

**Subject: North Cascades Smokejumper Base (NCSB) Facility Realignment**  
**Location: Okanogan-Wenatchee NF – Washington**  
**Key Issue: Renovations needed to ensure compliance with Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) standards**

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**Key Message:**

- Resolving facilities issues at NCSB is the top facilities priority for the Pacific Northwest Fire and Aviation Management program. The FS plans to continue smokejumper operations at NCSB in 2017 and is committed to continuing to provide aerially delivered firefighters in North Central Washington and nationally.
- The most recent FAA-approved Airport Layout Plan for Methow Valley State Airport, prepared in 1995, recommends removal of three FS buildings (Loft, Operations Building and Saw Shack) on the east side of the runway as they are located in an “Obstacle-Free Zone.” Washington State DOT could ask the FS to remove these buildings as runway obstructions may adversely affect the state’s eligibility to continue receiving funding from FAA for airport upgrades and expansions. The state has not yet made this request.
- A multidisciplinary team is preparing a Preliminary Project Analysis (PPA) to evaluate three potential locations for the NCSB and associated fire facilities. The evaluation will focus on improvements needed to the current facilities and will examine the feasibility of two alternate base locations. The locations to be evaluated are the existing base in Methow Valley, Pangborn Airport in East Wenatchee, and Macalister Field in Yakima.
- Each site will be evaluated based on criteria including fire occurrences and response times, socioeconomic factors, impacts to employees, implementation time, and cost. The ‘Choosing by Advantages’ methodology will be utilized to determine which site is best suited as the location for the Smokejumper Base and associated fire facilities.
- NCSB is an FS-owned facility located on FS property (approximately 19 acres) and, as such, would require Capital Improvement Program (CIP) funds to address current needs. Facilities engineers estimate that it will cost \$10 million to address the deficiencies.
- There are no FS-owned facilities at either Pangborn Airport or Macalister Field. Moving the Smokejumper Base to either location would require initiating a lease with those airports. Based on current lease costs at other airports within the Region, it is anticipated that a lease would run approximately \$400K/year for a 10-15 year lease.

**Background:**

- NCSB, located in the Methow Valley, is considered the “birthplace of smokejumping.” The first experimental jumps were conducted in the fall of 1939 using the first FS-owned aircraft, an SR-10 Stinson. Since then, NCSB has grown into a 30 person crew with one contracted aircraft, located at the Methow Valley State Airport in Winthrop, WA.
- The facility is in need of renovation due to deteriorating structures and relocation to ensure compliance with Federal Aviation Administration guidelines. In addition, the main bunk house was constructed in 1950 and has had no substantial improvements since. It does not currently meet basic health and safety standards.
- A group of PNW and OWNF employees met in late September 2016 to determine how best to proceed. A project management plan outlining the steps, timelines and roles is currently under development.