

DOT Section 4(f) Evaluation for the Friedman Memorial Airport

Department of Transportation
Federal Aviation Administration Helena Airports District Office
FINAL SECTION 303(c)/4(f) DE MINIMIS FINDING
For the Friedman Memorial Airport
City of Hailey, Blaine County, Idaho

1. Introduction

Section 303 was initially codified in Title 49 of the United States Code (USC) § 1653(f) (Section 4(f) of the USDOT Act of 1966). In 1983, § 1653(f) was reworded and recodified as Title 49 USC § 303, but still commonly referred to as DOT Section 4(f). Congress amended DOT Section 4(f) in 2005 when it enacted the Safe, Accountable, Flexible, Efficient Transportation Equity Act: A Legacy for Users.

Section 4(f):

Prohibits the use of land of significant publicly owned public parks, recreation areas, wildlife and waterfowl refuges, and land of a historic site for transportation projects unless the Administration determines that there is no feasible and prudent avoidance alternatives and that all possible planning to minimize harm has occurred.

De minimis impacts related to historic sites are defined as the determination of either “no adverse effect” or “no historic properties affected” in compliance with Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act (NHPA). For publicly owned parks, recreation areas, and wildlife/waterfowl refuges, *de minimis* impacts are defined as those that do not “adversely affect the activities, features, and attributes” of the Section 4(f) resource. *De minimis* impact determinations are based on the degree of impact after the inclusion of any measure(s) to minimize harm.

2. Project Description

The Friedman Memorial Airport (Airport or SUN) is located in Blaine County in the City of Hailey, Idaho, within the Wood River Valley. The Friedman Memorial Airport Authority (FMAA), formed through a Joint Powers Agreement between the City and County, currently operates and manages the Airport (Airport Sponsor). The Airport is a commercial service airport, serving several airlines and general aviation traffic. The Airport has one asphalt paved runway, which measures 7,550 feet long by 100 feet wide. It is oriented generally north-south and has a full parallel taxiway on the west side of the runway and several taxiway connectors.

The Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) is considering actions (known as the Proposed Action) requested by the FMAA to acquire privately-owned property under the approach and departure surfaces adjacent and south of the Friedman Memorial Airport (Airport) and provide for a development area to meet ongoing and future demand for apron and hangar development. Under the Proposed Action, approximately 386 acres of the Halfway Ranch/Eccles Flying Hat Ranch will be acquired; of which 10.4 acres will be developed for aircraft parking apron, hangars, vehicle access and vehicle parking (**Figure 2-1**).

The purpose of the Proposed Action is to protect the approach and departure surfaces to the south of SUN from incompatible development and land uses and to meet ongoing and future demand for apron and hangar development by developing a small acreage of the property proposed for acquisition.

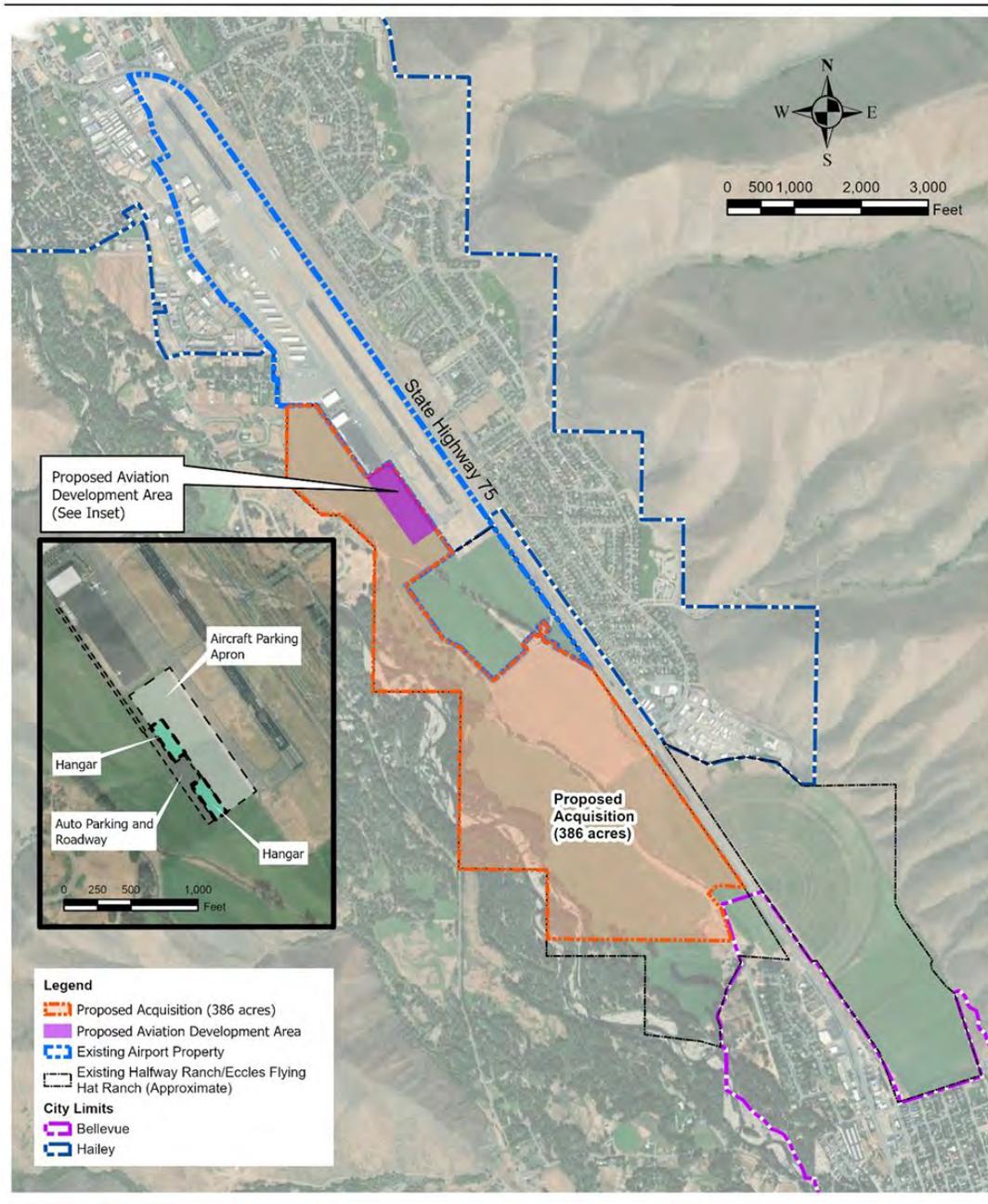


Figure 2-1: Proposed Action

3. Description of Section 4(f) Resources and Potential Impacts

Within the 386-acre area proposed for acquisition, the following historic resources were determined to be NRHP-eligible Section 4(f) resources (**Figure 3-1**):

- Halfway Ranch/Eccles Flying Hat Ranch Historic District (13-16207) (west of Highway 75)
- Cove Canal (10BN1126)
- Rockwell-White Power Plant Canal (10BN1191)
- Barn (previously recorded as a part of the SH-75 EIS)

Halfway Ranch/Eccles Flying Hat Ranch Historic District (13-16207) is eligible for listing in the NRHP as it retains sufficient integrity to communicate its historic associations with the agricultural development of the Wood River Valley and because it embodies distinctive characteristics of the settlement period methods of construction during the early twentieth century. The ranch is a relatively rare surviving example in the Wood River Valley of an early twentieth century large-acreage ranch district, complete with the key, character-defining historic elements of open pastureland, tree lines, and a nucleus of farmstead buildings that clearly convey a sense of past time and place. Though few resources on the ranch appear to be individually eligible, the ranch as a whole appears to be eligible for listing in the NRHP as a Historic District made up of its contributing resources and landscape elements.

The Cove Canal (10BN1126) is an historic irrigation feature established in 1882. It originates from the Big Wood River and traverses the project area. The Canal generally flows southeasterly, diagonally across the project area. After flowing for a total of approximately 7.65 miles, the Canal terminates southeast of the Town of Bellevue. The Cove Canal is associated with significant trends in local history and retains sufficient integrity to communicate its historic associations with the agricultural development of the Wood River Valley.

The Rockwell-White Power Plant Canal (10BN1191) carries water from the Big Wood River to the site of the former Rockwell-White Power Plant. Its point of diversion is NE¼ SE¼ Section 22, T2N R18E from the left bank of the Big Wood River. It travels a path to the southeast across the ranch and ends near State Highway 75, where it leads into the former power plant tail race structure and is then diverted into the Kohler Ditch and Arkoosh Canal. The Canal supplied water for electricity for mining and the community of Bellevue until it was decommissioned for industry in 1945.

The barn located within the District (NRHP Individually Eligible) is an excellent example of an early twentieth century ground-level stable barn. It has a large wood frame and a steeply pitched gambrel roof with the following features: open eaves with exposed rafter tails; corner boards; large, hinged door/ramp centered in the top of the east gable; and a row of square, four-light wood windows illuminating stalls. The barn communicates strong associations with development of the ranch and agriculture in the Wood River Valley, as a whole.

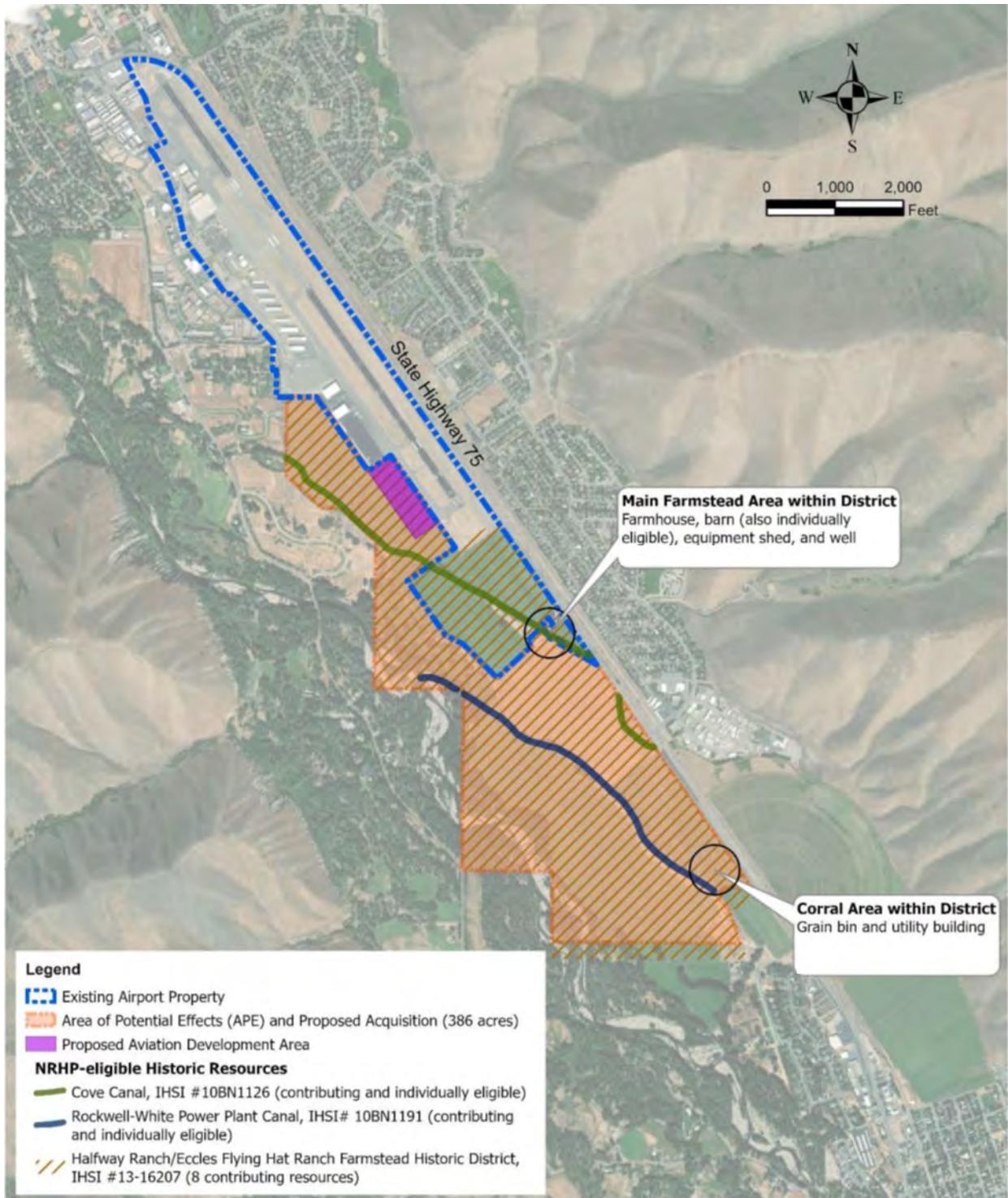


Figure 3-1: Historic Resources

The entire Proposed Action is located within the historic boundary of the Halfway Ranch/Eccles Flying Hat Ranch Historic District (District), and the property proposed for acquisition includes a large portion of the District. The District encompasses approximately 480 acres on the west side of State Highway 75 immediately south and west of the Airport and includes eight contributing resources that date from the 1880s to the 1950s, including a farmhouse, barn (individually eligible), equipment shed, grain bin, utility building, well, Cove Canal (individually eligible), and the Rockwell-White Power Plant Canal (individually eligible). With the exception of the 10.4-acre aviation development area, the acreage in the District is planned to remain in agricultural use with no direct effects on the eight contributing resources, including the individually eligible properties, or the landscape or spatial elements that contribute to the historic character of the District. Contributing resources associated with the District would remain in place and are not proposed for removal or demolition.

The 10.4-acre aviation development area is also within the District and is located immediately adjacent to existing aviation development along the west side of the existing runway. The Proposed Action would develop 10.4 acres to construct aircraft parking apron, hangars, vehicle access, and vehicle parking. This acreage represents two percent of the acreage within the District. It contains no contributing resources, landscape elements, or individually eligible properties in the District.

In a letter dated October 12, 2021, the FAA made a determination of **No Historic Properties Adversely Affected** due to the proposed project for land acquisition and development at the Airport. SHPO provided written concurrence with the determination in a letter dated November 1, 2021.

The determination of no adverse effect under Section 106 for the properties reflects a conclusion that the effects would not alter, directly or indirectly, any of the characteristics of the historic properties that qualify the properties for inclusion in the NRHP in a manner that would diminish the integrity of the properties' location, design, setting, materials, workmanship, feeling, or association as described in 36 CFR 800.5(a)(1). After acquisition of 386 acres of the District, the property would continue to be leased for agricultural use, except for the 10.4-acre development area, which represents a small percentage of the District, contains no contributing resources or NRHP-eligible resources, and is adjacent to the Airport and existing Airport features.

Because the Proposed Action would have no adverse effect on historic resources, the FAA determined that impacts to the historic resources, including the District and the eight contributing resources including a farmhouse, barn (individually eligible), equipment shed, grain bin, utility building, well, Cove Canal (individually eligible), and the Rockwell-White Power Plant Canal (individually eligible), would be **de minimis** under Section 4(f) for the Proposed Action.

Although mitigation is not required, the Airport Sponsor has agreed to include a condition in future lease agreements for the property requiring the use and maintenance of the contributing and NRHP-eligible resources to the District to be in compliance with the requirements and guidance of the Idaho State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO) and that any construction or improvements on contributing or individually eligible buildings and structures be done with the approval of the Airport, in consultation with SHPO, and according to the Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation. This agreement by the Sponsor will be included in any NEPA decision document relating to the Proposed Action, and included as a special condition describing required environmental mitigation in any future FAA grant for acquisition of the property acquired under the Proposed Action.

4. Coordination

Coordination with the FAA and State Historic Preservation Office

Initial coordination with the FAA and SHPO concerning the Halfway Ranch/Eccles Flying Hat Ranch identified historic resources and their respective impacts and all practical planning measures to avoid impacts to those resources. Coordination included:

- Several meetings and conference calls with the project team to confirm the area of potential impact, project alternatives, and eligible resource site boundaries.
- In a letter dated November 1, 2021, SHPO concurred with the FAA's determination of No Historic Properties Adversely Affected due to the proposed project for land acquisition and development at the Airport.

Coordination with Owners of Section 4(f) Resources

Representatives from FMAA and the owner of the Halfway Ranch/Eccles Flying Hat Ranch began detailed discussions about the sale of the property in 2019. The Landowner is a willing participant in the sale of the land identified for acquisition in the Proposed Action. Ongoing communications with the landowner's representatives have occurred since the fall of 2019. Communication has occurred monthly, if not weekly, to keep the landowner apprised of the status of the project. The landowner's representative has also frequently attended monthly FMAA public board meetings to stay informed of the Environmental Assessment process for the Proposed Action.

Coordination with the Public

Meetings of the FMAA Board are open public meetings that occur on the first Tuesday of the month, with public notice provided for each meeting. Since initiation of the Environmental Assessment for the Proposed Action in 2020, project status updates have been included on the agenda for every meeting of the FMAA Board. During these meetings, the Proposed Action has been specifically discussed multiple times. Additionally, a link is provided on the website for the Friedman Memorial Airport, which provides information and layouts for the Proposed Action, as well as an invitation for comments. To date, no comments have been received via the webpage. The webpage for the project is located at the following address: <https://iflysun.com/land-acquisition/>

The public will be offered an opportunity to comment on this Section 4(f) *de minimis* finding during the public comment period for the Draft EA. The public will have 30 days to comment on the proposed project, the potential impacts, and this finding.

5. Finding

After careful and thorough consideration of the facts contained herein, the undersigned finds that the proposed Federal action is consistent with Title 49 USC § 303 and other applicable environmental requirements. The proposed Federal action will not significantly affect the Halfway Ranch/Eccles Flying Hat Ranch Historic District and constitutes a de minimis Section 4(f) impact.



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William C. Garrison, Manager
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