

RECORD OF DECISION
ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT STATEMENT
AUTHORIZING CHANGES TO THE FALCON LAUNCH PROGRAM
AT VANDENBERG SPACE FORCE BASE

INTRODUCTION

The Department of the Air Force (DAF) is issuing this Record of Decision (ROD) for the Final Environmental Impact Statement (FEIS) for authorizing changes to the Falcon Launch Program at Vandenberg Space Force Base (VSFB), California.

The DAF is issuing this ROD per its Memorandum on Initial DAF Policy for Implementation of the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA), dated July 7, 2025, and Department of Defense (DOD) NEPA Implementing Procedures (June 30, 2025). The DAF considered all the alternatives, information, and analysis, and feedback submitted by state, tribal, and local governments, and the public, along with other relevant matters, during development of the FEIS. The Unique Identification number for this NEPA action is EISX-007-57-USF-1728547807.

This ROD documents:

- The DAF's decision;
- Alternatives considered;
- Factors considered in the decision;
- Whether the DAF adopted all practicable means to avoid or minimize environmental harm from the selected alternative, and if not, why not;
- Mitigations; and
- A Finding of No Practicable Alternative (FONPA) to address wetland and floodplain impacts.

DECISION SYNOPSIS

The DAF will authorize Space Exploration Technologies, Corp. (SpaceX) to increase the annual Falcon launch cadence at VSFB through launch and landing operations at Space Launch Complex (SLC) 4 and SLC-6. The DAF authorization includes the addition of Falcon Heavy operations, redevelopment of SLC-6 and construction of two landing zones approximately 850 feet south of SLC-6; and an increase in downrange recovery activities in the Pacific Ocean. No modification of SLC-4 will occur. The overall launch cadence for Falcon 9 and Falcon Heavy at both SLCs, combined, will be up to 100 launches per year. SpaceX will continue to land up to 12 first stages per year at SLC-4. In addition, up to 12 missions per year will utilize the landing zones at SLC-6, including up to five Falcon Heavy missions per year, where two boosters would land simultaneously. Falcon Heavy has not previously launched from VSFB.

The DAF selected Alternative 1, which implements the Proposed Action as described above, and the DAF will authorize SpaceX to construct a new hangar north of the launch pad at SLC-6 to support Falcon 9 and Falcon Heavy integration and processing (*FEIS* § 2.3 & *Figure 2.3-1, page 2-15*). SpaceX will construct a road and rail system from the hangar to the launch pad to transport Falcon and relocate the SLC-6 perimeter fence.

ALTERNATIVES CONSIDERED

The FEIS analyzed three alternatives including the Proposed Action (*FEIS* § 2.1, *page 2-1*), Alternative 1 (*FEIS* § 2.3, *page 2-15*), and the No Action Alternative (*FEIS* § 2.2, *page 2-14*)

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as summarized below.

Proposed Action. The Proposed Action is to authorize an increase in the annual Falcon launch cadence at VSFB through launch and landing operations at SLC-4 and SLC-6, including modification of SLC-6 (*FEIS* §2.1.7 & *Figure 2.1-8, page 2-13*) for Falcon 9 and Falcon Heavy launch vehicles to support future U.S. Government and commercial launch service needs. The overall launch cadence would increase from 50 Falcon 9 launches per year at SLC-4 to up to 100 launches per year for Falcon 9 and Falcon Heavy at both SLCs, combined; an increase in downrange recovery activities in the Pacific Ocean would also be authorized. Under the Proposed Action, Falcon Heavy, which has not launched from VSFB in the past, would launch and land up to five times per year from and at SLC-6. No modification of SLC-4 is proposed. The existing Horizontal Integration Facility (HIF) located north of SLC-6 would be modified into a hangar for use by SpaceX to support Falcon 9 and Falcon Heavy integration and processing. In addition, Space Launch Delta 30 would need to approve the Program on the range, including modifications to the Program. These modifications encompass changes to planning, construction, operations, and vehicle configurations.

Alternative 1. Under Alternative 1 (preferred alternative), the DAF would implement the Proposed Action as described above, but rather than modifying the existing HIF as described in Section 2.1.7 of the *FEIS*, DAF would authorize SpaceX to construct a new approximately 62,000 ft² hangar north of the launch pad to support Falcon 9 and Falcon Heavy integration and processing (*FEIS* § 2.3, *page 2-15*).

No Action Alternative. Under the No Action Alternative, the DAF would not authorize any Falcon 9 or Falcon Heavy launch or landing operations at, or modifications to, SLC-6, nor would the DAF authorize additional Falcon 9 launches from SLC-4. Falcon 9 launches and landings would continue at SLC-4 as currently authorized. Ongoing and currently planned activities, missions, and programs, including associated operations previously analyzed in separate National Environmental Policy Act documents would continue to occur at VSFB (*FEIS* § 2.2, *page 2-14*).

MITIGATION

To track mitigations, DAF will develop a Mitigation Plan within 90 days of the signature of this ROD that identifies principal and subordinate organizations with responsibility for oversight and execution of specific mitigations. The DAF will not implement an impact-inducing action related to the increase in Falcon launch cadence before the applicable mitigation measures described in this ROD (as identified in Attachment A to this ROD) are fully funded and in place.

The Mitigation Plan will:

- Identify specific mitigative actions;
- Identify the organization responsible for each mitigation; and
- Present the timing of each action.

Consultations with the relevant agencies resulted in prescribed mitigation and/or minimization measures. Those measures are provided in detail in Appendices B and C of the *FEIS*, which include correspondence with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) and National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS), and are listed in ROD Attachment A. For the identified impacts, the

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following measures are being taken:

Ensure compliance with the actions required by the USFWS Biological Opinion to monitor and mitigate potential adverse effects to listed species (*FEIS* § 3.5.2.5, *page 3-64 and Appendix B*).

Ensure compliance with the actions required by the NMFS Letter of Authorization (LOA) (*FEIS* § 3.6.2.5, *page 3-71 and Appendix C*).

Ensure compliance with the requirements outlined in the NMFS 2023 and 2024 Letters of Concurrence (*FEIS Appendix C*).

The DAF will ensure implementation of mitigation measures to avoid, minimize or compensate for environmental impacts associated with the increased launch and landing cadence for Falcon at VSFB, redevelopment of SLC-6, and an increase in landing activities in the Pacific Ocean (*ROD Attachment A*).

WETLANDS AND FLOODPLAINS FINDING OF NO PRACTICABLE ALTERNATIVE

Executive Order (EO) 11988, Floodplains Management, and EO 11990, Protection of Wetlands, (May 24, 1977) require Federal agencies to avoid to the extent possible the long and short-term adverse impacts associated with the occupancy and modification of floodplains and wetlands, respectively, and to avoid direct and indirect support of development in floodplains and wetlands wherever there is a practicable alternative. Alternatives to the construction activities proposed under the Proposed Action were considered, as described in Section 2.4 of the FEIS, and no practicable alternative to implementing the Proposed Action at and adjacent to SLC-6 was found. Based on the information contained within the EIS, I determined that there is no practicable alternative to development within or affecting floodplain and wetland areas from construction associated with the Falcon launch program at VSFB (*FEIS* § 3.7.2.1.4, *page 3-82 and FEIS* § 3.7.2.1.3, *page 3-81*). Therefore, the Proposed Action is consistent with EO 11988 and EO 11990, because the implementation of Best Management Practices and Environmental Protection Measures described in *ROD Attachment A* would ensure that adverse effects on the floodplains and wetlands are minimized.

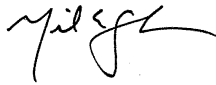
DECISION

The DAF has selected Alternative 1, after considering the potential environmental consequences of the Proposed Action and alternatives analyzed in the FEIS, the comments and concerns of the public and other key stakeholders, and factors related to national defense, including mission support, physical infrastructure, capacity and environmental criteria, cost factors and military plans.

The DAF will, by this decision, authorize the addition of Falcon Heavy operations (up to five launches per year), redevelopment of SLC-6, construction of two landing zones, an increase in downrange recovery activities in the Pacific Ocean, and an overall launch cadence increase for Falcon 9 and Falcon Heavy up to 100 launches per year at VSFB. By implementing the mitigation measures identified in this ROD (*ROD Attachment A*) and adhering to the mitigation plan described herein, the DAF has adopted all practicable means to avoid or minimize environmental harm. I certify that DAF has considered all relevant information raised in the

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NEPA process and that the NEPA process has closed.



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MICHAEL E. SAUNDERS, P.E., SES, DAF
Acting Assistant Secretary of the Air Force
(Energy, Installations & Environment)

(Date)

1 Attachment:

1. Attachment A: Mitigation Measures