



**Duluth Airport Authority  
Sky Harbor Airport - Duluth, MN**

**Obstruction Removal and  
Environmental Review Process**



**Project Update  
October 2012**

**General Project Background**

Sky Harbor Airport has been in operation on Minnesota Point since 1939 and consists of a single 3,050 foot long paved and lighted runway with a parallel taxiway, two sea lanes and a seaplane ramp and dock for seaplane access. Over time, a number of red and white pine trees located off the south end of the runway have grown tall enough to be considered obstructions for aircraft on approach to the airport. In 2006, Minnesota Department of Transportation (MnDOT) Office of Aeronautics directed the airport to clear the trees on the approach to Runway 32 in order to maintain a State of Minnesota airport license. A 2007 study indicated that more than 300 trees are currently impacting the runway approach. An environmental review process was initiated at that time. The objectives of the process are as follows:

- Maintain airport facilities at Sky Harbor Airport that meet Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) and MnDOT standards for airport licensure
- Maintain airport facilities sufficient to meet user needs
- Minimize conflict with the adjacent forest
- Do so in a way that is economically feasible

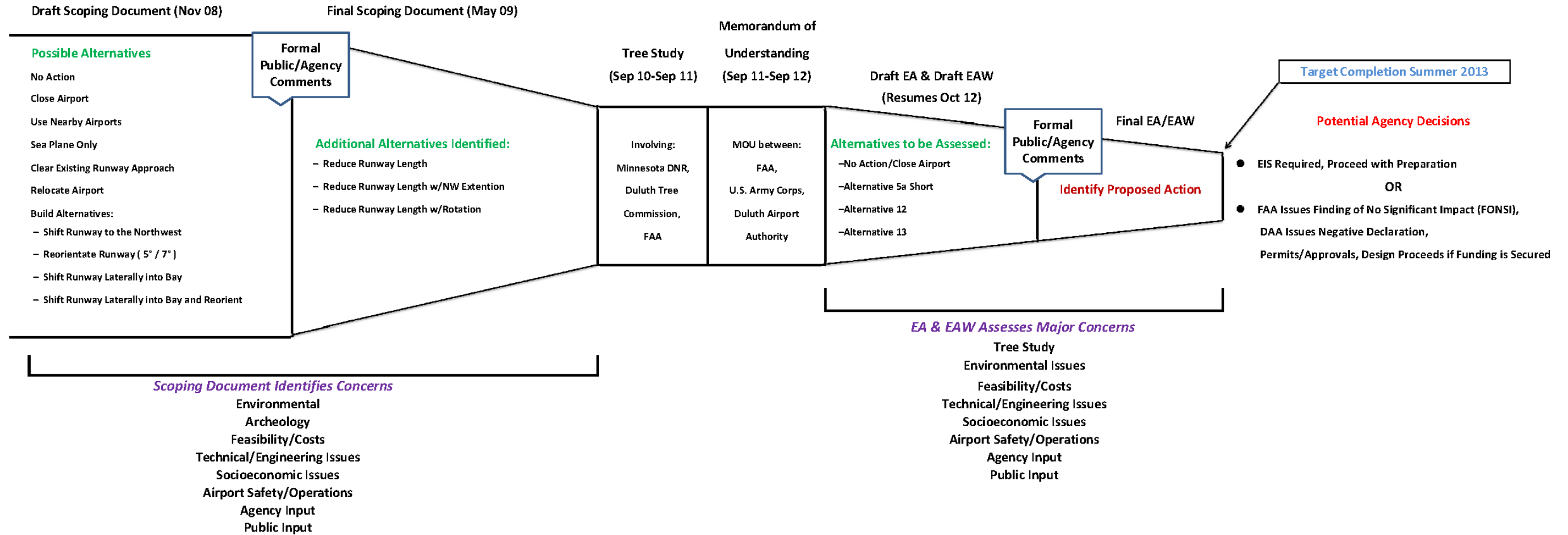
A Project Scoping Document that reviewed numerous alternatives was published in 2010. This document identified the Purpose and Need of project, assessed and narrowed the alternatives under consideration, and identified critical issues to be considered through the development of an Environmental Assessment (EA) document under the National Environmental Protection Act (NEPA). The development of the Scoping Document included a number of public meetings, technical evaluations and surveys, an archeological investigation, and the creation of a detailed tree growth rate model. Varying runway lengths and configurations were considered as was a complete relocation of the airport. The initial evaluation considered a wide range of impacts, feasibility, and overall cost. At the conclusion of the Scoping Document process, four alternatives were identified to carry forward into the Environmental Assessment for additional review. These include:

- **Alternative 5a Short (Preliminary Preferred Alternative)**
  - 2,600 foot long runway with a 5 degree rotation into Superior Bay
- **Alternative 12**
  - Runway shifted 300 feet north and shortened to 2,600 feet
- **Alternative 13**
  - 2,600 foot long runway with a 1.5 degree rotation into Superior Bay
- **No Action/Airport Closure**
  - Carried forward for comparison purposes. Ultimately results in airport closure due to loss of licensure.

See Page 4 for additional details about each alternative. The graphic on the following pages highlights the project timeline from Fall 2008 to the estimated completion in 2013.

**Sky Harbor Airport Environmental Review Process  
and Development of Alternatives  
for Federal Environmental Assessment (EA) and State Environmental Assessment Worksheet (EAW)**

**Project Timeline**



**Current Project Status**


Following completion of the Scoping document and the Tree Study, the Duluth Airport Authority, FAA and U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE) entered into a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) to merge the NEPA and Clean Water Act Section 404 review and permitting processes. The intent of the MOU is to preclude the need for routine revisiting of decisions that have already been agreed to earlier in the Environmental Assessment process, to encourage early substantive participation by the agencies, and to ensure that the information is adequate to address each Agency’s regulatory requirements. Through this MOU, the FAA will be holding meetings with USACE to gain concurrence at different points in the process (Purpose and Need, Alternatives, Selected Alternative, and Preliminary Design Phase Impact Minimization).


In addition to the three signatory parties of the MOU, there are several non-signatory participating federal and state agencies. They include the Environmental Protection Agency, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, and the State of Minnesota (Department of Natural Resources, Department of Transportation, and Pollution Control Agency). All information and communications related to the combined NEPA/Section 404 process will be provided to these

agencies, and they will be invited to all meetings. They will also be invited to comment on documents and analysis throughout the process.

Additional data collection is currently underway and the final chapters of the EA are being prepared for review. Public meetings will be scheduled for Fall 2012 and Winter 2013 to offer opportunities for review and discussion of the various alternatives, project impacts, and final recommendations.

**Contact the representatives below with any questions or comments:**

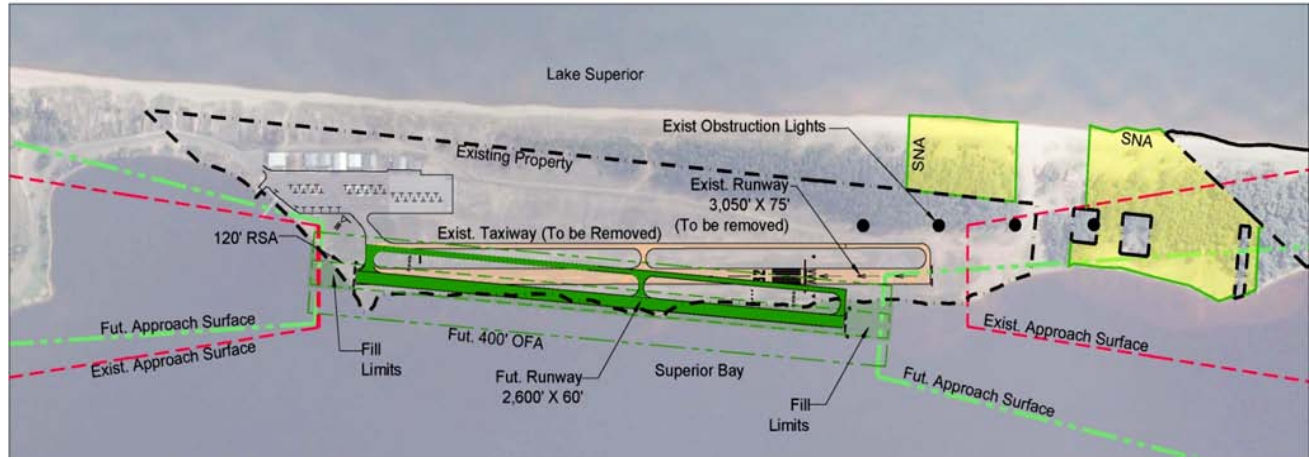
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# Project Alternatives to be Evaluated

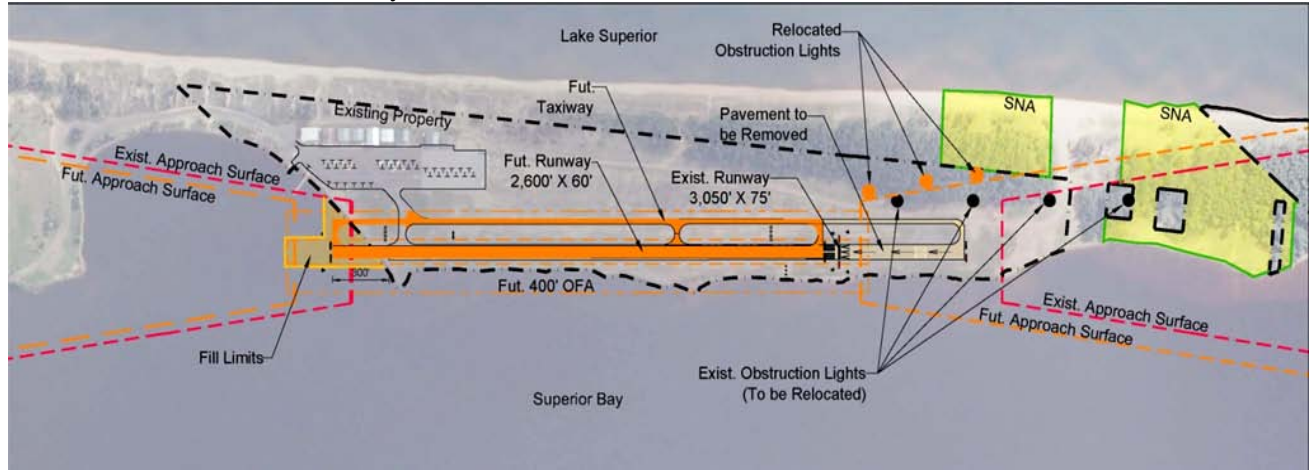
## Alternative 5a Short (Preliminary Preferred Alternative)

Shortened runway rotated 5 degrees



## Alternative 12

Runway shortened to 2,600 feet and shifted 300 feet north



## Alternative 13

Runway shortened to 2,600 feet, shifted 300 feet north and rotated 1.5 degrees

