetlands are protected under Presidential Executive Order 11990, *Protection of Wetlands*, commonly known as the "No Net Loss" executive order. This executive order directs any project that uses federal funds or is federally approved to mitigate for all wetland impacts that it causes regardless of size or regulatory status.

The *Georgia Erosion and Sedimentation Act of 1975* (GESA) regulates soil erosion and sedimentation resulting from land-disturbing activities. Enforcement of the GESA is the responsibility of the GAEPD, except for certain areas where Local Issuing Authorities (LIAs) permit and monitor construction site erosion under local ordinances that incorporate requirements of the GESA. However, public projects with federal/state funding such as the proposed action remain with an environmental liaison officer within the relevant regional office of the GAEPD.

Additionally, the GESA requires submittal of an Erosion and Sedimentation Control Plan (ESCP) to the GAEPD for any land-disturbing activities involving movement of dirt and/or grading of one acre or more of land. The ESCP must require protections at least as stringent as the National Pollution Discharge Elimination System (NPDES) General Permit. The ESCP will be submitted by the Airport. The plan must also incorporate BMPs, including sound conservation and engineering practices to prevent and minimize erosion and resultant sedimentation, which are consistent with, and no less stringent than, those practices contained in the Georgia Soil and Water Conservation Commission's *Manual for Erosion and Sediment Control in Georgia*, as well as the following:

- Stripping of vegetation, regrading, and other development activities shall be conducted in a manner to minimize erosion.
- Cut and fill operations must be kept to a minimum.
- Development plans must conform to topography and soil type to create the lowest practicable erosion potential.
- Whenever feasible, natural vegetation shall be retained, protected, and supplemented.
- The disturbed area and the duration of exposure to erosive elements shall be kept to a practicable minimum.

- Disturbed soil shall be stabilized as quickly as practicable.
- Temporary vegetation or mulching shall be employed to protect exposed critical areas during development.
- Permanent vegetation and structural erosion control practices shall be installed as soon as practicable.
- To the extent necessary, sediment in run-off water must be trapped using debris basins, sediment basins, silt traps, or similar measures until the disturbed area is stabilized.
- Adequate provisions must be provided to minimize damage from surface water to the cut face of excavations or the sloping of fills.
- Cuts and fills may not endanger adjoining property.
- Fills may not encroach upon natural watercourses or constructed channels in a manner to adversely affect other property owners.
- Grading equipment must cross flowing streams by means of bridges or culverts except when such methods are not feasible, provided, in any case, that such crossings are kept to a minimum.
- Land-disturbing activity plans for erosion, sedimentation and pollution control shall include provisions for treatment or control of any source of sediments and adequate sedimentation control facilities to retain sediments on-site or preclude sedimentation of adjacent waters by more than 25 Nephelometric Turbidity Units for waters supporting warm water fisheries or by more than 10 Nephelometric Turbidity Units for waters classified as trout waters.

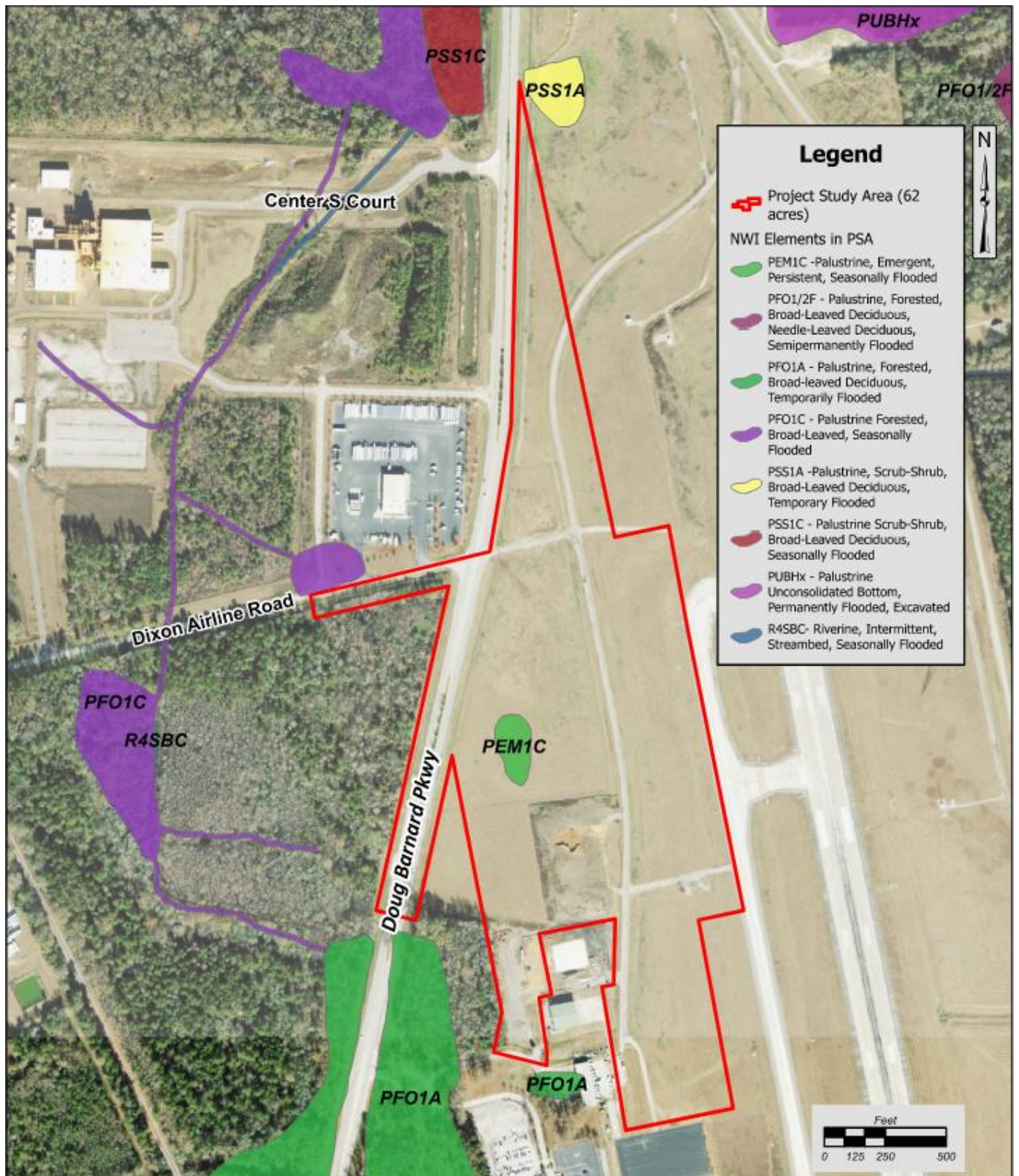
Lastly, the Airport will file a Notice of Intent (NOI) with the GAEPD for coverage under the NPDES General Permit to authorize the discharge of stormwater from sites where construction activities will result in contiguous land disturbances of one acre or more.

3.4.12.1.1 Affected Environment

To determine the locations and limits of the project area wetlands, appraise their types and functions, assess their regulatory status, and evaluate potential impacts from the proposed project, a qualified wetland biologist conducted a USACE-compliant wetland and stream delineation in April 2024 within the project study area.

The National Wetlands Inventory (NWI) provided by the USFWS identified one area within the project boundaries as freshwater emergent wetland. Initial field surveys of the project boundary were conducted and found no wetlands in the area identified by the NWI. A small wetland was identified approximately 200 feet southeast of the intersection of Dixon Airline Road and Doug Barnard Parkway consisting of 0.021 acres. See **Figure 3.4 Wetlands** for locations of these wetlands.

Figure 3.4 Wetlands



Source: Mead & Hunt Analysis, April 2024

The USACE provided correspondence on April 2, 2025, categorizing the wetlands that were observed are not waters of the United States and therefore are not within jurisdiction of Section 404 of the Clean Water Act. See **Appendix C – USACE Correspondence**.

3.4.12.1.2 Environmental Consequences

Based on the information above, jurisdictional wetland impacts are not anticipated to exceed the significance threshold mentioned above as a result of implementation of either the Build Alternative or the No Action Alternative.

3.4.12.2 Floodplains

Executive Order 11988, *Floodplain Management*, defines floodplains as “the lowland and relatively flat areas adjoining inland and coastal waters including flood-prone areas of offshore islands, including at a minimum, that area subject to a one percent or greater chance of flooding in any given year.” Executive Order 11988 discourages federal actions in a floodplain unless no practicable alternative exists and requires measures to minimize unavoidable short-term and long-term impacts if the proposed action occurs in a floodplain. FAA Order 1050.1F identifies the significance threshold for floodplains is an action that would cause notable harm to the natural or beneficial values of a floodplain, as defined in DOT Order 5650.2.

A floodplain is a flat, low area adjacent to a stream, river, or creek which may be flooded during high water flow conditions. A 100-year floodplain includes the area that has a one percent chance of flooding in any given year. Projects within a 100-year floodplain are discouraged.

3.4.12.2.1 Affected Environment

Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) Flood Insurance Rate Maps (FIRMs) were reviewed for the project area to evaluate potential floodplain impacts. FIRMs indicated that the project area is not located within a 100-year floodplain.

3.4.12.2.2 Environmental Consequences

Based on the information above, no floodplain impacts are expected with implementation of either the Build Alternative or the No Action Alternative.

3.4.12.3 Surface Water

The CWA, in conjunction with the *Fish and Wildlife Coordination Act* (16 U.S.C. §§ 661-667d), *Rivers and Harbors Act* (33 U.S.C. § 401 and 403), the *Safe Drinking Water Act* (SDWA) (42 U.S.C. §§ 300(f)-300j26), and other local statutes, establish regulations that protect the Nation’s water resources. Surface waters are typically lakes, rivers, streams, creeks, and wetlands. Surface waters collect the water from precipitation which does not infiltrate the soil and instead flows across the land. Surface waters can be hydrologically connected to groundwater. FAA Order 1050.1F provides the significance threshold for surface water as an action that would exceed water quality standards established by federal, state, local, and tribal regulatory agencies, or contaminate public drinking water supply in ways that would adversely affect public health.

Surface water quality standards are established and enforced in Georgia by the GAEPD via Total Maximum Daily Load (TMDL) limits for water bodies under Section 303(d) of the CWA and NPDES permits for point and non-point sources under Section 402 of the CWA. Planning, monitoring, administration, and enforcement of all water quality standards is delegated to the Watershed Protection Branch of the GAEPD, except for, as explained above, certain areas where Local Issuing Authorities (LIAs) permit and monitor construction site erosion under the GESA.

Augusta-Richmond County has adopted several ordinances to protect surface water supply resources from pollution or alteration. These ordinances include primarily: the Water Supply Watershed Protection Ordinance; the Soil Erosion, Sedimentation, and Pollution Control Ordinance; the Augusta Tree Ordinance; and the Savannah River Corridor Protection District, which was established through an amendment to the City of Augusta's zoning ordinance. A summary of these ordinances is provided below.

Water Supply Watershed Protection Ordinance

The purpose of this ordinance is to establish measures to protect the quality and quantity of the present and future surface water supply for the City of Augusta. It establishes a water supply watershed district covering an area within a seven-mile radius of the City's water supply intake on the Augusta Canal, which is fed by the Savannah River. Within the district, any new facilities that handle hazardous materials must perform their operations on impermeable surfaces having spill and leak collection systems.

Soil Erosion, Sedimentation, and Pollution Control Ordinance

The Soil Erosion, Sedimentation, and Pollution Control Ordinance is modeled on the GESA and governs land disturbing activities in Augusta-Richmond County, see **Section 3.4.12.1 Wetlands**. The GAEPD has certified Augusta-Richmond County as an LIA to regulate certain types of projects under the ordinance, with responsibilities including the processing of permit applications, forwarding ESCPs to the Soil and Water Conservation District, issuing permits, and conducting inspections.

Augusta Tree Ordinance

This ordinance, initially adopted in 1993, provides standards for the protection of public trees and for the designation of landmark trees, and further provides landscaping, tree protection, and tree establishment standards for the development of public or private property. Among other things, the ordinance is designed to prevent soil erosion, prevent structural and pavement saturation, conserve energy, and protect and enhance the aesthetic qualities of the community. The Augusta-Richmond County Planning and Development Department is responsible for administering the provisions of this ordinance that relate to the development of private lands, while the Augusta Tree Commission holds this responsibility for development of public lands.

Savannah River Corridor Protection District

The Savannah River is a unique resource that has played a central role in the history and development of the City of Augusta and surrounding communities. The river lies immediately east of AGS and is used for various purposes, including navigation, the generation of electricity, and drinking water for Augusta-Richmond County. The Savannah River Corridor Protection District is an overlay zoning district that protects lands within 100 feet of the banks of the river. The existing natural vegetative buffer must be maintained

within the district and new land uses are limited to single-family residences (minimum 2-acre lot), agricultural and timber production, wildlife and fisheries management, recreational uses, and some other public facilities and utilities. Handling, receiving, storage, and disposal of hazardous wastes are prohibited in the district.

Other ordinances and regulations adopted by Augusta-Richmond County such as the Comprehensive Zoning Ordinance, the Land Subdivision Regulations, the Site Plan Regulations, the Grading Ordinance, the Flood Damage Prevention Ordinance, and the Stormwater Management Ordinance / Stormwater Technical Manual promote water quality by limiting the types of land uses allowed in an area, restricting the amount of impervious surface on a lot, requiring detention facilities to control surface water runoff, and restricting development within floodplains.

3.4.12.3.1 Affected Environment

As explained in **Section 3.4.12.1 Wetlands**, a wetland delineation was completed for the project study area during a field visit in April 2024. As part of this field visit, surface water resources other than wetlands were also delineated. A non-jurisdictional ditch totaling 564 linear feet (0.079 acre) was delineated..

3.4.12.3.2 Environmental Consequences

No impacts to surface water resources are anticipated to reach or exceed the significance threshold under the Build Alternative. In addition to following the buffer requirements, the proposed project would adhere to the requirements for an Erosion and Sedimentation Control Plan (ESCP) and BMPs under the GESA. According to the GADNR Environmental Protection Division, the Build Alternative will require coverage under the Construction Stormwater General Permit and may require a stream buffer variance. Once constructed, it will also require coverage under the Industrial Stormwater General Permit. See **Appendix A – Agency & Tribal Coordination** for correspondence from the GADNR Environmental Protection Division.

3.4.12.4 Ground Water

Ground water is water that is below the surface of the ground within the spaces between soil and rock formations. Ground water quality is primarily governed under the SDWA administered by the USEPA. The study area for ground water includes all areas where the ground could be disturbed by construction of the Build Alternative, where impervious surfaces could change rates of ground water infiltration, where airport operations could increase spills or leaks, and where construction vehicles and other equipment could potentially impact ground water due to staging, machinery, storage, and spills. The significance threshold for ground water according to FAA Order 1050.1F is any action that would exceed ground water quality standards established by federal, state, local, and tribal regulatory agencies, or contaminate a public-supply aquifer in ways that may adversely affect public health.

3.4.12.4.1 Affected Environment

In Augusta-Richmond County, approximately 86 percent of the water supply comes from surface water and only 14 percent from ground water / aquifers. Ground water resources in Augusta-Richmond County are found in two major aquifers: the Upper Cretaceous and Basal Cretaceous aquifers. Most of the ground water used in Augusta-Richmond County is pumped from the Basal Cretaceous aquifer. The recharge area

for the Cretaceous aquifer covers the majority of Augusta-Richmond County and is classified as a significant ground water recharge area by the GADNR. The GADNR classifies the majority of Augusta-Richmond County as having either a high or medium susceptibility to pollution. Pollution susceptibility is the relative vulnerability of an aquifer to be polluted from spills, discharges, leaks, impoundments, applications of chemicals, injections, and other human activities in the recharge area. In October 1998, the Augusta Commission adopted a Ground Water Recharge Area Protection Ordinance in accordance with the State Rules for Environmental Planning Criteria. To protect the resource, Augusta-Richmond County administers their entire land area, via this ordinance, as though the entire area has a high susceptibility to pollution.

The objectives of the Ground Water Recharge Area Protection Ordinance, which the Augusta-Richmond County Planning and Development Department administers, are as follows:

- Protect ground water quality by restricting land uses that generate, use, or store dangerous pollutants in recharge areas.
- Protect ground water quality by limiting the density of development.
- Protect ground water quality by ensuring that any development that occurs within the recharge area shall have no adverse effect on ground water quality.

The ordinance establishes a Ground Water Recharge Area District which corresponds to all lands within the jurisdiction of Augusta-Richmond County except for those lands which lie east of the Central of Georgia Railroad as shown on the map titled “Most Significant Ground Water Recharge Areas of Georgia” published by the GAEPD and Georgia Geologic Survey (see **Appendix D – Ground Water**). Within the Ground Water Recharge Area District, no building permits or site plans can be approved unless the permit complies with ground water protection standards for the following:

- Waste disposal facilities
- Agricultural impoundments
- Land disposal
- Spill and leak protection
- Secondary containment
- Wastewater basins
- Stormwater basins
- Wastewater spray and sludge operation
- Minimum lot sizes and septic systems

For details on the Ground Water Recharge Area Protection Ordinance, see **Appendix D – Ground Water**.

3.4.12.4.2 Environmental Consequences

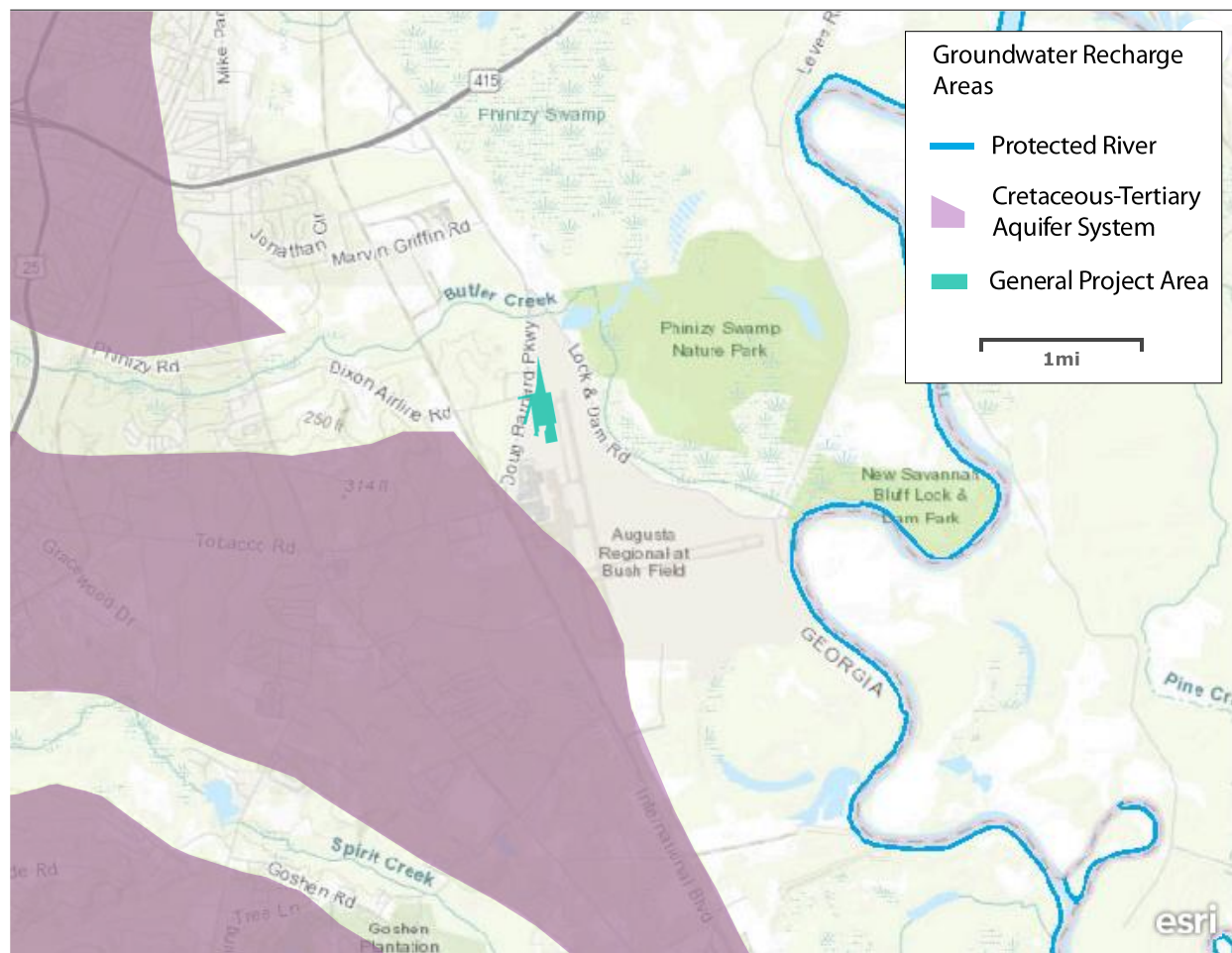
According to the GAEPD, maps of water wells and wellhead protection areas are not available for security reasons. However, the GAEPD stated there are very few private water wells in the Augusta region, with drinking water provided primarily through municipal water supply. As such, impacts on private water wells are not anticipated.

In addition to coordination with the GAEPD, a map of the Ground Water Recharge Area District was reviewed to determine the proposed project’s location relative to the district. As shown in **Figure 3.5 Ground Water Recharge Area District**. Much of the project area falls within the district. As a result, it will

be necessary to collaborate with the Augusta-Richmond County Planning and Development Department to guarantee adherence to ground water protection standards.

Based on the information above, no violations to water quality standards under the SDWA are expected and ground water impacts meeting or exceeding the significance threshold are not anticipated from implementation of either the Build Alternative or the No Action Alternative.

Figure 3.5 Ground Water Recharge Area District



Source: Georgia Department of Community Affairs, 2024

3.4.12.5 Wild and Scenic Rivers

Wild and Scenic Rivers are those resources that have extraordinary scenic, recreational, geologic, ecosystem, historic, or cultural value as defined in the *Wild and Scenic Rivers Act*. The *Wild and Scenic Rivers Act* (16 U.S.C. §§ 1271-1287) creates a national system intended to preserve certain rivers in a free-flowing condition for current and future enjoyment. The national system is administered by the Bureau of Land Management (BLM), the NPS, the USFWS, and the United States Forest Service (USFS). The land surrounding a protected river or river segment determines the agency that administers the national system.

The Nationwide Rivers Inventory (NRI) is a list maintained by the NPS which identifies river segments that possess remarkable natural or cultural values and are of more than local or regional importance. All federal agencies are required to avoid or mitigate impacts to NRI segments.

The FAA has not established a significance threshold for Wild and Scenic Rivers.

3.4.12.5.1 Affected Environment

According to the National Wild and Scenic Rivers System website, there are no rivers in the National Wild and Scenic Rivers System in Augusta-Richmond County. The closest protected river is the Chattooga River, which flows along the border between Georgia and South Carolina approximately 123 miles northwest of AGS at its closest point.

According to the NPS, a segment of the Savannah River, which flows east of AGS, is listed on the NRI. This river segment is approximately 1.6 miles east/southeast of the project area.

3.4.12.5.2 Environmental Consequences

There are no Wild and Scenic Rivers within the project study area. Although an NRI river segment (Savannah River) is within proximity of the project area, construction will occur more than one mile from the river. Impacts to Wild and Scenic Rivers and NRI resources are not anticipated with the implementation of either the Build Alternative or the No Action Alternative.

3.5 Means to Reduce Adverse Environmental Impacts

Projects should take care to avoid permanent adverse impacts on the environment. It is important that all adverse environmental impacts be minimized or mitigated if avoidance is not possible. The various impacts of the Build Alternative and the means to reduce the impacts to the greatest extent possible through BMPs are summarized in **Table 3.3 Best Management Practices of the Build Alternative**. None of the measures included in the table are necessary to keep impacts below significance.

Table 3.3 Best Management Practices of the Build Alternative	
Environmental Factor	Proposed Best Management Practices
Air Quality	To minimize air emissions from construction equipment, the following recommendations may be implemented and incorporated by the Airport during construction, where feasible: Use low-sulfur diesel fuel (less than 0.05 percent sulfur). Retrofit engines with an exhaust filtration device to capture diesel particulate matter before it enters the project area.

Table 3.3 Best Management Practices of the Build Alternative	
Environmental Factor	Proposed Best Management Practices
	Position the exhaust pipe so that the diesel fumes are directed away from the operator and nearby workers, thereby reducing the fume concentration to which personnel are exposed. Use catalytic converters to reduce carbon monoxide, aldehydes, and hydrocarbons in diesel fumes. These devices must be used with low sulfur fuels. Use climate-controlled cabs that are pressurized and equipped with high efficiency particulate air (HEPA) filters to reduce the operator's exposure to diesel fumes. Pressurization ensures that air is moved from the inside to the outside. HEPA filters ensure that any incoming air is filtered first. Regularly maintain diesel engines, which is essential to keeping exhaust emissions low, and follow the manufacturer's recommended maintenance schedule. For example, blue/black smoke indicates that an engine requires servicing or tuning. Reduce exposure through work practices and training, such as turning off engines when vehicles are stopped for more than a few minutes, training diesel operators to perform routine inspections, and maintaining filtration devices. Purchase new vehicles that are equipped with the most advanced emission control systems available. With older vehicles, use electric starting aids as block heaters to warm the engine to reduce diesel emissions.
Biological Resources	BMPs contained in FAA AC 150/5370-10H, <i>Standard Specifications for Construction of Airports</i> will be followed during construction. Should the tricolored bat be federally listed prior to the project being permitted or completed, avoid tree clearing altogether or between May 1 through July 15 and December 15 through February 15. Prior to construction activities taking place in areas with potential bird nesting habitat and during the breeding season (March through August), the affected areas should be surveyed for nesting activity. This is to avoid impacting active nests or young. Surveys should be conducted by a

Table 3.3 Best Management Practices of the Build Alternative	
Environmental Factor	Proposed Best Management Practices
	qualified biologist and be coordinated with appropriate federal and state agencies. The project area was surveyed in April and October 2024 for threatened and endangered species, as well as suitable habitat. No critical habitat or species were observed in either survey.
Coastal Resources	None Required.
Dept. of Transportation Act, Section 4(f)	None Required.
Farmlands	None Required.
Hazardous Materials	Any waste generated through proposed project improvements will be disposed of in compliance with all federal, state, and local regulations. The contractor will be required to have a Spill Prevention, Control, and Countermeasure (SPCC) plan in place to be implemented if a spill occurs during construction.
Historical, Architectural, Archaeological, and Cultural Resources	If archaeological materials are discovered during project activities, The FAA, Georgia Department of Community Affairs' Historic Preservation Division, and Native American tribes will be notified immediately and all ground disturbing activities will cease until these resources can be assessed by a Secretary of the Interior-qualified archaeologist.
Land Use	Traffic from construction vehicles would be managed to avoid and minimize any impacts to local roads by defining haul routes and by scheduling the arrival and departure times of vehicles so that normal traffic patterns are not interrupted.
Natural Resources and Energy Supply	BMPs to reduce energy consumption during construction of the Build Alternative will be employed, where applicable. These include all equipment should be in good working order to ensure the most efficient use of fuel, checked for leaks, and repaired immediately. Idling control measures to reduce energy consumption would be used, such as implementing an equipment shut-off policy, optimizing work schedules to minimize waiting time, and training equipment operators on proper idling techniques.
Noise and Noise Compatible Land Use	Construction staging areas will not be allowed near sensitive land uses.
Socioeconomics and Children's Environmental Health and Safety Risks	None Required.

Table 3.3 Best Management Practices of the Build Alternative	
Environmental Factor	Proposed Best Management Practices
Visual Effects & Light Emissions	None Required.
Water Resources	<u>Wetlands:</u> AGS is required to file a Notice of Intent (NOI) with the GAEPD for coverage under the NPDES General Permit to authorize the discharge of stormwater from sites where construction activities will result in contiguous land disturbances of one (1) acre or more. Additionally, an Erosion and Sedimentation Control Plan (ESCP) must be submitted to the GAEPD. <u>Floodplains:</u> None Required. <u>Surface Water:</u> Mitigation will be the same as described above for wetlands. <u>Ground Water:</u> In accordance with the Ground Water Recharge Area Protection Ordinance, coordination with the Augusta-Richmond County Planning and Development Department will be required to ensure ground water protection standards are followed in the project area. <u>Wild and Scenic Rivers:</u> None Required.
Reasonably Foreseeable Impacts	None Required.

Chapter 4.0 Agency Coordination and Public Outreach

The chapter of the Environmental Assessment (EA) describes the coordination process employed to provide applicable agencies and the public the opportunity to comment on the potential effects of the construction and operation of the proposed project.

4.1 Agency Coordination

Pertinent federal, state, regional, and local resource agencies and Native American tribes with potential jurisdiction over or interest in the proposed project were contacted to solicit their comments on the proposed project as it related to their specific area of expertise or regulatory jurisdiction including permitting and mitigation requirements (**Appendix A – Agency & Tribal Coordination**). A copy of the distribution list, coordination letters, and attachments sent to each agency and organization, and their response letters are also found in the appendix. Specific information and direction received from responding agencies is noted and addressed in the appropriate resource sections above where applicable.

Based on this consultation, inconsistency with known federal, state, or local laws or administrative rules is not expected. The Build Alternative will adhere to appropriate regulations and permitting requirements including any necessary mitigation measures. This includes regulations and permitting requirements of any applicable ordinances adopted by Augusta-Richmond County to protect surface water supply resources from pollution or alteration. See **Section 3.4.12.3 Surface Water** for a discussion of these ordinances.

4.2 Public Outreach

A Notice of Availability (NOA) for the Draft EA (DEA) was published in the Augusta Chronical on Thursday, September 4, 2025, and on the AGS website (<http://www.flyags.com>). The DEA will be available for public review and comment at the AGS administrative offices (1501 Aviation GA, Augusta, GA 30906) during normal business hours for 30-days, from Thursday, September 4, 2025 until Monday, October 6, 2025. Electronic and hand-delivered comments must be received before 5:00 pm Eastern Daylight Time on Monday, October 6, 2025.

A Public Meeting will be held at the end of the 30-day public review period on Tuesday, October 7, 2025, from 5:00 to 6:30 pm Eastern Daylight Time at the AGS Meet and Greet Lobby (1501 Aviation Way, Augusta, GA 30906). The meeting format will be open house with Consultant and AGS staff available to answer questions about the proposed project and potential environmental impacts. Written comments will be accepted and formal oral comments can be submitted to an on-site court reporter. No formal presentation will be made. All written and oral comments received will be compiled, and responses to comments, as needed, will be prepared and incorporated into the Final EA (FEA). Material presented at the public meeting will be included in the FEA.

Chapter 5.0 List of Preparers

The chapter lists the names and qualifications of the principal Mead & Hunt participants that assisted in the preparation of the Environmental Assessment (EA), as well as representatives from the Airport and the FAA.

Mead & Hunt, Inc.

Kelly Maddoux, AICP, Project Manager / Quality Control - Has more than 30 years of experience in preparing airport master plans, ALPs, environmental overviews, airport site selection studies, airport noise studies, and airport terminal plans.

Nathan Moran, Airport and Environmental Planner - Serves as an airport and environmental planner for Mead & Hunt and is responsible for developing airport planning, environmental, and sustainability documents.

Veronica Miller, Environmental Planner – Serves as an environmental planner for Mead & Hunt and is responsible for threatened and endangered species surveys, wetland and stream delineations pursuant to Section 4040 of the Clean Water Act, and Section 404/401 documentation and submission.

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