

**DRAFT ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT  
ESTABLISHMENT OF RESTRICTED AREA AIRSPACE R-6604C/D/E  
AT WALLOPS FLIGHT FACILITY**

**NATIONAL AERONAUTICS AND SPACE ADMINISTRATION  
GODDARD SPACE FLIGHT CENTER  
WALLOPS FLIGHT FACILITY  
WALLOPS ISLAND, VIRGINIA 23337**

**EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

The *Environmental Assessment (EA) for the Establishment of Restricted Area Airspace R-6604C/D/E* analyzes the potential environmental consequences resulting from the establishment of Restricted Area Airspace (R-) at the National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA) Goddard Space Flight Center's Wallops Flight Facility (WFF), located in Accomack County, Virginia. This EA provides a description of the aircraft, tempo of operations, and types of activities currently operating in the airspace and the need for the proposed airspace. This EA then analyzes the potential direct, indirect, and cumulative environmental effects of two alternatives: the Proposed Action and the No Action Alternative.

**PURPOSE AND NEED FOR THE PROPOSED ACTION**

The mission of WFF is to support aeronautical research, science, technology, and education. In 1942, the U.S. Government purchased the site of the current Wallops Main Base, for a naval air station. The Chincoteague Naval Air Station was commissioned on March 5, 1943, as an auxiliary to the Norfolk Naval Air Station. The air station was primarily a training field, but was also used for ordnance testing. In 1959, NASA acquired the Naval Air Station and has been conducting flight training, scientific flights, and aeronautical research ever since. Currently, WFF conducts a variety of elevated risk test activities. These operations center on the Main Base airfield which lies under unprotected portions of airspace. Additionally, inter-governmental agreements, such as those with Naval Air Station Patuxent River and Naval Air Systems Command, leverage WFF's capability for operational and developmental testing, and evaluating military systems in support of our nation's defense and security.

The purpose of NASA's request for additional Restricted Area Airspace is to protect non-participating aircraft from the dangers associated with high-risk experimental test flight operations. This is accomplished by expanding the existing airspace in a segmented fashion, thereby facilitating safe separation between the two activities with minimal impacts to current civil air traffic.

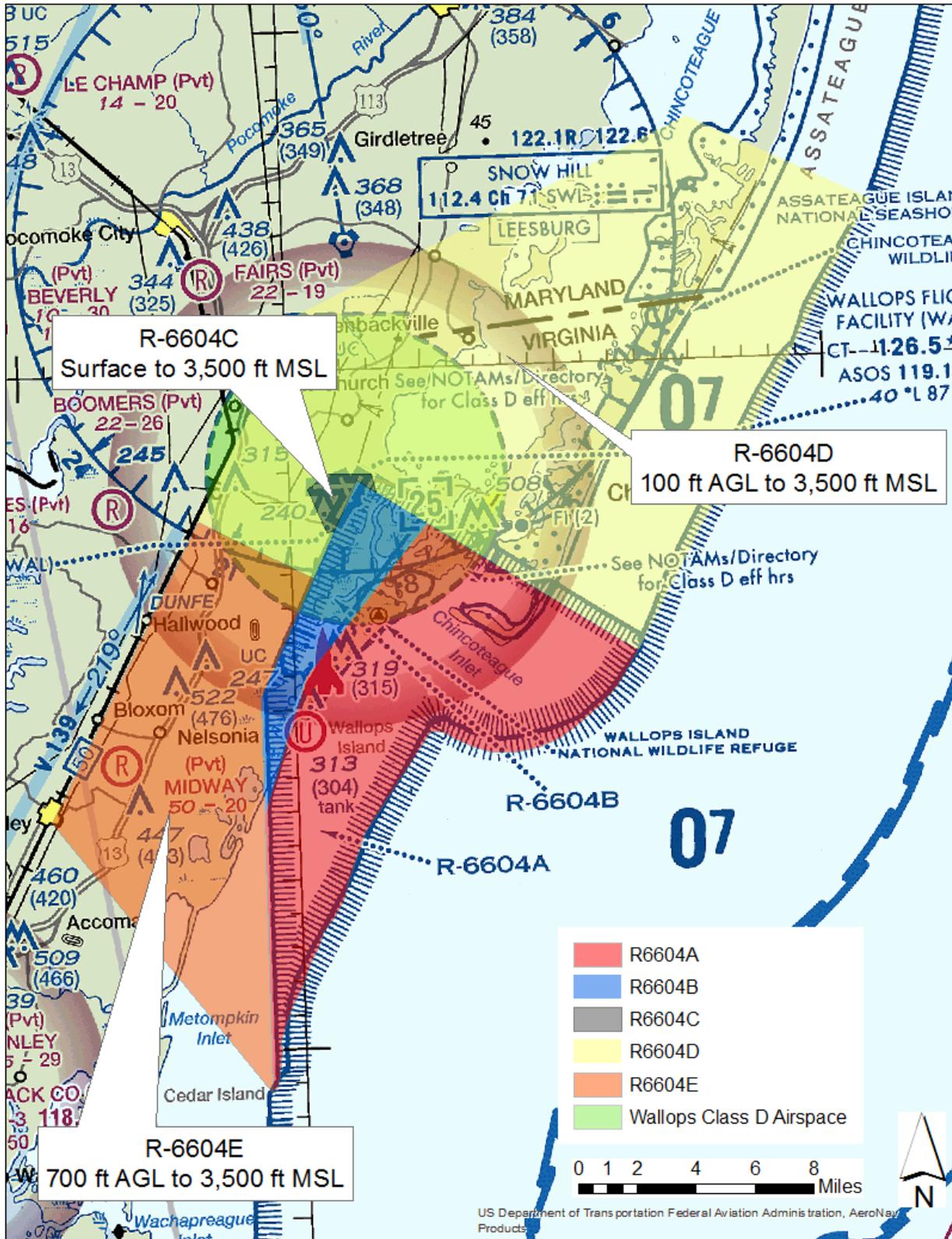
**PROPOSED ACTION AND NO ACTION ALTERNATIVE**

The Department of Transportation's (DOT's) Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) regulates U.S. airspace. All entities, including agencies of the U.S. government such as NASA, must submit a request to FAA for it to grant changes to the nation's airspace. With the purpose of safely segregating civil air traffic from flight testing of unproven and experimental aerial systems, NASA has applied to FAA for the expansion of existing Restricted Area Airspace R-6604A/B by adding new airspace designated R-6604C/D/E (Figure 1). R-6604C would incorporate the airspace from the ground surface up to, and including, 3,500 feet above ground level (AGL); would be linked to R-6604A/B; and would extend through

and beyond existing Class D airspace. Similarly, R-6604D would extend from 100 feet AGL to 3,500 feet AGL and R-6604E would span from 700 feet AGL to 3,500 feet AGL. Similar to R-6604A/B, each section of airspace could be activated separately, as needed. Activation of these areas would be accomplished by issuing a Notice to Airmen (NOTAM) at least 12 hours prior to the activation.

#### **SUMMARY OF POTENTIAL ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACTS**

According to the analysis in this EA, implementation of the Proposed Action would result in no impacts to DOT Act Section 4(f) lands (i.e., publicly owned parks, recreational areas, wildlife and waterfowl refuges, or public and private historical sites). Minor, short-term impacts would be anticipated to airspace management. Implementation of the Proposed Action would have a beneficial impact on the health and safety of the participating and non-participating aircraft, and the general public. Minimal impacts are anticipated to the general aviation community. No significant impact would occur to the surrounding community from noise as a result of expanding R-6604. Under the No Action alternative, conditions on the Wallops Main Base would remain unchanged. Aircraft would continue to operate from the airfield. However, the current safety risks and limitations on operations would remain.



Note ft: feet; AGL: above ground level; MSL: mean sea level

Figure 1: Proposed Restricted Area Airspace R-6604C/D/E