

Okaloosa County News Release

7/29/2008

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P08-427

Joint Land Use Study Extended

FORT WALTON BEACH FL – The Tri-County Joint Land Use Study (JLUS) effort has been extended beyond its original August 31, 2008 completion. The extension decision was made during the Wednesday, July 23 JLUS Policy Committee meeting by unanimous vote of the members present. “We decided to extend our effort in order to eliminate a potential conflict with Eglin Air Force Base’s on-going Environmental Impact Statement activity,” said Commissioner Bill Roberts, chairman of the JLUS Policy Committee. “Eglin is estimating having the final Record of Decision signed around September 22 of this year. That final document could possibly contain information and data that could alter the analysis in the JLUS, so we decided to wait. It is in the best interest of all of us to take this step so we can fully analyze the results of the EIS final decision,” Roberts continued. The JLUS is currently using preliminary data from the EIS as the basis for analysis.

“This doesn’t stop work currently occurring on the JLUS,” said Jeff Fanto, the County’s Growth Project Coordinator. “We continue to welcome comments and inputs from the public plus the professional staffs in each affected municipality on the Interim Draft JLUS report,” he added. “Once the EIS Record of Decision is released and our consultant team has had time to look it over, we will resume our schedule of releasing both the Draft and Final JLUS reports, plus hold public hearings to solicit additional public comment,” Fanto said.

There was a JLUS Public Hearing scheduled for August 6, 2008 at 6 p.m. in Crestview. That has been cancelled and will be rescheduled. “Once we see the impact of the final EIS on our JLUS, we will publish an updated schedule leading to completion,” Fanto said.

The study is the first of two Federally-funded efforts assisting local communities in planning for the possible mission impacts as a result of the Base and Realignment and Closure (BRAC) 2005 decisions to relocate the U.S. Army’s 7th Special Forces Group (Airborne) from Fort Bragg, North Carolina, and establish the F-35 Joint Strike Fighter Integrated Joint Training Site on Eglin Air Force Base.

The Joint Land Use Study is a program that is designed to encourage cooperative land use planning between military installations and the surrounding communities so that future community growth and development are compatible with the training or operational missions of the installation. It also seeks ways to reduce the operational impacts on adjacent land. The JLUS program encourages communities

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and the military to study the issues in an open forum, taking into consideration both community and military viewpoints. Recommendations in a study are used to guide local jurisdictions in the development and implementation of land development controls. The intent of the controls is to ensure that future public and private development around the military installation will be compatible with both the military mission and the development needs of the community.

The full text of the Interim Draft Joint Land Use Study document can be found at http://webgis.co.okaloosa.fl.us/jlus/docs/Interim_Draft_Eglin_JLUS_report.pdf. Additionally, copies of the document are available at any public library in any of the Okaloosa, Santa Rosa, or Walton County library systems.

For more information, contact Jeff Fanto, Growth Project Coordinator, at jfanto@co.okaloosa.fl.us, or by calling 850-609-3014

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