

NOTICE OF AVAILABILITY

Final Environmental Assessment (EA) Addressing the Restricted Airspace for the Operation of a Tethered Aerostat at South Padre Island, Texas

U.S. Customs and Border Protection (CBP) Air and Marine Operations Center (AMOC) announces the availability of a Final Environmental Assessment Addressing the Restricted Airspace for the Operation of a Tethered Aerostat at South Padre Island (SPI), Texas. The Final EA was prepared in accordance with the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) of 1969 (42 United States Code [U.S.C.] 4321 et seq.) Department of Homeland Security Directive 023-01 Revision 01, *Implementation of the National Environmental Policy Act*, and other pertinent environmental statutes, regulations, and compliance requirements.

CBP AMOC proposes the establishment of a new Special Use Airspace by the Federal Aviation Administration consisting of a two-part Restricted Area for a tethered aerostat system at SPI, Texas. The Tactical Maritime Surveillance System (TMSS) is deployed by AMOC at the U.S. Coast Guard Station at SPI. The Proposed Action is needed to protect against the extreme airspace hazard created by the aerostat, the purpose of which is to provide law enforcement with sensible physical security of critical infrastructure over large geographic areas and to increase situational awareness in border areas, thereby enhancing officer safety. The TMSS is a balloonborne radar system that provides long-range detection of low-altitude aircraft to detect and track suspicious air traffic. The TMSS monitors the Gulf of America and approximately 200 miles along the coastline local to SPI, an area frequently used by transnational criminal organizations for smuggling of narcotics and people. The analysis presented in this EA allows decision makers to determine if the Proposed Action would affect the natural, cultural, social, economic, and physical environment, as well as whether the action can proceed to the next phase of project development or if an Environmental Impact Statement is required.

The Final EA evaluates potential impacts on the environment from the Proposed Action and the No Action Alternative. The Final EA demonstrates that the Proposed Action would not significantly impact the environment and based on this analysis, CBP AMOC has prepared and signed a Finding of No Significant Impact (FONSI). The Final SEA and FONSI are available on the CBP website at <https://www.cbp.gov/about/environmental-management>.