

# INITIAL STUDY

1. **Project Title:** REACH Air Lease
2. **Lead Agency Name and Address:** City of Willits  
380 E. Commercial Street  
Willits, CA 95490
3. **Contact Person and Telephone:** Adrienne Moore, City Manager  
(707) 459-7120
4. **Project Location:** 1310 Poppy Drive, Willits, CA 95490  
Located on Ells Field – Willits Municipal Airport  
See **Figure 1**
5. **Project Sponsor’s Name and Address:** REACH Air Medical Services  
451 Aviation Boulevard  
Santa Rosa, CA 95403
6. **General Plan Designation(s):** Does not appear to have a general plan designation. The General Plan indicates that a specific plan is to be developed.
7. **Zoning Designation(s):** Does not appear to have a zoning designation. The General Plan indicates that a specific plan is to be developed.

## 8. Description of Proposed Project

REACH proposes to obtain a 0.34-acre leasehold on the Willits Municipal Airport from the City of Willits. This leasehold will be used as a local base for REACH’s air ambulance service. The facility will consist of the following:

- A modular office building of approximately 1,850 square feet
- Four paved automobile parking spaces including one handicap space
- A 20-foot by 20-foot paved helicopter parking position
- The area surrounding the helicopter parking position will be stabilized with either rolled crushed aggregate (gravel) or asphaltic concrete or a mixture of both

Utilities will be extended from adjacent areas on the Airport.

The facility will be staffed 24-hours per day, 365 days per year. Staff will consist of one pilot and two-flight medical crew. Pilots serve a 12-hour shift, while medical staff serve a 24-hour shift. Morning shift changes will occur between 6 A.M. to 10 A.M. Evening shift changes will occur between 6 P.M. and 10 P.M.

An on-call aircraft mechanic will inspect the helicopter at the beginning of each morning shift. It is expected that the mechanic will leave the site following the inspection. Routine minor maintenance (e.g. oil and filter changes) will be conducted either at the parking pad or in the adjacent box hangar. Routine major

maintenance will be performed at REACH's facilities at the Charles M. Schulz – Sonoma County Airport in Santa Rosa, California. Should a mechanical problem arise when the helicopter is parked at the Willits Municipal Airport, repairs will likely be made in the box hangar adjacent to the REACH facility.

The facility will serve as the base for one helicopter. The helicopter is an Airbus EC 135. This helicopter is equipped with a single main rotor (see **Figure 2**). It is anticipated that an average of one flight per day will occur (e.g., one departure and one arrival) initially. This is expected to grow to an average of 1.5 flights per day. However, the number of flights on any particular day will vary depending upon the demand for services. Arrivals and departures will be along the extended runway centerline. Arriving helicopters will descend to a spot on the runway abeam the helicopter parking position. The helicopter will then turn and hover-taxi to the parking pad. Departing helicopters will hover-taxi from the parking pad to the runway and then depart along the runway's extended centerline (see **Figure 3**). Upon passing the end of the runway, the helicopter will begin turning in the direction of its destination.

REACH's helicopter is powered by a turbine engine that burns Jet A, the most common fuel for nonmilitary jets. Fuel will come off-site from a fuel vendor. A 5,000-gallon fuel truck will be parked at the airport for use by REACH only. This truck would be filled every 4-6 weeks by a fuel vendor. REACH will obtain the required permit for this fuel service from the County Environmental Health Department. The fuel would be available for REACH aircraft only.

Most patient services will occur away from the Airport. One common off-airport location is the designated helicopter landing site adjacent to the Little Lake Fire Protection District Substation No. 541 on Baechtel Road. However, some patients may be loaded onto the helicopter at the Airport. It is expected that this will occur about twice each month. Some of these may be transfers from the Frank R. Howard Memorial Hospital in Willits. When this hospital opens its new facility in spring 2015, some transfers will be made from the helipad being constructed at the new site. Depending upon the medical needs of the patient, some emergency transports will involve an ambulance arriving at the Airport with lights and siren.

It is important to understand that this environmental document addresses the environmental impacts of the facilities that will be created if the lease is approved. No environmental review is required to introduce regular helicopter operations at the Airport. Helicopter operators have a right to use the Airport; no approvals are required. In this way, airports are like roads; no approval is required for individuals to use either type of transportation facility.

## **9. Surrounding Land Uses and Setting**

The project site is located about three miles north-northwest of the center of the City of Willits on Ells Field – Willits Municipal Airport. The Airport is located adjacent to the eastern border of the Brooktrails subdivision. The Airport is part of the City of Willits, but surrounding lands are under the jurisdiction of the County of Mendocino. Direct access to the site is gained from Poppy Drive, which ends at the Airport. Sherwood Road is the major arterial serving the area. It connects to Highway 101 southeast of the project site.

The area in the vicinity of the project site is hilly with the terrain generally falling to the east. The principal vegetation communities are Douglas fir-tan oak, annual grassland, and chaparral. The project site is a level area that was created when the Airport was constructed. A box hangar and aircraft parking apron lie immediately north of the project site. The balance of the hangars and other airport facilities lie further

north. The Airport's sole runway lies about 275 feet east of the proposed helicopter parking position. Single-family residences on large lots lie west of the project site. The areas north, south, and east of the Airport remain largely in their native state.

#### **10. Other Public Agencies Whose Approval is Required**

The City of Willits (not the project proponent) must obtain approval of the conditions in the lease from the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA). This approval is required due to contractual agreements between the City and FAA. The FAA will review the lease to ensure that the required standard provisions are included. This approval is not regulatory in nature.

Following construction of the REACH facility, the building, parking area, and helicopter parking position will be added to the Airport Layout Plan. The FAA must approve the update to the Airport Layout Plan.

No approval is required from the State of California. The airport permit for Willits Municipal Airport is issued by the California Division of Aeronautics. No amendment of the Airport's permit is required because only a helicopter parking position is proposed. If a helipad were proposed, an amendment to the permit would be required because a helipad functions as a runway; it must be included in the Airport permit.

#### **11. Summary of Potential Environmental Effects**

The only potentially significant environmental effect is noise impacts to residences west of the Airport due to use of a new helicopter parking position. Shifting the helicopter parking position further from the western property line of the Airport reduces the noise impact to less than significant levels.

## REFERENCES

The following references are cited in the text that follows for the Initial Study.

1. Judgment by staff with Mead & Hunt, Inc.
2. California Scenic Highway Mapping System accessed on January 14, 2015 at: [http://www.dot.ca.gov/hq/LandArch/scenic\\_highways/](http://www.dot.ca.gov/hq/LandArch/scenic_highways/)
3. California Important Farmland Finder accessed on January 11, 2015 at: <http://maps.conservation.ca.gov/ciff/ciff.html>. State of California, Department of Conservation.
4. *Willits General Plan Revision – Vision 2020*, adopted August 12, 1992.
5. California Air Resources Board, Area Designations for State Ambient Air Quality Standards, accessed on January 16, 2015 at: <http://www.arb.ca.gov/desig/adm/adm.htm>
6. California Air Resources Board, Area Designations for National Ambient Air Quality Standards, accessed on January 16, 2015 at: <http://www.arb.ca.gov/desig/adm/adm.htm>
7. Personal communications with Jim Walker, Facilities Manager, REACH Air Medical Services in November and December 2014 and January 2015.
8. *Revised Biological Assessment, Ells-Willits Airport*, Jane Valerius Environmental Consulting and Wildlife Research Associates, October 2009.
9. California Natural Diversity Data Base (version 09/2014).
10. *A Cultural Resources Investigation of the Willits Airport Runway Safety Improvement Project, Located in Mendocino County, California*, Roscoe and Associates, August 2009.
11. Letter from Alecia Esquivel, Environmental Assistant, of the Redwood Valley Rancheria, dated November 23, 2004.
12. Willits NE Special Studies Zones map accessed on January 14, 2015 at: [http://gmv.consrv.ca.gov/shmp/download/quad/WILLITS/maps/WILLITS\\_NE.PDF](http://gmv.consrv.ca.gov/shmp/download/quad/WILLITS/maps/WILLITS_NE.PDF)
13. *Figure C-5: Earthquake Hazard Areas*, Mendocino County Multi-Hazard Mitigation Plan accessed on January 14, 2015 at: [http://www.co.mendocino.ca.us/oes/pdf/Earthquake\\_Hazard\\_Areas\\_11x17.pdf](http://www.co.mendocino.ca.us/oes/pdf/Earthquake_Hazard_Areas_11x17.pdf)
14. Resource Conservation Service *Web Soil Survey* accessed on January 14, 2015 at: <http://websoilsurvey.nrcs.usda.gov/app/WebSoilSurvey.aspx>
15. California Department of Toxic Substances Control, EnviroStor Data Base accessed on January 14, 2015 at: <http://www.envirostor.dtsc.ca.gov/public>.
16. California Water Resources Control Board, GeoTracker data base was access on January 14, 2015 at: <http://geotracker.waterboards.ca.gov/>
17. Federal Emergency Management Agency, Flood Insurance Rate Map 06045C1125F, effective date June 2, 2011 accessed on January 14, 2015 at: <https://msc.fema.gov/portal>.
18. *Figure C-3: Dam Failure Hazard Areas*, Mendocino County Multi-Hazard Mitigation Plan accessed on January 14, 2015 at: [http://www.co.mendocino.ca.us/oes/pdf/Dam\\_Failure\\_Hazard\\_Areas\\_11x17.pdf](http://www.co.mendocino.ca.us/oes/pdf/Dam_Failure_Hazard_Areas_11x17.pdf).
19. Personal communications with Dan Ramsey, Airport Manager, Willits Municipal Airport in December 2014.
20. Personal communication with Mark Cicali, Chief Pilot for REACH on January 15, 2015.
21. City of Willits Code of Ordinances accessed at: [https://www.municode.com/library/ca/willits/codes/code\\_of\\_ordinances](https://www.municode.com/library/ca/willits/codes/code_of_ordinances).
22. *Estimating the Effects of Auditory and Visual Disturbance to Northern Spotted Owls and Marbled Murrelets in Northwestern California*, US Fish and Wildlife Service, July 26, 2006
23. Personal communication with Angela M. Liebenberg, Environmental Scientist, California Department

- of Fish and Wildlife, Coastal Conservation Planning on February 5, 2015.
24. Personal communication with William McIver, Fish and Wildlife Biologist Arcata office of the US Fish and Wildlife Service on February 5 and February 13, 2015.

## DETERMINATION

(Completed by Lead Agency: City of Willits)

On the basis of this initial study:

- I find that the proposed project COULD NOT have a significant effect on the environment, and a NEGATIVE DECLARATION will be prepared.
- I find that although the proposed project could have a significant effect on the environment, there will not be a significant effect in this case because revisions in the project have been made by or agreed to by the project proponent. A MITIGATED NEGATIVE DECLARATION will be prepared.
- I find that the proposed project MAY have a significant effect on the environment, and an ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT REPORT is required.
- I find that the proposed project MAY have a "potentially significant impact" or "potentially significant unless mitigated" impact on the environment, but at least one effect 1) has been adequately analyzed in an earlier document pursuant to applicable legal standards, and 2) has been addressed by mitigation measures based on the earlier analysis as described on attached sheets. An ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT REPORT is required, but it must analyze only the effects that remain to be addressed.
- I find that although the proposed project could have a significant effect on the environment, because all potentially significant effects (a) have been analyzed adequately in an earlier EIR or NEGATIVE DECLARATION pursuant to applicable standards, and (b) have been avoided or mitigated pursuant to that earlier EIR or NEGATIVE DECLARATION, including revisions or mitigation measures that are imposed upon the proposed project, no further environmental documentation is required.

  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature

  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

Adrienne Moore, City Manager  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Signatory Name

City of Willits  
\_\_\_\_\_  
For

## ENVIRONMENTAL FACTORS POTENTIALLY AFFECTED

CATEGORY	ANALYSIS SUMMARY (See individual pages for details)					
	Pg	Potentially Significant Impact				
		Less than Significant Impact with Project Mitigation			No Impact	
		Less than Significant Impact				
		Comments				
1. AESTHETICS	8	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Minor new light source.
2. AGRICULTURE/FORESTRY RESOURCES	9	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	
3. AIR QUALITY	10	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Minor new source of combustion gases.
4. BIOLOGICAL RESOURCES	12	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Additional noise similar to existing levels
5. CULTURAL RESOURCES	17	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	
6. GEOLOGY/SOILS/SEISMICITY	19	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Near fault zone
7. GREENHOUSE GAS EMISSIONS	21	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	May increase emissions in long term
8. HAZARDS/HAZARDOUS MATERIALS	22	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	
9. HYDROLOGY/WATER QUALITY	24	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	
10. LAND USE/LAND USE PLANNING	26	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	
11. MINERAL RESOURCES	27	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	
12. NOISE	28	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Relocation of helicopter parking pad resolves potential noise impact
13. POPULATION/HOUSING	31	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	
14. PUBLIC SERVICES	32	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	
15. RECREATION	33	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	
16. TRANSPORTATION/TRAFFIC	34	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	
17. UTILITIES/SERVICE SYSTEMS	35	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	
18. MANDATORY FINDINGS OF SIGNIFICANCE	36	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	

## ENVIRONMENTAL CHECKLIST

### 1. AESTHETICS

Would the proposed project:	Potentially Significant Impact	Less Than Significant with Mitigation Incorporated	Less Than Significant Impact	No Impact
a) Have a substantial adverse effect on a scenic vista?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
b) Substantially damage scenic resources, including, but not limited to, trees, rock outcroppings, and historic buildings within a state scenic highway corridor?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
c) Substantially degrade the existing visual character or quality of the site and its surroundings?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
d) Create a new source of substantial light or glare which would adversely affect daytime or nighttime views in the area?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

#### Discussion

a, c, d): The modular building and helicopter parking position may be visible from three residents located southwest of the project site. Portions of the surrounding hillsides are visible from these residences. The proposed project will extend the developed area of the Airport's building area about 35 feet to the south. The proposed modular office will be consistent in appearance with the adjacent box hangar and other hangars on the Airport. The helicopter parking position will be similar to the aircraft tiedown positions, which currently exist.

b): Poppy Drive is not a designated state scenic highway corridor.

Sources: 1, 2

#### Mitigation

None required.

## 2. AGRICULTURE AND FORESTRY RESOURCES

In determining whether impacts to agricultural resources are significant environmental effects, lead agencies may refer to the California Agricultural Land Evaluation and Site Assessment Model (1997) prepared by the California Department of Conservation as an optional model to use in assessing impacts on agriculture and farmland. In determining whether impacts to forest resources, including timberland, are significant environmental effects, lead agencies may refer to information compiled by the California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection regarding the state's inventory of forest land, including the Forest and Range Assessment Project and the Forest Legacy Assessment project; and forest carbon measurement methodology provided in Forest protocols adopted by the California Air Resources Board.

Would the proposed project:	Potentially Significant Impact	Less Than Significant with Mitigation Incorporated	Less Than Significant Impact	No Impact
a) Convert Prime Farmland, Unique Farmland, or Farmland of Statewide Importance, as shown on the maps prepared pursuant to the Farmland Mapping and Monitoring Program of the California Resources Agency, to non-agricultural use?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
b) Conflict with existing zoning for agricultural use, or a Williamson Act contract?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
c) Conflict with existing zoning for, or cause rezoning of, forest land (as defined in Public Resources Code Section 12220(g)), timberland (as defined in Public Resources Code Section 4526), or timberland zoned Timberland Production (as defined by Government Code Section 51104(g))?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
d) Result in the loss of forest land or conversion of forest land to non-forest use?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
e) Involve other changes in the existing environment which, due to their location or nature, could result in conversion of Farmland to non-agricultural use or conversion of forest land to non-forest use?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>

### Discussion

a – e): The project site does not contain any farmland or trees. The site is designated as “urban” in mapping prepared by California Farmland Mapping and Monitoring Program. The site is not covered by an agreement pursuant to the Williamson Act. The site is not zoned for farming or forestry uses.

Sources: 1, 3, 4

### Mitigation

None required.

### 3. AIR QUALITY

Where available, the significance criteria established by the applicable air quality management or air pollution control district may be relied upon to make the following determinations.

Would the proposed project:	Potentially Significant Impact	Less Than Significant with Mitigation Incorporated	Less Than Significant Impact	No Impact
a) Conflict with or obstruct implementation of the applicable air quality plan?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
b) Violate any air quality standard or contribute substantially to an existing or projected air quality violation?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
c) Result in a cumulatively considerable net increase of any criteria pollutant for which the project region is non-attainment under an applicable federal or state ambient air quality standard (including releasing emissions which exceed quantitative thresholds for ozone precursors)?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
d) Expose sensitive receptors to substantial pollutant concentrations?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
e) Create objectionable odors affecting a substantial number of people?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

#### Discussion

a – c): The project site is located in the Mendocino County Air Quality Management District. The area is currently listed as “nonattainment” for the State Annual Average PM10 standard and the 24-hour PM10 standard (suspended particulates). The area is in attainment or unclassified for all national pollutant standards. On an average day, the project will generate 10 vehicle trips by REACH staff and two helicopter operations (i.e., one departure and one arrival). Ultimately the number of operations are expected to increase to an average of three per day. Compliance with Mendocino County Air Quality Management District requirements to address particulates requires use of best management practices during construction.

d): The project will generate 10 vehicle trips and initially two and eventually three helicopter operations on an average day. The nearest sensitive receptor (a residence) is 275 feet from the proposed parking spaces and 350 feet from the helicopter parking position. With this volume of activity and distance from the nearest sensitive receptor, a “hot spot” analysis is not justified. Pollutant concentrations will be less than significant.

e): Due to the distance to the nearest receptors, odors from car or truck exhaust are not anticipated to be detectable. The helicopter is powered by a turbine jet engine. Jet fuel has a distinct odor. Depending upon the speed and direction of the wind, it is possible that the odor of jet fuel (Jet A) will be noticeable during the twice per day arrival and departure. Three residences may be close enough to the helicopter parking position to detect the smell of jet fuel.

Sources: 1, 5, 6

**Mitigation**

None required.

#### 4. BIOLOGICAL RESOURCES

Would the proposed project:	Potentially Significant Impact	Less Than Significant with Mitigation Incorporated	Less Than Significant Impact	No Impact
a) Have a substantial adverse effect, either directly or through habitat modifications, on any species identified as a candidate, sensitive, or special-status species in local or regional plans, policies, or regulations, or by the California Department of Fish and Game or U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
b) Have a substantial adverse effect on any riparian habitat or other sensitive natural community identified in local or regional plans, policies, and regulations or by the California Department of Fish and Game or U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
c) Have a substantial adverse effect on federally protected wetlands as defined by Section 404 of the Clean Water Act (including, but not limited to, marsh, vernal pool, coastal, etc.) through direct removal, filling, hydrological interruption, or other means?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
d) Interfere substantially with the movement of any native resident or migratory fish or wildlife species or with established native resident or migratory wildlife corridors, or impede the use of native wildlife nursery sites?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
e) Conflict with any local policies or ordinances protecting biological resources, such as a tree preservation policy or ordinance?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
f) Conflict with the provisions of an adopted Habitat Conservation Plan, Natural Community Conservation Plan, or other approved local, regional, or state habitat conservation plan?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>

#### Discussion

A Biological Assessment was prepared in 2009 for another project on the Airport. A biological reconnaissance was conducted and a formal wetland delineation was prepared as a part of this project. A copy of this Assessment is attached. No significant changes to the Airport are known to have occurred in the subsequent six years. **Figure 4**, taken from this Assessment, presents the vegetation types and wetlands located on the Airport. The project site has been added to the graphic. The site falls within the California annual grassland classification.

a): Table 2 in the Assessment summarizes the special status plant species potentially present on the Airport and Table 3 provides a similar summary for animal species. Special status species include those listed as:

- Threatened or endangered under the Federal Endangered Species Act

- Threatened, rare or endangered under the California Endangered Species Act
- California Rare Plant Rank 1B by the California Native Plant Society
- Subject to the Migratory Bird Treaty Act

Based upon Table 2 in the Assessment, one special status plant is located on the Airport: Sonoma canescent manzanita (*Arctostaphylos canescens* ssp. *Sonomensis*). This plant is identified as Rank 1B by the California Native Plant Society. This plant is present in three locations on the west side of the Airport and two locations on the south side of the Airport. None occur within the project site. Table 3 in the Assessment identifies two species of bird for which suitable habitat exists on the Airport: yellow warbler (*Dendroica petechial brewsteri*) and yellow-breasted chat (*Icteria virens*). Both of these birds nest in riparian corridors which are not present on the project site.

City staff have indicated that some members of the community have expressed concern about potential impacts to the Northern spotted owl (*Strix occidentalis*), a Federally listed threatened species. The Assessment indicates that this species favors “dense coniferous and hardwood forest and shaded, steep-sided canyons.” The Assessment indicates that suitable habitat is not present on the Airport. Therefore, it is concluded that the proposed project will not directly affect Northern spotted owl habitat because suitable habitat does not exist within the project site.

The California Natural Diversity Data Base (version 09/2014) indicates that in the early 1990s there were two sightings of the spotted owl less than a mile northeast of the Airport (1991, 1993) and five sightings short of a mile southeast of the project site (1990, 1991). The locations of these sightings are in areas that are overflown by fixed-wing aircraft flying a standard traffic pattern as defined by the FAA. At this point in the standard landing pattern (the *base leg*), fixed-wing aircraft can be expected to be at an altitude about 800 to 1,000 feet above the Airport’s elevation (i.e., 3,363 feet MSL).

REACH’s chief pilot indicates that he anticipates that REACH pilots landing at the Airport will commonly make a base entry about ½ mile from the end of the runway. This means that the helicopter will approach the Airport at a right angle to the runway and then turn towards the Airport about ½ mile from the end of the runway. This pattern is similar to the landing pattern used by smaller fixed-wing aircraft. The chief pilot expects that the helicopter will be descending through 1,000 feet above Airport elevation while on the base leg of the approach. This also mirrors the altitude currently used by fixed-wing aircraft.

Fixed-wing aircraft departing the Airport will typically follow the extended runway centerline until at least the end of the runway. The point at which fixed-wing aircraft make their initial turn will depend upon the destination, climb performance of the aircraft, and pilot preference. REACH’s standard practice will be to initiate turns only after passing beyond the end of the runway. Both fixed-wing aircraft and the REACH helicopter may pass over the locations of the historical Northern spotted owl sightings depending upon the destination and other factors noted above. Due to differences in climb performance, the REACH helicopter is likely to be slightly higher than the fixed-wing aircraft; however, both can be expected to be around 1,000 feet above airport elevation.

From the information presented above, we can conclude that the three areas where historical sightings of the Northern spotted owl have occurred have been and will continue to be routinely overflown by fixed-wing aircraft. The REACH helicopter will also regularly overfly the northeastern location during arrivals. REACH may overfly all sites during departures depending upon the intended destination.

The document preparers contacted the biologist with the California Department of Fish and Wildlife, who is responsible for land animals in the geographic region of the project site, to enquire about potential

biological concerns and specifically to determine the level of concern about the Northern spotted owl. The biologist indicated that her agency would probably defer to the US Fish and Wildlife Service for evaluation of impacts to the Northern spotted owl. The state biologist indicated that the apparent level of potential biological impacts was so low that her agency might not make a formal response after receiving a copy of the initial study as part of CEQA review. This biologist also provided a copy of the auditory impact assessment document noted in the paragraphs that follow.

The appropriate biologist with the US Fish and Wildlife Service was then contacted by telephone. The federal biologist indicated that the project appeared to have such limited potential for impact on the Northern spotted owl that the agency would be unlikely to formally evaluate the project. He also indicated that the agency would not wish to involve itself in regulating the flight of medical helicopters generally. The document preparers requested that the biologist arrange for an official comment letter from his agency. He indicated that a letter will be provided by about April 4, 2015. This letter will be included with any other correspondence that arrives during the planned comment period for this project.

In 2006, the US Fish and Wildlife Service published guidance on assessing the auditory impact on the Northern spotted owl. The document indicates that “harassment” of the Northern spotted owl is likely to occur if any of the following three conditions would be created by the proposed project:

- (a) The action-generated sound level substantially exceeds (i.e., by 20-25 dB or more as experienced by the animal) ambient conditions existing prior to the project;
- (b) When the total sound level, including the combined existing ambient and action-generated sound, is very high (i.e., exceeds 90 dB, as experienced by the animal); or
- (c) When visual proximity of human activities occurs close to (i.e., within 40 m of) an active nest site.

Single-event maximum sound levels were calculated for both existing fixed-wing operations and the new REACH operations over the three areas where the Northern spotted owl was historically present. The FAA’s Integrated Noise Model was used to generate the data. The sites in which the Northern spotted owl was sited are located the following distances from the proposed REACH helicopter parking position:

- Owl Site 1: approximately 4,500 feet northeast with an assumed nest height of 1,685 feet MSL
- Owl Site 2: approximately 5,000 feet east-southeast with an assumed nest height of 1,440 feet MSL
- Owl Site 3: approximately 4,800 feet southeast with an assumed nest height of 1,740 feet MSL

The Airport’s elevation is 2,063 feet MSL. Due to the sensitivity of the mapped data, a graphic depiction of the locations of the Northern spotted owl sightings is not provided.

Noise levels for helicopter arrivals and departures to and from the south were modeled. Due to the steep slope of the runway fixed-wing aircraft seldom arrive from or depart to the north. So only operations to and from the south were modeled. The touch and go operation mentioned is a training operation in which an aircraft lands, but does not stop before taking off again.

In modeling the sound levels it was assumed that the Northern spotted owl nest would be located 50 feet above ground level. The owl typically nests at least 15 feet above ground level and may nest 100 feet above ground level if a suitable cavity in a tree exists. No data is available on the elevation of the nesting sites in the areas where the presence of the owl is documented. In any case, nesting sites are subject to change over time. **Table 1** presents the estimated sound levels in decibels (dB).

<b>Table 1</b>				
<b>Maximum Sound Level Comparison</b>				
Note: All sound levels in decibels				
Aircraft	Operation	Owl Site A	Owl Site B	Owl Site C
EC130 (REACH helicopter)	Depart to North	62.6	56.8	52.9
	Depart to South	63.0	61.6	64.2
	Arrive from North	72.0	61.9	58.0
	Arrive from South	65.5	68.4	69.8
Cessna 172 (single-engine fixed-pitch)	Touch & Go	55.3	52.7	55.2
	Arrive from South	53.6	54.1	54.4
	Depart to South	55.3	51.8	52.2
Beech Baron 58 (piston twin0)	Arrive from South	68.3	68.8	69.1
	Depart to South	69.6	71.9	73.6
Single-engine Variable Pitch (e.g. Cessna 182)	Touch & Go	69.6	69.1	71.7
	Arrive to South	66.5	66.9	67.2
	Depart to South	69.9	68.5	69.5

Based upon the harassment criteria noted above the following conclusions can be reached:

- (a) REACH’s helicopter would generate sound levels similar to those by fixed-wing aircraft.
- (b) No sites are exposed to sound levels higher than 90 dB currently or with the introduction of REACH’s helicopter
- (c) All aircraft activity are more than 1,000 feet above nesting sites.

Therefore, it is concluded that the project would not cause a significant impact on the Northern spotted owl.

b – c): **Figure 4** shows that the Airport contains both wetlands and riparian (“streams”) habitat. The project site is located in California annual grassland habitat and will not directly affect either wetlands or riparian habitat. Since the project site was rough graded when the Airport was constructed, the general pattern of drainage will not be altered by the project. The project site is not hydrologically connected to any of the wetlands or streams on the Airport.

d): The project site is located inside the fenced perimeter of the Airport. No new fences or other barriers to the movement of land animals will be created. The project does not alter any stream or water body. No wildlife corridors or nursery sites were identified in the Biological Assessment. The project site was created by grading.

e – f): The City does not have a biologically oriented ordinance. No part of the Airport is part of a habitat conservation plan of any type.

Sources: 1, 8, 9, 20, 21, 22, 23, 24

**Mitigation**

None required.

## 5. CULTURAL RESOURCES

Would the proposed project:	Potentially Significant Impact	Less Than Significant with Mitigation Incorporated	Less Than Significant Impact	No Impact
a) Cause a substantial adverse change in the significance of a historical resource as defined in §15064.5?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
b) Cause a substantial adverse change in the significance of an archaeological resource pursuant to §15064.5?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
c) Directly or indirectly destroy a unique paleontological resource or site or unique geologic feature?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
d) Disturb any human remains, including those interred outside of formal cemeteries?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>

### Discussion

a – d): A Cultural Resources Investigation was prepared in 2009 for another airport project. This investigation included both a pedestrian survey, research, and data base search of the California Historical Resources Information System (CHRIS) at the Northwest Information Center at Sonoma State University and a consultation with potentially interested tribal contacts provided by the California Native American Heritage Commission. The Area of Potential Effect for that project included the location of the proposed helicopter parking pad, but not the adjacent site for the modular building. However, given that the entire project site was created by grading the hillside to provide a level building site, the general conclusions of the investigation are presumed to apply to the entire site.

The Northwest Information Center indicated that the CHRIS database did not contain any references to cultural resources on the Airport. The Center indicated that the area was moderately sensitive for Native American artifacts and of low sensitivity for historic-period artifacts. The California Native American Heritage Commission indicated that there were no known cultural resources in the general area of the Airport. Only one letter from a tribal representative was received as part of the investigation. This letter was from Redwood Valley Reservation. It indicated that no known cultural resources existed on the Airport. However, the letter indicated that the tribe considered all of Mendocino County to be culturally sensitive and that undiscovered cultural sites may exist. The tribe’s representative asked to be notified if any cultural artifacts were discovered during construction.

In 2004, the Sherwood Valley Rancheria was contacted in 2004 regarding potential impacts from the Airport’s five-year capital improvement program. A letter from the Sherwood Valley Rancheria’s Tribal Environmental Program staff indicated that there were no known cultural or archaeological sites in the Area of Potential Effect. However, the letter indicated that the tribe considered all of Mendocino County to be culturally sensitive and that undiscovered cultural sites may exist. The tribe’s representative asked to be notified if any cultural artifacts were discovered during construction.

This Investigation concluded that:

“During the course of this investigation, no significant cultural resources were identified and no further studies are recommended at this time.”

To support a thorough review of the initial study on February 6, 2015, a Sacred Lands File and Native American Contacts List Request was submitted to the California Native American Heritage Commission. At the time of release of this initial study a response from the agency had not be received. When received, all suggested contacts will be provided with a copy of the initial study. Any tribes on the suggested contacts list will be invited to initiate discussions with the City over cultural concerns.

Sources: 1, 10, 11

**Mitigation**

None required.

## 6. GEOLOGY, SOILS, AND SEISMICITY

Would the proposed project:	Potentially Significant Impact	Less Than Significant with Mitigation Incorporated	Less Than Significant Impact	No Impact
a) Expose people or structures to potential substantial adverse effects, including the risk of loss, injury, or death involving:				
i) Rupture of a known earthquake fault, as delineated on the most recent Alquist-Priolo Earthquake Fault Zoning Map issued by the State Geologist for the area or based on other substantial evidence of a known fault? (Refer to Division of Mines and Geology Special Publication 42.)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
ii) Strong seismic ground shaking?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
iii) Seismic-related ground failure, including liquefaction?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
iv) Landslides?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
b) Result in substantial soil erosion or the loss of topsoil?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
c) Be located on geologic unit or soil that is unstable, or that would become unstable as a result of the project, and potentially result in on- or off-site landslide, lateral spreading, subsidence, liquefaction, or collapse?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
d) Be located on expansive soil, as defined in Table 18-1-B of the Uniform Building Code (1994), creating substantial risks to life or property?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
e) Have soils incapable of adequately supporting the use of septic tanks or alternative wastewater disposal systems where sewers are not available for the disposal of wastewater?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>

### Discussion

a): The project site is located about one mile from the Alquist-Priolo Special Studies Zone associated with the Maacama fault. However, along with the Brooktrails subdivision and much of the City of Willits, the project site is susceptible to strong seismic ground shaking. Data does not indicate that the soils in the area are subject to liquefaction. The one-story modular structure does not require special design features to meet building codes.

b): The project site was graded when the Airport was constructed to provide a level building site. Standard erosion control measures are expected to be adequate to control soil erosion.

c – d): Because the project site is already man-altered, the Resource Conservation Service classifies the soil as “urban land” rather than a specific soil type. Soils in the area are well-drained loams with significant slopes. Many soils in the area have a limiting layer of weathered bedrock within about six feet of the

surface. Soils in the area vary in the degree to which they are expansive from low to moderate. Numerous structures exist on the Airport (including a two-story office). The box hangar adjacent to the project site has a Portland cement concrete floor. No indication exists that excessive soil expansion exists within the airports existing building area.

e): The project's office will be connected to a community sewage treatment system.

Sources: 1, 7, 12, 13

**Mitigation**

None required.

## 7. GREENHOUSE GAS EMISSIONS

Would the proposed project:	Potentially Significant Impact	Less Than Significant with Mitigation Incorporated	Less Than Significant Impact	No Impact
a) Generate greenhouse gas emissions, either directly or indirectly, that may have a significant impact on the environment?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
b) Conflict with an applicable plan, policy or regulation adopted for the purpose of reducing the emissions of greenhouse gases?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>

### Discussion

a, b): The principal sources of greenhouse gas emissions for this project will be fuel consumed by the helicopter and staff vehicles. Lighting and heating the modular building will also consume electricity (generated elsewhere) and potentially propane. Initial operations of the project will replace patient transfer activities already being provided by REACH (or other air ambulance services), but with helicopters based at more distant airports. Therefore, the initial level of use will either reduce greenhouse gas emissions or be neutral in terms of greenhouse gas emissions. In the longer term, patient transfer activities by REACH's helicopter may replace transfers that would otherwise occur using ambulances. The REACH helicopter uses more fuel than an ambulance on a per mile basis; therefore, if shift from use of ambulances to helicopters occurs, there would be a net increase in greenhouse gas emissions. The potential for this increase to occur is too speculative to permit quantification. However, any increase would contribute to the cumulative generation of greenhouse gases in Willits and Mendocino County.

No threshold exists to measure the significance of the greenhouse gas emissions for this small-scale development. The best that can be done is to evaluate the whether the project is consistent with land use policies and otherwise is efficient in the broadest sense. The project is proposed to be sited at an existing airport on a previously prepared building site. This minimizes the need for new construction. It is also consistent with the City's land use policies. Fueling for the helicopter will be from a truck based at the Airport. This avoids the need for routine diversions to other airports for fueling. Given the limited nature of the proposed project, no other evaluation criteria have been identified.

Sources: 1, 7

### Mitigation

None required.

**8. HAZARDS AND HAZARDOUS MATERIALS**

Would the proposed project:	Potentially Significant Impact	Less Than Significant with Mitigation Incorporated	Less Than Significant Impact	No Impact
a) Create a significant hazard to the public or the environment through the routine transport, use, or disposal of hazardous materials?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
b) Create a significant hazard to the public or the environment through reasonably foreseeable upset and accident conditions involving the release of hazardous materials into the environment?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
c) Emit hazardous emissions or handle hazardous or acutely hazardous materials, substances, or waste within one-quarter mile of an existing or proposed school?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
d) Be located on a site which is included on a list of hazardous materials sites compiled pursuant to Government Code Section 65962.5 and, as a result, would it create a significant hazard to the public or the environment?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
e) For a project located within an airport land use plan or, where such a plan has not been adopted, within two miles of a public airport or public use airport, would the project result in a safety hazard for people residing or working in the project area?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
f) For a project within the vicinity of a private airstrip, would the project result in a safety hazard for people residing or working in the project area?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
g) Impair implementation of or physically interfere with an adopted emergency response plan or emergency evacuation plan?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
h) Expose people or structures to a significant risk of loss, injury or death involving wildland fires, including where wildlands are adjacent to urbanized areas or where residences are intermixed with wildlands?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>

**Discussion**

a – b): The proposed project will not involve the use or transport of any acutely hazardous wastes. The fuels (gasoline, diesel fuel, Jet A fuel) and lubricants in the vehicles and helicopter will be the principal sources of hazardous materials. While vehicle and helicopter accidents are possible, they are not

reasonably foreseeable. The helicopter will receive a daily inspection by an FAA-certified aviation mechanic to ensure a high level of reliability.

c): The proposed project will not generate hazardous emissions or involve handling hazardous substances. The nearest school is Willits High School, which is 2.5 miles southeast of the project site.

d): The Airport does not have any have any hazardous waste sites or leaking underground storage tanks. A leaking underground storage tank had existed on the Airport, but it was remediated and the case is closed (RB Case #: 1TMC392).

e – f): The project is located on a public airport. Airport land use policies do not apply to on-airport aviation uses.

g): The project would not affect the ability of emergency response or evacuation plans to be implemented. The project would not constrain the ability to evacuate the Airport or surrounding areas. The availability of a medical helicopter in the Willits area could be an asset in many types of emergency response situations.

h): The project site is located in a rural area surrounded on three sides by wildlands. However, the project is similar to existing uses on the site. It would not uniquely expose employees to wildland fire hazards or expand the wildland interface. The Airport consists of large areas that are paved or have limited vegetation.

Sources: 1, 15, 16

### **Mitigation**

None required.

## 9. HYDROLOGY AND WATER QUALITY

Would the proposed project:	Potentially Significant Impact	Less Than Significant with Mitigation Incorporated	Less Than Significant Impact	No Impact
a) Violate any water quality standards or waste discharge requirements?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
b) Substantially deplete groundwater supplies or interfere substantially with groundwater recharge such that there would be a net deficit in aquifer volume or a lowering of the local groundwater table level (e.g., the production rate of pre-existing nearby wells would drop to a level which would not support existing land uses or planned uses for which permits have been granted)?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
c) Substantially alter the existing drainage pattern of a site or area including through the alteration of the course of a stream or river, in a manner that would result in substantial erosion or siltation on- or off-site?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
d) Substantially alter the existing drainage pattern of a site or area including through the alteration of the course of a stream or river or, substantially increase the rate or amount of surface runoff in a manner that would result in flooding on- or off-site?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
e) Create or contribute runoff water which would exceed the capacity of existing or planned stormwater drainage systems or provide substantial additional sources of polluted runoff?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
f) Otherwise substantially degrade water quality?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
g) Place housing within a 100-year flood hazard area as mapped on a federal Flood Hazard Boundary or Flood Insurance Rate Map or other flood hazard delineation map?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
h) Place within a 100-year flood hazard area structures that would impede or redirect flood flows?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
i) Expose people or structures to a significant risk of loss, injury or death involving flooding, including flooding as a result of the failure of a levee or dam?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
j) Inundation by seiche, tsunami, or mudflow?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>

### Discussion

a – f): The project site was rough graded when the Airport was constructed. Only limited grading will be required to construct the proposed facilities. The general pattern of drainage will not be altered nor will any stream be modified. Stormwaters will be accommodated via sheet flows to existing natural swales. No new drainage structures are proposed. Given the level project site, standard soil stabilization measures will be sufficient to protect downstream water quality.

g – h): The Airport is located in an area that is outside of the 500-year floodplain.

i): The Airport is not located within a dam inundation zone.

j): The project site is not located near the ocean or body of water; therefore, the project site is not subject to tsunamis or seiches. The project site is located on a level area near the top of the adjacent ridge. The upslope area is generally forested and has limited potential for mud flows.

Sources: 1, 17, 18

**Mitigation**

None required.

**10. LAND USE AND LAND USE PLANNING**

Would the proposed project:	Potentially Significant Impact	Less Than Significant with Mitigation Incorporated	Less Than Significant Impact	No Impact
a) Physically divide an established community?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
b) Conflict with any applicable land use plan, policy, or regulation of an agency with jurisdiction over the project (including, but not limited to the general plan, specific plan, local coastal program, or zoning ordinance) adopted for the purpose of avoiding or mitigating an environmental effect?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
c) Conflict with any applicable habitat conservation plan or natural community conservation plan?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>

**Discussion**

The project will occur on a site on the Willits Municipal Airport that is designated for aviation uses on the adopted Airport Layout Plan. Although the Airport is operated by the City of Willits, no land use policies for the facility are contained in the Willits general plan. Nor is the project site included in any form of conservation plan.

Sources: 4

**Mitigation**

None required.

**11. MINERAL RESOURCES**

Would the proposed project:	Potentially Significant Impact	Less Than Significant with Mitigation Incorporated	Less Than Significant Impact	No Impact
a) Result in the loss of availability of a known mineral resource that would be of value to the region and the residents of the state?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
b) Result in the loss of availability of a locally important mineral resource recovery site delineated on a local general plan, specific plan or other land use plan?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>

**Discussion**

a – b): The project site has not been identified as a possible source for minerals. The Airport is not a designated site for mineral extraction.

Sources: 1, 21

**Mitigation**

None required.

## 12. NOISE

Would the proposed project:	Potentially Significant Impact	Less Than Significant with Mitigation Incorporated	Less Than Significant Impact	No Impact
a) Exposure of persons to or generation of noise levels in excess of standards established in the local general plan or noise ordinance, or applicable standards of other agencies?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
b) Exposure of persons to or generation of excessive groundborne vibration or groundborne noise levels?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
c) A substantial permanent increase in ambient noise levels in the project vicinity above levels existing without the project?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
d) A substantial temporary or periodic increase in ambient noise levels in the project vicinity above levels existing without the project?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
e) For a project located within an airport land use plan or, where such a plan has not been adopted, within two miles of a public airport or public use airport, would the project expose people residing or working in the area to excessive noise levels?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
f) For a project located in the vicinity of a private airstrip, would the project expose people residing or working in the project area to excessive noise levels?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>

### Discussion

a – d): Noise is the principal substantive concern for the proposed project. Note that noise impacts on the Northern spotted owl are assessed in Section 4 Biological Resources. This section limits its assessment to impact on people. In California, aviation noise effects are commonly quantified using Community Noise Equivalent Level (CNEL) contours. CNEL is the annual average sound level, in decibels, obtained by adding together all noise events, with the addition of 4.77 decibels to weight sound levels from 7 P.M. to 10 P.M. and 10 decibels to weight sound levels from 10 P.M. to 7 A.M. In effect, this weighting means that each aircraft operation in the evening is counted as the same as five daytime operations and each nighttime operation counts as the same as ten daytime operations. The weighing of evening and nighttime events accounts for the fact that noise events during these hours are more intrusive when ambient noise levels are lower and people are trying to sleep. The 24-hour CNEL is annualized to reflect noise generated by aircraft operations for an entire year and is identified by “noise contours” showing levels of aircraft noise.

The Mendocino County Airport Land Use Commission (ALUC) has responsibility for ensuring compatibility between the public-use airports in the county and other land uses. The ALUC’s policies are contained in the *Mendocino County Airport Land Use Plan*. The agency’s basic noise policy is contained in Policy 3.1.3:

“Noise Exposure in Residential Areas — The maximum CNEL considered normally acceptable for residential uses in the vicinity of airports covered by this plan is 60 dBA.”

Therefore, 60 dBA CNEL noise contour will be used as the threshold of significance for noise impacts in this analysis.

The FAA’s Integrated Noise Model (INM) version 7.0d was used to develop the noise contours. This is the standard software used for civilian airports. Because the Airport does not have an aircraft control tower, an actual count of aircraft operations does not exist. Therefore, the FAA’s Terminal Area Forecast for 2014 was used to establish the current annual number of aircraft operations (5,500 operations). An aircraft operation is either one landing or one departure. The mix of aircraft types was defined in consultation with the City’s Airport Manager. **Table 1** presents the inputs to INM.

Aircraft		2014		2014 with REACH	
		Annual		Annual	
		Itinerant	Local	Itinerant	Local
Twin Engine Propeller	Beech Baron	110	-	110	-
	Cessna 172	1,298	1,122	1,298	1,122
Single Engine Propeller	Cessna 182	147	128	147	128
	Fixed-Pitch Propeller	1,298	1,122	1,298	1,122
	Variable-Pitch Propeller	147	128	147	128
Helicopter	Eurocopter 135	-	-	730	-
Subtotal		3,000	2,500	3,730	2,500
TOTAL		5,500		6,230	

Noise contours were first prepared for the Airport without the proposed project (see **Figure 5**). In this and subsequent CNEL noise contour graphics, the 55, 60, and 65 CNEL noise contours are shown. Because it is considered the threshold of significance, the 60 CNEL contour is in bold. Noise contours were then developed which added one daily departure and one daily arrival by the REACH helicopter (see **Figure 6**). This is the average annual activity level anticipated for the project. The addition of the project would expand the noise contours to the west. With the helicopter parking position in the originally proposed location the 60 CNEL noise contour extends over the residences located immediately west of the project site. This is considered a potentially significant effect.

To mitigate this noise impact, the benefit of shifting the helicopter parking pad closer to the runway was evaluated. In the alternative studied, the pad was shifted about 55 feet east and 20 feet north. The Northern shift is to place the pad slightly closer to the edge of existing pavement to minimize construction costs. This alternative location also meets FAA design standards. This shift in the pad’s location resulted in a shift in the noise contours to the east. In **Figure 7** it can be seen that the shift in the pad’s location moves the 60 CNEL to the Airport’s property line. This alternative pad location would reduce the noise impacts to a level that is less than significant.

Single-event noise is sound as we experience it, it is sometimes termed the maximum noise level. There is no standard for single-event noise levels; however, to aid in understanding how the proposed project will compare to exiting airport operations, a single-event graphic was prepared. **Figure 8** compares the single-event noise levels generated by the REACH helicopter with a common single-engine propeller aircraft (Cessna 172) and twin-engine propeller aircraft (Beech Baron). The noise contours are for aircraft departures which are the loudest noise events. As can be seen in the graphic, at the residence closest to the parking pad, the REACH helicopter will be louder than the single-engine aircraft but quieter than the

twin-engine aircraft. Elsewhere along the departure path, the REACH helicopter will be about as loud as the single-engine aircraft.

Sources: 1, 19

**Mitigation**

Mitigation 12-1: Shift the helicopter parking pad such that the eastern edge of the pad is 210 feet west of the runway centerline.

### 13. POPULATION AND HOUSING

Would the proposed project:	Potentially Significant Impact	Less Than Significant with Mitigation Incorporated	Less Than Significant Impact	No Impact
a) Induce substantial population growth in an area, either directly (for example, by proposing new homes and businesses) or indirectly (for example, through extension of roads or other infrastructure)?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
b) Displace substantial numbers of existing housing, necessitating the construction of replacement housing elsewhere?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
c) Displace substantial numbers of people, necessitating the construction of replacement housing elsewhere?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>

#### Discussion

a): It is not known whether the employees associated with the project will move to the City of Willits or surrounding areas. However, even if all of the employees do move to the area, the number is so small that the effect on area population will be insignificant.

b – c): No displacement of housing or people will occur as a result of the project.

Source: 1

#### Mitigation

None required.

**14. PUBLIC SERVICES**

Would the proposed project:	Potentially Significant Impact	Less Than Significant with Mitigation Incorporated	Less Than Significant Impact	No Impact
a) Result in substantial adverse physical impacts associated with the provision of new or physically altered governmental facilities, need for new or physically altered governmental facilities, the construction of which could cause significant environmental impacts, in order to maintain acceptable service ratios, response times, or other performance objectives for any of the following public services:				
i) Fire protection?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
ii) Police protection?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
iii) Schools?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
iv) Parks?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
v) Other public facilities?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>

**Discussion**

a) i – v): The scale and location of the project are such that it will not require any change in the provision of public services or the creation of new/altered public facilities.

Source: 1

**Mitigation**

None required.

**15. RECREATION**

Would the proposed project:	Potentially Significant Impact	Less Than Significant with Mitigation Incorporated	Less Than Significant Impact	No Impact
a) Increase the use of existing neighborhood and regional parks or other recreational facilities such that substantial physical deterioration of the facilities would occur or be accelerated?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
b) Include recreational facilities or require the construction or expansion of recreational facilities that might have an adverse physical effect on the environment?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>

**Discussion**

a – b): The project will not directly increase the use of any park. Indirectly, new employees could incrementally increase the use of parks. However, the increase in use would be small and too speculative to attempt to quantify.

**Mitigation**

None required.

## 16. TRANSPORTATION AND TRAFFIC

Would the proposed project:	Potentially Significant Impact	Less Than Significant with Mitigation Incorporated	Less Than Significant Impact	No Impact
a) Conflict with an applicable plan, ordinance or policy establishing measures of effectiveness for the performance of the circulation system, taking into account all modes of transportation including mass transit and non-motorized travel and relevant components of the circulation system, including but not limited to intersections, streets, highways and freeways, pedestrian and bicycle paths, and mass transit?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
b) Conflict with an applicable congestion management program, including, but not limited to level of service standards and travel demand measures, or other standards established by the county congestion management agency for designated roads or highways?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
c) Result in a change in air traffic patterns, including either an increase in traffic levels or a change in location that results in substantial safety risks?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
d) Substantially increase hazards due to a design feature (e.g., sharp curves or dangerous intersections) or incompatible uses (e.g., farm equipment)?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
e) Result in inadequate emergency access?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
f) Conflict with adopted policies, plans, or programs regarding public transit, bicycle, or pedestrian facilities, or otherwise decrease the performance or safety of such facilities?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
g) Conflict with adopted policies, plans, or programs supporting alternative transportation (e.g., conflict with policies promoting bus turnouts, bicycle racks, etc.)?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>

### Discussion

a – b, d – g): The project will generate a maximum of seven vehicle trips at shift change: four inbound and three outbound. Access will be via existing two-lane streets. This volume of traffic is too small to have a significant effect on surrounding streets, other forms of travel or transit services. No congestion management plan exists for the area surrounding the project site. No roads will be created or altered as part of this project. No vehicle types will begin using the roads to the project site that do not already do so. The project does not conflict with any identified transportation-related plan of either the City of Willits or Mendocino County.

Sources: 1, 7, 20

### Mitigation

None required.

## 17. UTILITIES AND SERVICE SYSTEMS

Would the proposed project:	Potentially Significant Impact	Less Than Significant with Mitigation Incorporated	Less Than Significant Impact	No Impact
a) Exceed wastewater treatment requirements of the applicable Regional Water Quality Control Board?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
b) Require or result in the construction of new water or wastewater treatment facilities or expansion of existing facilities, the construction of which could cause significant environmental effects?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
c) Require or result in the construction of new storm water drainage facilities, or expansion of existing facilities, the construction of which could cause significant environmental effects?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
d) Have sufficient water supplies available to serve the project from existing entitlements and resources, or are new or expanded entitlements needed?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
e) Result in a determination by the wastewater treatment provider that would serve the project that it has adequate capacity to serve the project's projected demand in addition to the provider's existing commitments?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
f) Be served by a landfill with sufficient permitted capacity to accommodate the project's solid waste disposal needs?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
g) Comply with federal, state, and local statutes and regulations related to solid waste?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>

### Discussion

a – g): REACH has obtained approval for connections to the Brooktrails Township Community Services District for water and sewer service. Solid waste collection will be provided by Solid Wastes of Willits through a contract with Brooktrails Township Community Services District. Electricity, telephone, and cable service will be extended from a utility pole near the entrance to the Airport. The scale of this project is too small to effect requirements for water, wastewater treatment or solid waste disposal.

Source: 7

### Mitigation

None required.

**18. MANDATORY FINDINGS OF SIGNIFICANCE**

Would the proposed project:	Potentially Significant Impact	Less Than Significant with Mitigation Incorporated	Less Than Significant Impact	No Impact
a) Have the potential to degrade the quality of the environment, substantially reduce the habitat of a fish or wildlife species, cause a fish or wildlife population to drop below self-sustaining levels, threaten to eliminate a plant or animal community, reduce the number or restrict the range of a rare or endangered plant or animal, or eliminate important examples of the major periods of California history or prehistory?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
b) Have impacts that would be individually limited, but cumulatively considerable? ("Cumulatively considerable" means that the incremental effects of a project are considerable when viewed in connection with the effects of past projects, the effects of other current projects, and the effects of probable future projects.)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
c) Have environmental effects that would cause substantial adverse effects on human beings, either directly or indirectly?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

**Discussion**

The only potentially significant effect is the increase in noise from operations at the helicopter parking pad on residences immediately west of the Airport.

**Mitigation**

Shifting the pad to the east makes potential noise impacts less than significant.

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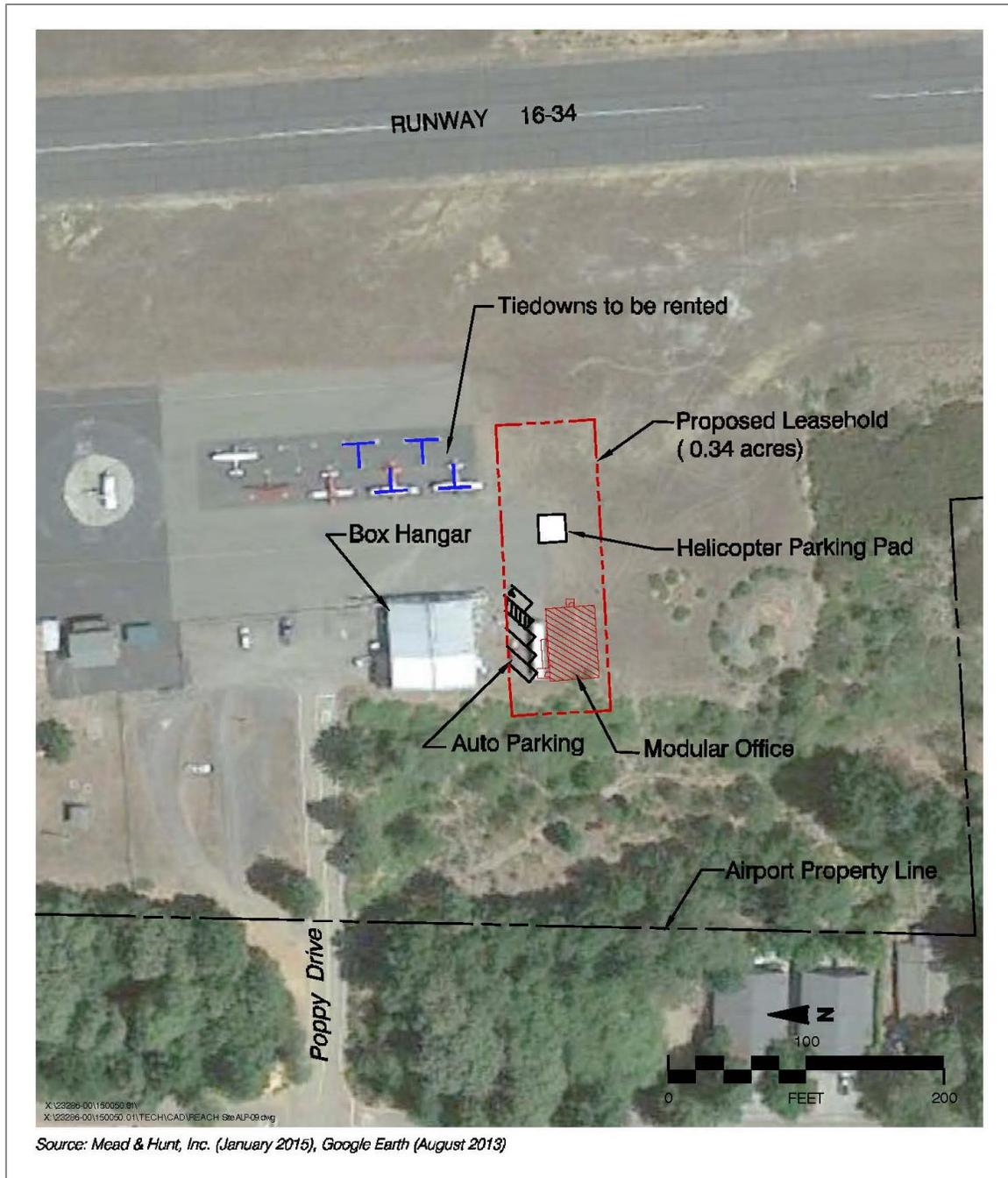
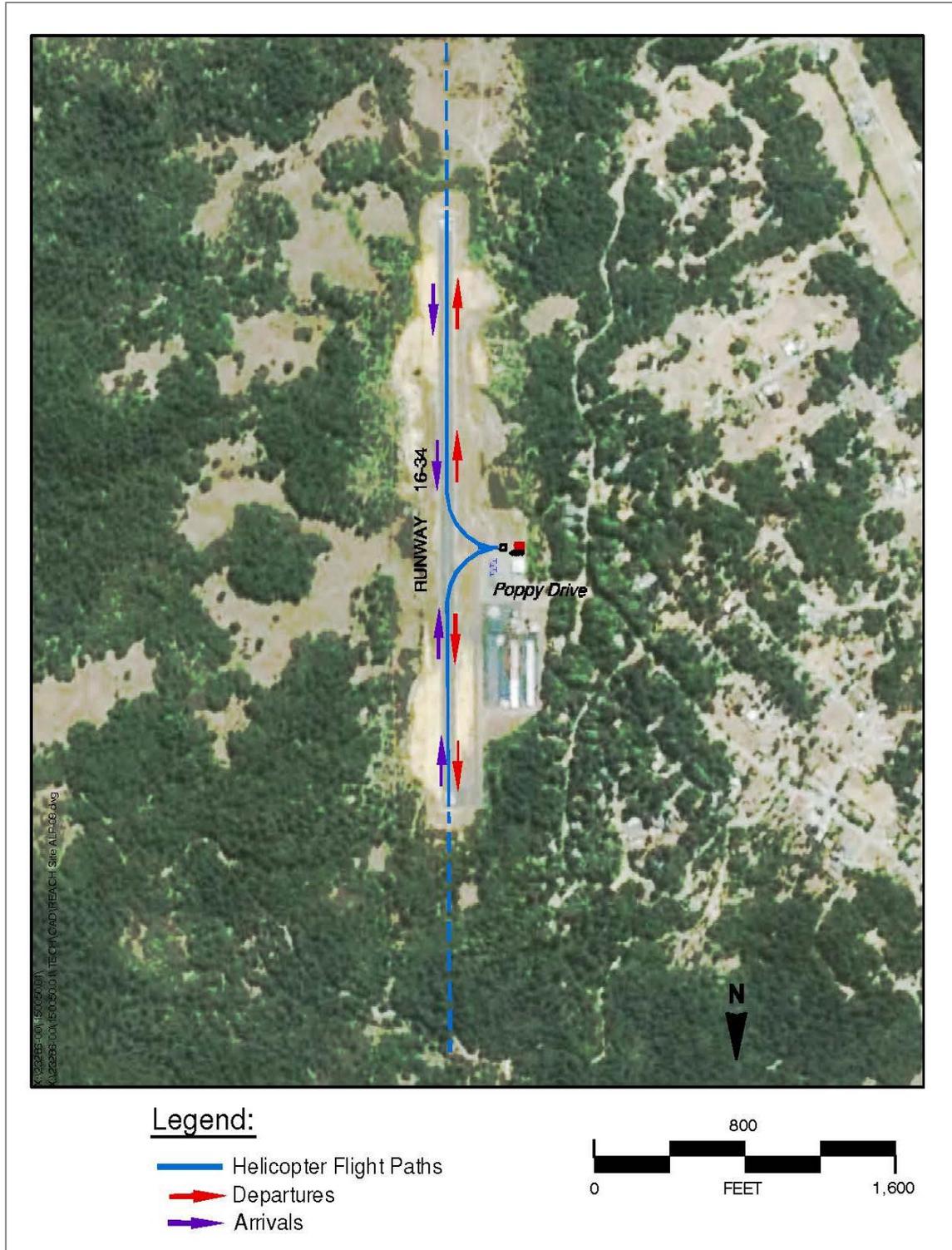


Figure 1  
**Proposed REACH Site**  
Willits Municipal Airport



**Figure 2**  
**EC 135 REACH Helicopter**  
Willits Municipal Airport



**Figure 3**  
**Helicopter Flight Paths**  
Willits Municipal Airport

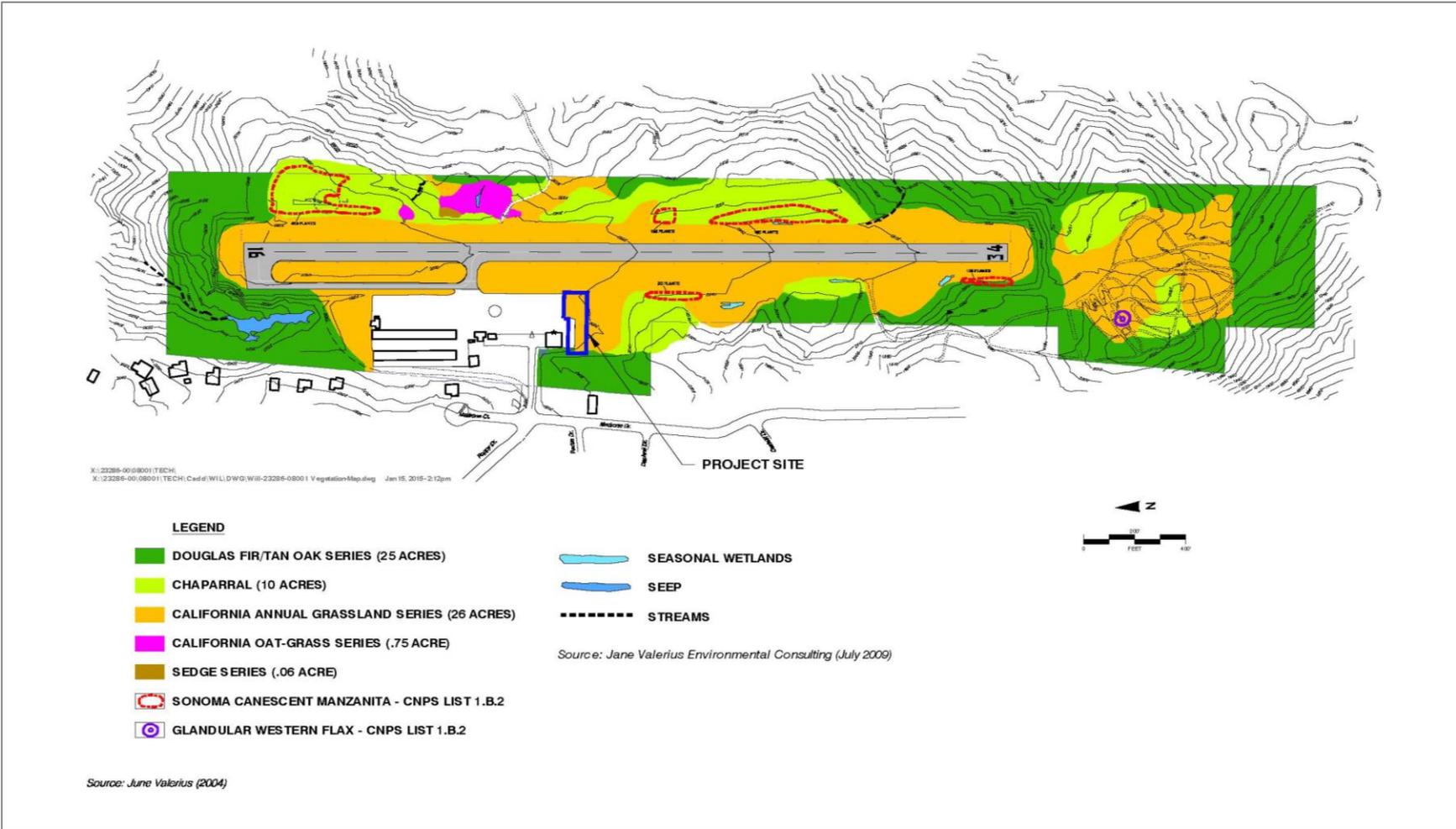


Figure 4  
**Vegetation Map**  
Willits Municipal Airport

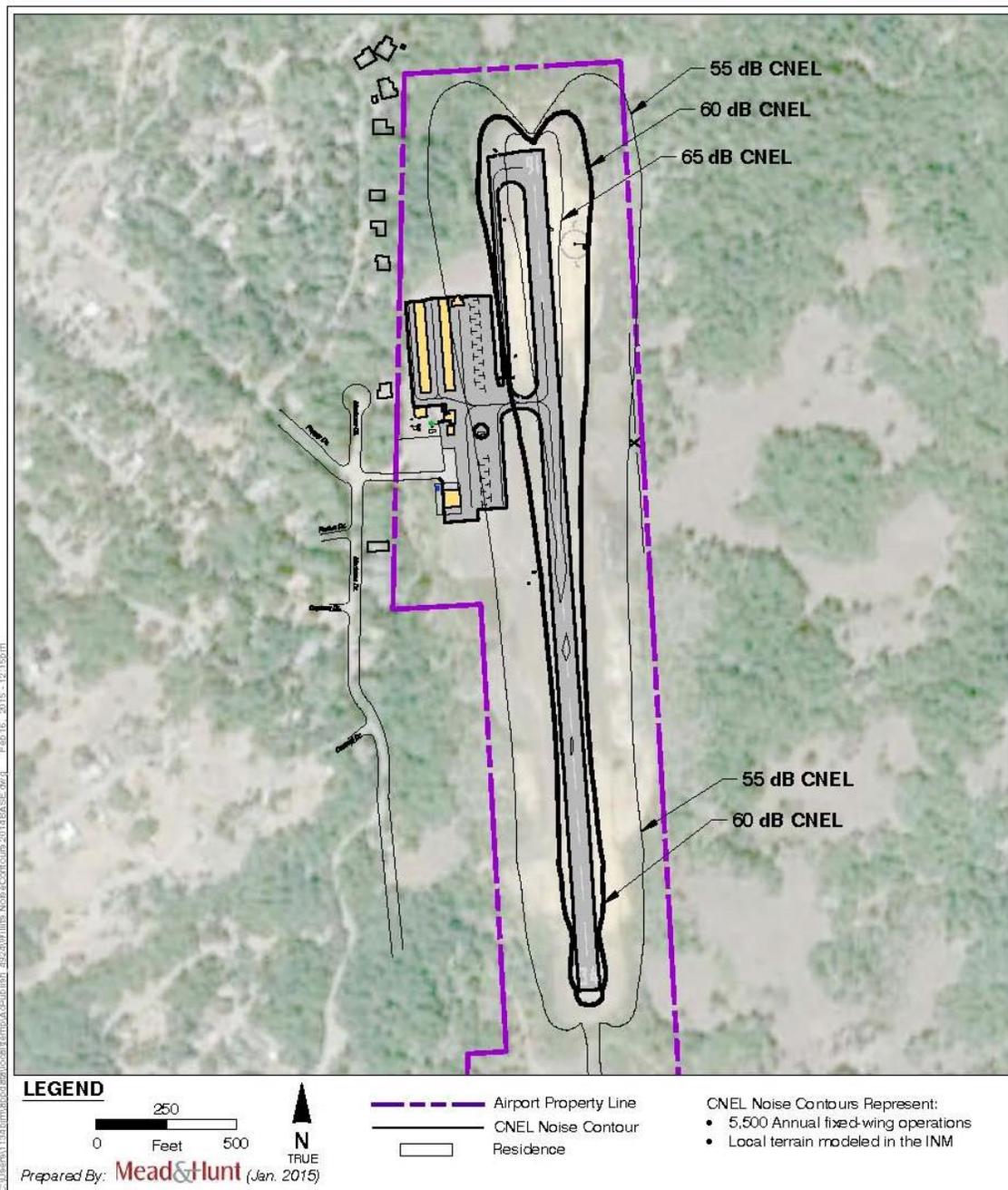


Figure 5  
**2014 Operations – Noise Contours**  
Willits Municipal Airport

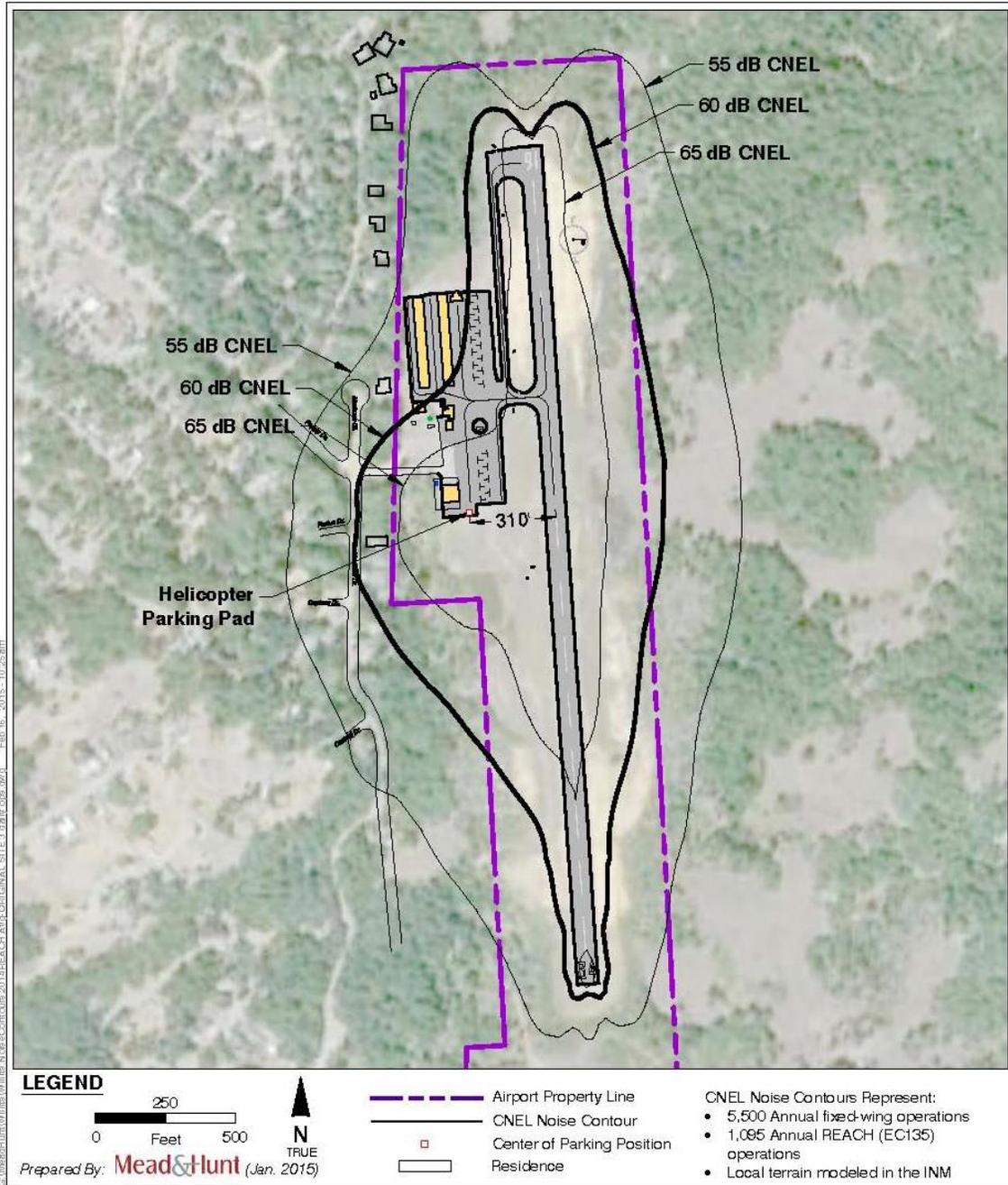


Figure 6

**2014 Operations + REACH Average Day – Noise Contours  
Proposed Parking Position**

Willits Municipal Airport

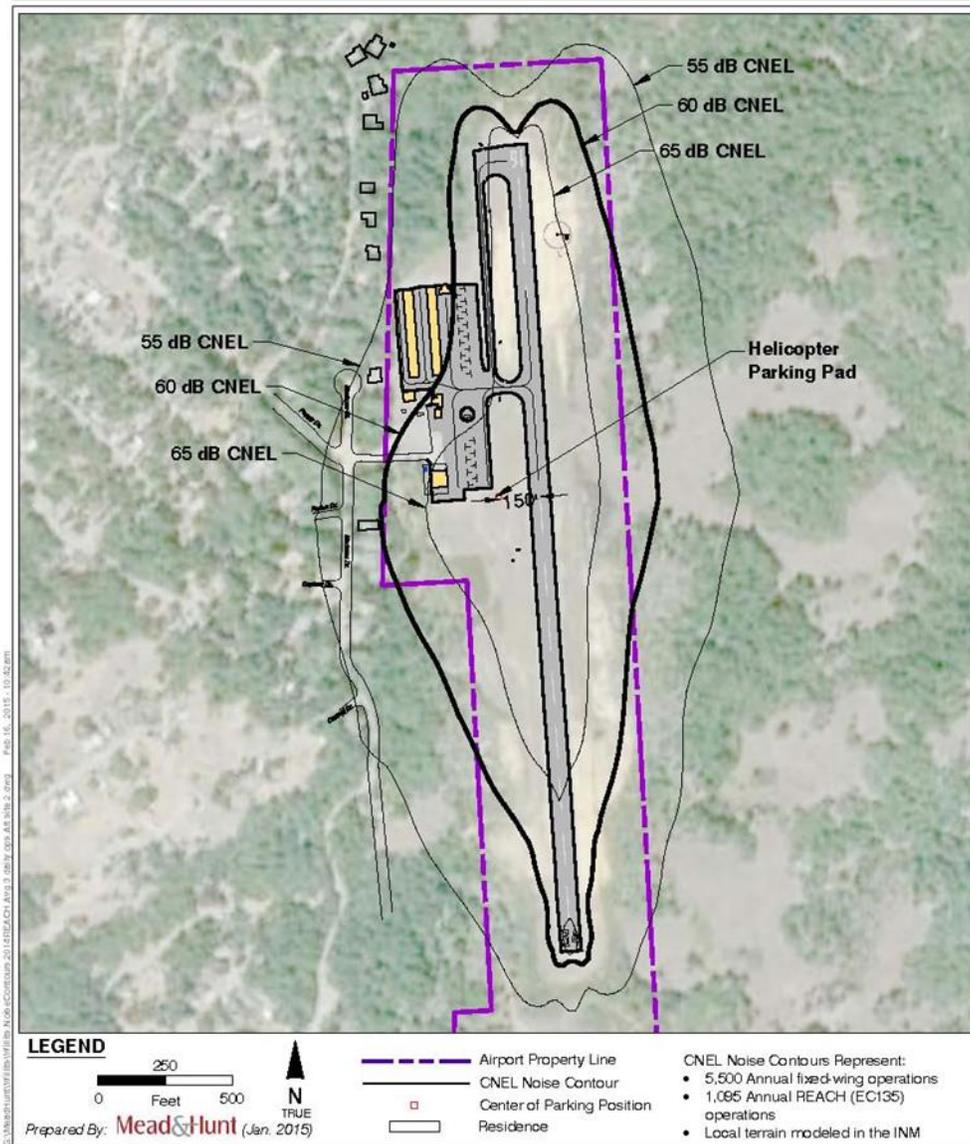
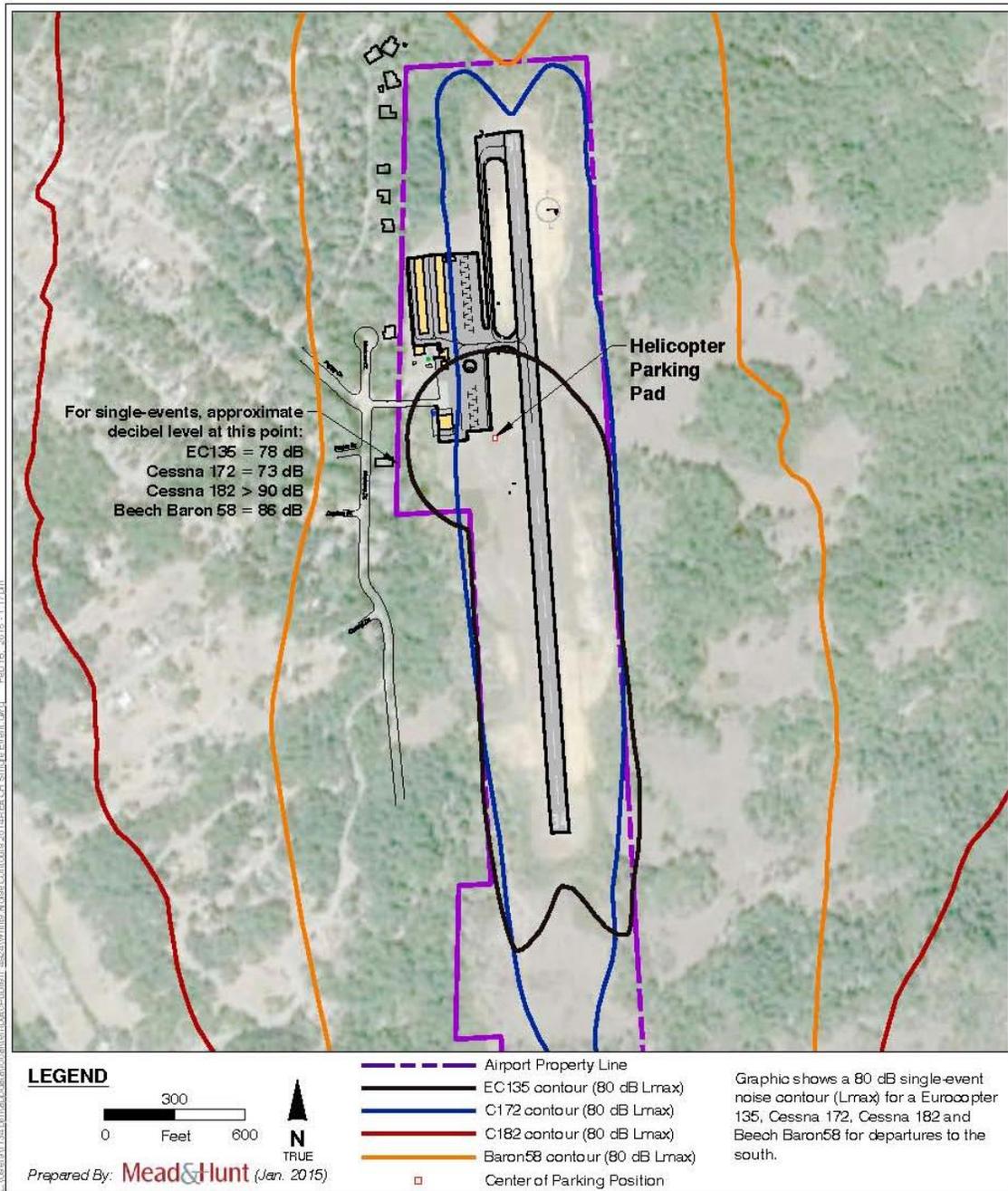


Figure 7  
**2014 Operations + REACH Average Day – Noise Contours**  
**Alternate Parking Position**  
Willits Municipal Airport



**Figure 8**  
**Single/Event Comparison**  
 Willits Municipal Airport