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COUNTY OF MARIN

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February 11, 2014

Board of Supervisors
County of Marin
3501 Civic Center Drive
San Rafael, CA 94903

RE: Certification of the Final Environmental Impact Report for the Gnoss Field Proposed 13/31 Runway Extension Project

Dear Board Members:

RECOMMENDATION: 1) Conduct a public hearing reviewing and considering the Final EIR documents and the EIR administrative record on the adequacy of the Final EIR for certification; and 2) approve the attached Resolution to certify the Gnoss Field Proposed 13/31 Runway Extension Project Final EIR as adequate and complete pursuant to California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA), the State EIR Guidelines and the Marin County Environmental Review Guidelines and Procedures.

These recommended actions only verify that the potential impacts of the proposed project have been adequately assessed and identified. Should your Board adopt staff's recommendations and direct further consideration of the proposed project, then the next steps are to 1) develop a wetland and endangered species mitigation strategy based on the proposed mitigation measures and information contained in the Final EIR, 2) prepare estimates of total project costs and identify funding sources, and 3) identify milestones that must be met before project construction. Your Board would then, at a future noticed public hearing, consider the merits of the proposed runway extension project.

BACKGROUND

Gnoss Field Airport is located just north of the City of Novato and east of U.S. Highway 101. The airport serves as an important link in the regional transportation network by providing air travel options for residents and businesses of Marin County. The Airport has one runway that is currently 3,300 feet long and 75 feet wide. On an annual basis approximately 85,500 takeoffs and landings occur at the Airport. Typical aircraft types include single and twin engine propeller aircraft, as well as small business jet aircraft. The existing runway, known as Runway 13/31, is surrounded by a system of levees and ditches that protect the airport from flooding and channel drainage through the surrounding area.

An Airport Master Plan was adopted by the County of Marin in 1989, and then updated in March of 1997. An Airport Land Use Plan was adopted by the County in 1991. All three of these plans include the future extension of Runway 13/31. A Preliminary Design Report for a Runway Extension, prepared in 2002, together with an Aviation Demand Forecast both document the need for runway improvements to serve existing and anticipated aircraft activity levels, as well as current and future changes in small aircraft design. The 2007 Marin Countywide Plan as amended also references the Airport Master Plan and Airport Land Use Plans and includes policies that allow for the runway extension within the Baylands Corridor.

Based on the cumulative findings of the above plans and studies, Marin County as the owner and operator of the Gnoss Field Airport proposes improvements to bring several airport design features into compliance with current Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) standards. The proposed improvements include extension of Runway 13/31 and the corresponding taxiway and runway safety areas (overruns), associated levee construction and realignment of drainage, and reprogramming of the navigational aids for the extended runway. In partnership with the FAA, the County of Marin has assessed the potential environmental impacts from the proposed improvements. The FAA has prepared a Draft EIS to comply with the Federal requirements of the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) and the County has prepared a Draft EIR to comply with the State of California's regulations embodied in the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA).

CALIFORNIA ENVIRONMENTAL QUALITY ACT (CEQA) COMPLIANCE

The Draft and Final Environmental Impact Report for Gnoss Field – Proposed Extension of Runway 13/31 were prepared in accordance with CEQA, including the CEQA Statutes (Public Resources Code §§21000-21178.1), State CEQA Guidelines (Code of Regulations, Title 14, §§ 15000-15387), and the Marin County Environmental Impact Review Guidelines. Concurrent with the preparation and distribution of the Draft EIR; the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) prepared and distributed a separate Draft EIS for public review and comment. In compliance with CEQA a Notice of Preparation (NOP) of the Draft Environmental Impact Report (EIR) for the Gnoss Field Airport - Proposed Extension of Runway 13/31 was published on July 11, 2008. A Notice of Intent (NOI) of the Draft Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) was also published on that date.

A public scoping meeting seeking comments from public agencies on the environmental issues to be addressed in the Draft EIS and Draft EIR was held at the Marin Civic Center on August 14, 2008. Later that evening a public scoping meeting seeking comments from the general public was held at the Marin Humane Society Auditorium. Comment letters were submitted to the FAA in response to the NOI and NOP. A copy of the NOP and NOI, a transcript of the public scoping meeting, and a copy of all written letters submitted in response to the NOP and NOI can be found in Volume 3 of the EIS and EIR. In addition Volume 3 contains a summary table listing categories of comments received during the public scoping period and references where an issue raised in a comment is discussed in the Draft EIR.

A copy of the Draft EIS/EIR and Appendix (Volumes 1, 2, and 3) was also accessible from a link on the public website, **"http://www.gnossfieldeis-eir.com"**. In addition, a hard copy was available for review at the Marin County Civic Center Library, and other library branches including the Novato Library.

On December 9, 2011, the County of Marin circulated the Gnoss Field Airport Proposed Extension of Runway 13/31 Draft Environmental Impact Report for public review and comment. A Notice of Completion of the Draft EIR was published and began a 60-day review and comment period. During the public review period from December 9, 2011 to February 6, 2012 comments on the Draft EIR were solicited from governmental agencies and the public. Concurrent with the distribution of the Draft EIR; the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) distributed a separate Draft EIS for public review and comment. The Marin County Board of Supervisors and the Federal Aviation Administration conducted a joint public hearing on January 10, 2012 to receive governmental agency and public comment on the Draft EIS and Draft EIR.

During the review period, Marin County and the FAA received comment letters on the Draft EIS and EIR from governmental agencies, organizations and the public. In addition, oral comments were received on the Draft EIS and EIR at the January 10, 2012 public hearing. Marin County and the FAA prepared written responses to each of the written and oral comments received during the public review period. The written and oral comments received on the Draft EIR, along with the written responses to those comments, can be found in Appendices P and Q of the Final Environmental Impact Report.

On November 8, 2013 Marin County circulated, the Gnoss Field Airport – Proposed Extension of Runway 13/31 Final Environmental Impact Report. Copies of the Final EIR were circulated to all public agencies that submitted comments on the Draft EIR in compliance with Public Resource Code Section 21092.5. Copies of the Final EIR were also distributed to members of the public that submitted comments on the Draft EIR. A notice of availability of the Final EIR for review was published and began an 18-day review and comment period on the Final EIR, which was to end on November 25, 2013, however, the County subsequently extended the comment period on the Final EIR an additional 14 days to December 9, 2013 to provide additional opportunity for public input.

A copy of the Final EIR and Appendix (Volumes 2 and 3) were also accessible from a link on the public website, **"http://www.gnossfieldeis-eir.com"**. In addition, a hard copy was available for review at the Marin County Civic Center Library, and other library branches including the Novato Library.

The County received 8 written letters and e-mail messages commenting on the 'Final EIR Appendix Q - Responses to Comments'. In accordance with the Marin County *Environmental Impact Review Guidelines*, topical written responses were prepared for the major environmental issues raised in the comment letters received on the Final EIR. The written comments received and topical responses present amplifications, clarifications and / or additional information that in some cases resulted in minor and insignificant modifications to the EIR. They do not, however, raise new or substantially more severe significant impacts or new mitigation measures or alternatives not

considered in the EIR and do not require recirculation for further review and comment in accordance with *State CEQA Guidelines* Section 15088.5.

Copies of all written comments received on the Final EIR and written responses were posted on the project website "http://www.gnossfieldeis-eir.com" on January 21, 2014 as the Final EIR Amendment. The Amendment includes the 8 written letters and e-mail messages received during the Final EIR review and comment period, as well as, Marin County's topical responses to major environmental issues contained in the comment letters received. The Draft EIR, Final EIR Appendices P and Q - Responses to Comments and the Final EIR Amendment together with the public record constitute the Final EIR for the Gnoss Field Airport – Proposed Extension of Runway 13/31 Project.

SUMMARY OF MAJOR CONCLUSIONS IN FINAL EIR

The following is a summary of the major conclusions set forth in the environmental analysis:

- The FEIR identifies a total of fifteen project impacts as significant or potentially significant. Feasible mitigation measures are available to reduce all 15 of these impacts to a less-than-significant level. The Final EIR found that no significant unavoidable impacts would occur if the proposed project were to be implemented.
- Project implementation could result in direct or indirect impacts to water quality due to an increase in impervious surface area causing annual pollutant loading values. Marin County will be responsible for obtaining all applicable permits and for ensuring compliance with all permit provisions including preparation and implementation of a Storm Water Pollution Prevention Plan and locally required Best Management Practices. These mitigation measures would reduce potential impacts to water quality to less-than-significant levels.
- Project implementation would permanently impact habitat for two federal threatened and endangered wildlife species and would temporarily impact this habitat during construction activities. The proposed project would result in the permanent removal of 6.8 acres of vegetation and 1.54 acres of open water ditch/channel habitat shared by the Salt Marsh Harvest Mouse (SMHM) and the California Clapper Rail (CCR). An additional 16.05 acres of SMHM and CCR habitat would be temporarily impacted during construction activities. The Final EIR found that these impacts were significant but can be reduced to a level of insignificance by implementing the recommended mitigation. The United States Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) issued a Biological Opinion letter regarding impacts to the two federally protected species. The Biological Opinion requires that Marin County develop a habitat compensation plan for USFWS approval using all the following compensation ratios:
    - 1:1 ratio (replaced:removed) on-site habitat restoration or replacement for short-term temporary SMHM habitat impacts (lasting for less than one year);
    - 1.1:1 ratio (replaced:removed) off-site habitat replacement for short-term temporary SMHM habitat impacts (lasting for less than one year);

  - 1:1 ratio (replaced:removed) on-site habitat restoration or replacement for long-term temporary SMHM habitat impacts (lasting for more than one year but less than two years);
  - 2:1 ratio (replaced:removed) off-site habitat restoration or replacement for long-term temporary SMHM habitat impacts (lasting for more than one year but less than two years); and
  - 3:1 ratio (replaced:removed) off-site habitat restoration or replacement for permanent SMHM habitat impacts (lasting for more than two years).

- Marin County has carefully designed the Proposed Project to fit in with the existing topography and to avoid and minimize impacts to wetlands. Project implementation, however, would fill 12.6 acres of wetland on site and permanently remove 11.83 acres of wetlands. The project as proposed would create 0.77 acres of wetland thereby reducing the permanent wetland impact to 11.83 acres. Marin County will minimize the potential for direct and secondary impacts to wetlands by requiring all construction activities be conducted pursuant to guidelines included in FAA Standards for Specifying Construction of Airports and locally required Best Management Practices.

  Marin Countywide Plan Policy BIO-3.2 states that where avoidance of wetlands is not possible, projects be required to replace habitat on-site through restoration and/or habitat creation at a minimum ratio of 2 acres for each acre lost (2:1 replacement ratio) for on-site mitigation and a minimum 3:1 replacement ratio for off-site mitigation. Mitigation wetlands should be of the same type as those lost and provide habitat for the species that use the existing wetland. Due to the potential for wildlife (including bird) strikes, FAA and United States Army Corps of Engineers (USACOE) regulations prohibit the creation of wetlands next to airports (FAA Advisory Circular 150/5200-33B Hazardous Wildlife Attractants on or Near Airports). The County in implementing its wetland mitigation policy would have to take into consideration the FAA restriction in determining the appropriate ratio of compensatory mitigation. The Final EIR identifies a number of feasible wetland mitigation sites both in and outside Marin County. The Mitigation Measures allow Marin County to develop its own wetland mitigation plan that must be reviewed and approved by the USFWS.

- Based on the findings of the detailed airport noise exposure analysis, the Community Noise Equivalent Level (CNEL) noise levels resulting from the Proposed Project would not exceed the noise compatibility guidelines for residential or noise-sensitive land uses as defined by Caltrans, FAA, or Marin County. As a result, no residents in the General Study Area would be exposed to noise levels in excess of Federal, state, or local noise standards or ordinances from aircraft operating in compliance with established approach and departure procedures.

- The airport does at times receive reports of aircraft over-flights from some residents living in residential communities south of the airport. These over-flights occur when pilots do not directly follow the approach and departure protocols established for Gnoss Field or are from aircraft passing by and not departing or arriving at Gnoss Field. Noise generated from aircraft over-flights of residential areas could exceed the noise compatibility guidelines for residential areas established in the Marin Countywide Plan. However, the proposed project extends the runway to the north,

away from the residential areas, and therefore would change the aircraft patterns allowing earlier maneuvering for southbound departures and result in reduced overflights to the south.

Marin County currently has noise abatement procedures in place and the Gnoss Field Airport Manager routinely provides pilots using the airfield with instructions on complying with the airport's approach and departure procedures in an effort to reduce over-flights in residential areas. Airport operations include airport approach and departure protocols designed to avoid aircraft over-flights of residential communities in the General Study Area. The noise generated by pilot over-flights are from pilots who are not following established noise abatement procedures. Therefore, aircraft over-flights are directly related to individual pilot behavior that is against adopted airport approach and departure protocols. Therefore, the noise impacts of the proposed project under the threshold criteria is deemed less-than-significant.

- Archaeological or other historic sites could potentially be discovered during construction of the proposed runway extension. As part of the environmental requirements, Marin County will have an archaeological site monitor present during the initial site excavation of the proposed runway extension. Marin County will stop work and evaluate any archaeological or other historic site discovered during the excavation or subsequent construction of the proposed project.

COUNTYWIDE PLAN CONSISTENCY

The Final EIR finds that the Proposed Project, with the incorporation of mitigation measures specified in this Final EIR, is consistent with all relevant policies of the Countywide Plan 2007 and County Development Code requirements.

SUMMARY OF ALTERNATIVES

The following alternatives to the proposed project are considered in the Draft EIS and EIR & Final EIR:

- **Alternative A - (No Project)** assumes that Runway 13/31 would be maintained at its current length and no associated taxiway extension, Runway Safety Area (RSA) extension, realignment of drainage channels, extension of levees, or reprogramming of navigational aids would occur. This alternative does not meet the purpose and need for the project.
- **Alternative B – Proposed Project (Extend Runway to the Northwest by 1,100 Feet)** assumes that Runway 13/31 would be extended to the northwest by 1,100 feet for a total runway length of 4,400 feet. In addition, this alternative would include extension of the corresponding taxiway to match the length of the runway; inclusion of FAA standard 240-foot RSA at each end of the runway in addition to the 1,100 foot runway extension; corresponding realignment of drainage channels to drain the extended runway, taxiway, and RSA from flooding; corresponding relocation of the access road south of the runway, which extends from the west side to the east side of the Airport to keep the access road outside of the RSA; and re-programming of

the navigational aids that pilots use for approach to landing at the Airport to reflect the extended runway.

- **Alternative C - (Extend Runway to the Southeast by 1,100 Feet)** assumes that Runway 13/31 would be extended to the southeast by 1,100 feet for a total runway length of 4,400 feet. In addition, this alternative would include extension of the corresponding taxiway to match the length of the runway; inclusion of FAA standard 240-foot RSA at each end of the runway in addition to the 1,100 foot runway extension; corresponding realignment of drainage channels to drain the extended runway, taxiway, and RSA from flooding; and re-programming of the navigational aids that pilots use for approach to landing at the Airport to reflect the extended runway. Alternate C would require runway extension across the Black John Slough resulting in substantially greater amounts of fill and impacts to wetlands. It is highly improbable the United States Army Corps of Engineers would issue a permit to construct Alternate C.
- **Alternative D - (Extend Runway to the Southeast by 240 Feet and to the Northeast by 860 Feet)** assumes that Runway 13/31 would be extended to the southeast by 240 feet and to the northeast by 860 feet for a total runway length of 4,400 feet. In addition, this alternative would include extension of the corresponding taxiway to match the length of the runway; inclusion of FAA standard 240-foot RSA at each end of the runway in addition to the 1,100 foot runway extension; corresponding realignment of drainage channels to drain the extended runway, taxiway, and RSA from flooding; corresponding relocation of the access road south of the runway, which extends from the west side to the east side of the Airport to keep the access road outside of the RSA; and re-programming of the navigational aids that pilots use for approach to landing at the Airport to reflect the extended runway. Alternate D would result in (when compared to Alternate B) impacts to an additional 0.9 acres of wetlands.

Alternative B-Proposed Project is considered the environmentally superior alternative.

SUMMARY OF ENVIRONMENTAL COMMENTS RECEIVED ON DRAFT & FINAL EIR AND RESPONSES TO COMMENTS

The written and oral comments received on the Draft EIS and EIR during the public review and comment period did not make a distinction as to which document the comment was addressed. Therefore, the FAA and County of Marin jointly prepared the written responses to comments received on the Draft EIS and EIR. Comments received on the Draft EIS and EIR were organized into 26 topical categories. Although there were written responses prepared for all 26 topical categories there were several topical categories raised in many of the comment letters received. These same common topical categories were also raised again in the eight written comment letters received on the Final EIR. The County of Marin prepared the written responses to comments received on the Final EIR (see Attachment #2).

The major topical issues contained in the comments received on both the Draft EIS and EIR and Final EIR includes: Aviation Forecasting, Runway Length Analysis, Aircraft Operations and Noise Levels, Growth Impacts of the Runway Extension, Shorter

Runway Alternative, Increase in Risk of Bird Strikes, and Endangered Species/Wetland Impacts and Mitigation Measures.

The following is a brief discussion of each topical category comment and a summation of the written response.

1. **Aviation Forecast:** Commenters suggest that the Aviation Forecast underestimates future aviation activity at Gnoss Field because the extension of Runway 13/31 would stimulate an increase in aircraft takeoffs and landings (operations or aviation activity) not accounted for in the forecast.

   Response: The FAA has found that aviation activity increases and decreases as the United States' and world economic activity increases and decreases. The FAA annually produces a national aerospace forecast report that forecasts aviation activity for a 20-year period[1]. These forecasts have found that fundamentally the demand for aviation is driven by economic activity. That is, aviation activity typically responds to economic demand rather than creates economic demand. The forecast for a specific airport, such as Gnoss Field, is influenced by the same economic factors as the national aerospace forecast. Therefore, it is not runway length that determines activity at the airport, but the economic and demographic factors in the geographic area served by Gnoss Field.

   It is possible owners or pilots who use one size of aircraft now, could choose to use larger size aircraft in the future if the proposed project is implemented. However, FAA aerospace activity forecasting has found, over many years of evaluation, that aviation activity increases in response to other types of economic activity, rather than creates other economic activity. It is more likely that the aircraft fleet mix at Gnoss Field already accurately reflects the local economic demand for aviation activity, including aviation user choices regarding their preferred size of aircraft.

2. **Runway Length Analysis**: Some commenters asserted that an 1,100-foot runway extension is longer than justified for the aviation fleet mix at Gnoss Field. Commenters stated that the required runway length was incorrectly calculated, and that the purpose and need for the project on which the runway length analysis was based was unnecessarily narrow. Commenters also stated that the appropriate FAA guidance regarding determining runway length was not followed.

   Response: FAA guidance provides that airport dimensional standards such as runway length and width, separation standards (distances) between runways and taxiways, surface gradients, and similar dimensions should be selected to be appropriate for the "critical aircraft" that will make "substantial use" of the airport in the planning period for improvements. For Gnoss Field, the critical aircraft was determined to be the Cessna 525 business jet, and so the justified runway length for Gnoss Field was established based on the requirements of this aircraft. One commenter suggested the Cessna 525 was not the appropriate critical aircraft because it is no longer in production. The fact that the Cessna 525 or any aircraft is

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1 FAA Aerospace Forecasts at www.faa.gov/about/office_org/headquarters_offices/apl/aviation_forecasts/

no longer being produced has no bearing on whether or not it does or does not operate at a particular airport. The Cessna 525 represents the most demanding aircraft that regularly operates at the airport and the design will accommodate the existing similar aircraft mix that currently flies at the airport. The proposed 1,100-foot runway extension for this project is consistent with FAA guidance regarding how an airport's primary runway should be able to accommodate the critical aircraft at that airport.

3. **Aircraft Operations and Noise Levels**: Many commenters contend the runway extension would result in changes in the overall Gnoss Field aircraft fleet mix from smaller to larger aircraft, which in turn would result in an increase in aircraft noise that should be considered a significant impact on the environment, particularly in the residential communities south of the Airport.

   Response: The EIR analysis found that aviation activity at Gnoss Field is expected to increase whether or not a runway extension is constructed. As discussed previously, aircraft size is based as a result of economic activity in the area and the current aircraft fleet mix likely reflects the current local economic demand. Future economic demand may change the fleet mix, but it is likely this would be a slow process especially with the airport approved for aircraft with a wing span of 48 feet or less.

   The determination of what noise level represents a significant noise impact on the environment has been the subject of extensive study. Based on the extensive research and evaluation, the FAA uses the 65-decibel (dB) Community Noise Equivalent Level (CNEL) as the threshold of significant noise impacts in urban and residential settings such as those near Gnoss Field. Marin County has chosen to use 60 CNEL as the local threshold for significant noise impacts.

   While there were concerns expressed about additional noise generated by the proposed project, the environmental analysis found that the project would not result in a significant increase in noise primarily because the closest residential areas are located far outside the 60 CNEL noise contour south of the Airport. In fact, there would be noise reduction benefits to the residential areas to the south of the Airport associated with the runway extension to the north. Specifically, the extension to the north would allow aircraft to gain altitude quicker when departing to the south, which would allow them to be higher when approaching noise sensitive areas to the south of the Airport, and also allow them to turn away from the homes sooner to avoid the radio towers to the east.

4. **Growth Inducing Impacts of Runway Extension:** Many commenters suggested that extending the runway would induce changes in airport activity and off-airport growth and that this was not captured in the Draft EIS/EIR.

   Response: Gnoss Field exclusively serves general aviation and air taxi activity and does not have any scheduled commercial passenger air service. Gnoss Field cannot become a commercial service airport with scheduled airline service, as a result of the proposed runway extension alone. The County would need to obtain a 14 CFR Part

139 certificate from the FAA in order for Gnoss Field to allow scheduled airline service. To obtain a certificate, an airport must agree to certain operational and safety standards and provide for such things as firefighting and rescue equipment. These requirements vary depending on the size of the airport and the type of commercial flights provided. Should Marin County desire to apply for a Part 139 certificate, a new CEQA/NEPA document and public input process would be required. In summary, the current environmental analysis found that the proposed runway extension would not result in an increase in forecasted airport operations or change in aircraft fleet mix beyond that anticipated for the No Action Alternative.

Regarding off-airport growth, the proposed project is not intended or expected to cause an un-forecasted growth in aircraft operations at Gnoss Field. Further, the Proposed Project would not involve additional expansion or extension of infrastructure facilities or roadways that could induce unplanned growth adjacent to Gnoss Field, nor is the Proposed Project anticipated to induce additional growth on vacant industrially zoned land near the Airport or other developable land in the region.

5. **Shorter Runway Alternative:** Some commenters stated that the Final EIR failed to consider a Shorter Runway Alternative, and that a shorter runway was a reasonable alternative to the proposed project.

   Response: A shorter runway alternative was not included for evaluation in the EIR because it did not meet the purpose and need for the project which was to allow existing aircraft, as represented by the critical aircraft at Gnoss Field, the Cessna 525, to operate at maximum gross take off weight under all weather conditions.

   Furthermore a Shorter Runway Alternative would not avoid or significantly lessen any of the significant effects of the proposed project. A shorter runway would result in the taking of fewer wetlands and endangered species habitat, but the impact on wetlands and endangered species would remain significant and still require mitigation at the same ratios as the proposed project. Since the impact on wetlands and endangered species habitat could not be reduced to a less-than-significant level and a significant environmental benefit would not occur from reducing the length of the runway extension, there was no CEQA basis to compromising the purpose and need of the proposed project.

6. **Increase in Risk of Bird Strikes:** Redwood Landfill and Recycling Center has submitted a letter in response to the Final EIR contending that additional mitigation measures are needed because the proposed project will decrease the distance between Gnoss Field and Redwood Landfill and would result in flights that are lower in altitude over the landfill. The letter also contends that the bird control mitigation measures contained in Redwood Landfills operating permit issued by the Local Enforcement Agency (LEA) were formulated based on the conditions existing at Gnoss Field at the time of the preparation of the Redwood Landfill's EIR and did not take into consideration the proposed extension of the runway and the forecast increase in aviation activity through 2027. Redwood Landfill requests that a new mitigation measure be included in the Final EIR requiring an evaluation every three

years as to whether or not additional bird control measures are necessary as a result of the runway extension project and that the County take responsibility for the additional bird control measures, or reimburse Redwood for the additional costs associated with changes in its bird control program.

Response: The Final EIR for the Proposed Extension of Runway 13/31 contains a detailed analysis of the potential impacts of the proposed runway extension on Redwood Landfill operations. The impact analysis found that aircraft approach and departure routes over the landfill will not change significantly and that the small projected change in aircraft elevation over the landfill during takeoffs and landings to the north will not result in a significant change in the risk of bird strikes. The EIR found that current bird control measures included in Redwood Landfill's operating permit adequately mitigate bird activity at the landfill and therefore the impact of the proposed runway extension is less-than-significant and no new mitigation measures are required.

Furthermore the contention that the projected increase in activity (as previously mentioned, activity is related to economics and demographics, not runway length) at Gnoss Field will result in the need for additional bird control measures appears to be inconsistent with the findings of Redwood Landfill's own EIR. The Final EIR for Redwood Landfill's operating permit found that the working face of the landfill and the composting area were bird attractants and that the impacts identified in the Landfill's Final EIR required mitigation measures be taken at Redwood Landfill to discourage and disperse birds at the landfill.

7. **Endangered Species/Wetland Impacts and Mitigation Measures**: Marin Audubon disagreed with the priority of mitigation listed in the Draft and Final EIR and objected to mitigation allowing for the use of mitigation banks and in-lieu fees.. Marin Audubon also expressed an opinion that wetland mitigation required for the Proposed Project should be located within Marin County and close to the project site.

Response: Off-site habitat compensation is required for both the California clapper rail and salt marsh harvest mouse and wetland fill. Since these species prefer tidal salt marsh, it is likely that Marin County will choose to coordinate the wetland mitigation requirements ultimately required in the US Army Corps of Engineers permit with the habitat compensation requirements of the USFWS Biological Opinion. The order of mitigation preference is established by the US Army Corps of Engineers regulations at 33 CFR 332.3 and was provided as information in the document.

The mitigation measures contained in the Final EIR provide options and allow, but do not require, wetland and endangered species mitigation to be located in Marin County. The USFWS Biological Opinion allows the USFWS to increase required habitat compensation ratios for the Proposed Project if the proposed off-site restoration area is outside of the San Pablo Bay Recovery Unit identified in the *Draft Recovery Plan for Tidal Marsh Ecosystems of Northern and Central California*. As the San Pablo Bay recovery Unit extends from Gallinas Creek in Marin County (at the southwestern end of the recovery unit) around San Pablo Bay north and east to Mare Island in Solano County, Marin County will likely attempt to locate the

compensatory habitat mitigation site within or near Marin County to minimize mitigation requirements.

Endangered species and wetland mitigation measures also require Marin County to develop a wetland and endangered species mitigation plan in conjunction with the California Department of Fish and Wildlife and the US Fish and Wildlife Service. Staff will coordinate with the resource agencies and provide opportunities for stakeholder input during the preparation of the mitigation plan.

State CEQA Guidelines

The information contained in the written comments and master responses contained in Appendix Q of the Final EIR and the attached Amendment to the Final EIR do not result in any new or substantially more severe significant impacts or new mitigation measures or alternatives not considered in the Draft EIR and therefore do not require recirculation for further review and comment in accordance with *State CEQA Guidelines* Section 15088.5. The written topical responses together with the written comments received on the Final EIR are incorporated as a minor amendment to the Final EIR.

State CEQA Guidelines Section 15151 "Standards for Adequacy of an EIR" provides that an EIR should be prepared with a sufficient degree of analysis to provide decision-makers with information which enables them to make a decision that intelligently takes account of environmental consequences. An evaluation of the environmental effects of a proposed project need not be exhaustive, but the sufficiency of an EIR is to be reviewed in light of what is reasonably feasible. Disagreement among experts does not make an EIR inadequate, but the EIR should summarize the main points of disagreement among the experts. The Courts have looked not for perfection but for adequacy, completeness, and a good faith effort at full disclosure.

In furtherance of this the State Appellate Court has held that "analysis must be specific enough to permit informed decision making and public participation. The need for thorough discussion and analysis is not to be construed unreasonably, however, to serve as an easy way of defeating projects. What is required is the production of information sufficient to understand the environmental impacts of the proposed project and to permit a reasonable choice of alternatives so far as environmental aspects are concerned."

An EIR is not inadequate for example, when it provides a program level of analysis commensurate with the underlying detail of the project application, or uses an environmental setting baseline that incorporates existing on-site uses. Nor is it inadequate if it doesn't resolve differences of opinion on impact conclusions in the EIR or resolve all matters related to the decision on the merits of the project for approval or disapproval. An EIR is not required to consider in detail each and every conceivable variation of the alternatives stated; nor is it required to evaluate alternatives to components of a project.

The State Supreme Court has stated that "the purpose of CEQA is to compel government at all levels to make decisions with environmental consequences in mind.

CEQA does not, indeed cannot, guarantee that these decisions will be those which favor environmental considerations, nor does it require absolute perfection in an EIR".

CONCLUSION: The Final EIR for the Gnoss Field Airport – Proposed Extension of Runway 13/31 has undergone rigorous preparation and processing in full compliance with CEQA, State EIR Guidelines, and County Environmental Review Procedures. Substantial opportunity and time for public participation in the EIR process and review and comment on the EIR documents has been provided which meets and exceeds the requirements of CEQA and the County's Environmental Impact Review Procedures. The Gnoss Field Airport – Proposed Extension of Runway 13/31 Final EIR provides thorough discussion and analysis of impacts and alternatives consistent with what is reasonably feasible, and is now adequate and complete to be acceptable for certification as the environmental review for the project. The Final EIR provides sufficient information to make an informed decision on the environmental effects, project mitigations and alternatives, and to proceed to reviewing the merits of the proposed runway extension project.

PUBLIC HEARING: The purpose of the public hearing is for the Board of Supervisors to review and consider the Final EIR documents, the EIR administrative record, and conduct a public hearing on the adequacy of the Final EIR for certification.

FISCAL IMPACT: There is no impact to the County General Fund by this action.

REVIEWED BY:	[ ]	Auditor/Controller	[X]	N/A
	[ ]	County Counsel	[X]	N/A
	[ ]	Human Resources	[X]	N/A

Respectfully submitted,

Craig Tackabery
Assistant Director

Attachments: Draft Resolution
Final EIR Amendment/Responses to Comments on the Final EIR