

Notice of Availability (NOA)
Draft Environmental Assessment
Replacement of CH-53E Heavy Lift Helicopter with CH-53K Heavy Lift Helicopter
(MCAS) Miramar, San Diego County, CA

Pursuant to the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) of 1969, as implemented by the Department of Defense (DoD) NEPA Implementing Procedures, the U.S. Marine Corps gives notice that an Environmental Assessment (EA) has been drafted and that an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) is not required for the proposed replacement of CH-53E Super Stallion Heavy Lift Helicopter (HLH) with the CH-53K King Stallion HLH at Marine Corps Air Station (MCAS) Miramar.

The CH-53E model aircraft was first introduced to the USMC in 1981. The last CH-53E aircraft was delivered to the USMC in 2003. As such, MCAS Miramar's fleet of CH-53E aircraft have been in service for as long as 45-years. In 2018, Congress mandated that the USMC maintain a fleet of 200 CH-53E aircraft. However, due to aircraft mishaps, fatal accidents, and other aircraft losses, the USMC only has an inventory of 147 aircraft. To further exasperate the ability of Marines to safely achieve training, readiness, and lethality standards while flying the aging CH-53E, only an approximate 37% of the 147 aircraft fleet is available for operations at any given time. From September 2015 to December 2024, there were more than 10 total loss events recorded while operating the CH-53E. Unfortunately, several of these recent events have costs the lives of brave servicemen and servicewomen. Therefore, the purpose of the Proposed Action is to replace MCAS Miramar's 64 CH-53E heavy lift helicopters with the new CH-53K heavy lift helicopters, in accordance with the 2025 USMC Aviation Plan. The need for replacing CH-53E aircraft with the CH-53K aircraft is to ensure that U.S. Marine Corps can continue to conduct the training necessary for mission and battlefield readiness, to efficiently execute operational tasking, and to maintain battlefield survivability and superiority.

The U.S. Marine Corps has prepared a Draft EA to evaluate the proposed actions impacts to the quality of the human environment. There are currently four CH-53E aircraft squadrons stationed at MCAS Miramar. Each squadron consists of 16 helicopters. As such, MCAS Miramar is authorized for a total of 64 CH-53E aircraft. The Proposed Action would replace all of MCAS Miramar's authorized CH-53E aircraft with new CH-53K aircraft. At this time, it is not anticipated that the Proposed Action would result in changes to personnel loading, aviation operations, training activities, or construction of new facilities (e.g. new hangars, runways, etc.). If any additional interrelated proposals are adopted in the future, continuing or supplemental environmental review and analysis would be completed in accordance with NEPA and DoD procedural requirements.

This Draft EA evaluates both the potential environmental impacts associated with the Proposed Action and the environmental impacts of not implementing the proposed action (i.e., a "no action" alternative). The following resource areas have been evaluated in this EA: air quality and noise. The following resources were not carried forward in this EA because potential impacts were considered negligible or nonexistent: geological resources, hydrology, cultural resources, biological resources, hazardous, materials and hazardous waste, public health and safety, and socioeconomics.

The Draft EA identifies no significant impacts to air quality and the noise environment. The Draft EA is available for review and comment until January 19, 2026. For more information, the Draft EA is posted at: https://www.miramar.marines.mil/Portals/164/DRAFT%20EA_MCAS%20MIRAMAR%20CH-53K_NOA.pdf. Comments received prior to January 19, 2026, will be considered in development of the Final EA.

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