and § 989.33, Requirements for analysis abroad. This reorganization of the rule was accomplished to show that Air Force environmental planning abroad is part of the EIAP, but is not considered a part of the Air Force's NEPA compliance. Air Force analysis abroad is strictly driven by 32 CFR Part 187, Environmental effects abroad of major DOD actions. Title 32 CFR Part 187 implements Executive Order 12114, Environmental Effects Abroad of Major Federal Actions.

The former § 989.36, Procedures for holding public hearings, has been reformatted as Attachment 3— Procedures for Holding Public Hearings on Draft Environmental Impact Statements.

1. Combining Documents

Comments: Commenters indicated that comprehensive planning is based upon a solid information base, quite similar to the information base required for the EIAP. Commenters further indicated that comprehensive plans should support good economic, environmental and social management goals, and the Air Force EIAP should be applied to comprehensive planning.

Response: Sections 1500.4(o), 1500.5(i) and 1506.4 of the CEQ regulations address combining environmental documents to reduce duplication and paperwork. This combination could include any other type of document so long as the actual NEPA document is in compliance with that law and the CEQ regulations. Air Force comprehensive planning includes as a fundamental planning component, environmental constraints and opportunities. It also incorporates operational, urban planning, and capital improvement programs, to identify and assess development alternatives and ensure compliance with applicable federal, state, and local laws, regulations and policies. No further changes will be made to this regulation with reference to wording addressing combining documents.

2. Environmental Assessments (EA)

Comment: Several commenters disagreed with Air Force's "non-involvement" of the public or oversight agencies in preparation of draft EAs. Further, commenters suggested that draft EAs be made available to the public for review and comment in the same manner as draft EISs. Commenters major concerns revolved around the potential for the Air Force to "hide" potential impacts and to take actions that would otherwise require an EIS and therefore require public hearings.

Response: CEQ has indicated their intent as to when public review of EAs is necessary. For example: borderline cases (reasonable argument for preparation of an EIS); unusual, new, or precedent setting cases; public controversy; or when the action is one which would normally require an EIS. CEQ has also indicated that where the proposal itself integrates mitigation from the beginning and it is impossible to define the proposal without including the mitigation, the agency may then rely on mitigation measures in determining if overall effects would not be significant. In those instances, agencies should make the FONSI and EA available for 30 days of public comment before taking action.

The Air Force has identified specific actions where a 30 day public review is required. Section 989.14 of this rule has been modified to identify procedures for public involvement in the development of an EA. The Air Force has included the public in the review of appropriate EAs, where the public input would assist in better decision-making.

The Air Force has specifically modified § 989.14(g) by adding a subparagraph (5) which will require all EAs that mitigate impacts to insignificance in lieu of an EIS, to be the subject of a public review period. Section 989.14(j) has been revised to define how to initiate a public review period for specified actions. The extent of public involvement will typically coincide with the magnitude and complexity of the proposed action and its potential effect on the area in question.

3. Finding of No Significant Impact (FONSI)

Comment: Commenters suggested that the final rule should provide provisions for public dissemination and comment on all FONSIs. Commenters also suggested that a public review period should be provided for all NEPA documentation.

Response: The Air Force considers all NEPA compliance documents public documents, unless classified for operational reasons. These documents are available to the public, upon request or as part of previously established mailing list. They are also available through regional offices of federal agencies having responsibility for a certain area of environmental protection, the state single point of contact and state agencies. The amount of time provided for review of an EA/ FONSI is directly related to the magnitude of the action and potential environmental controversy. Section 989.15(e)(l) has been edited to clarify

intent and to ensure that all Air Force organizations understand that a public review is the norm unless clearly unnecessary.

Section 989.15(f) has been modified by adding subparagraph (4) in cases where potential significant environmental impacts found during preparation of an EA/FONSI are mitigated to insignificance in lieu of preparing an EIS, as defined in § 989.22(c).

4. Public Involvement in the Environmental Impact Analysis Process (EIAP) (Air Force NEPA Compliance Process) Notice of Intent (NOI): Scoping and Review and Comments of Documentation

Comment: Commenters were concerned that the Air Force would attempt to keep the public involvement in a proposal to a minimum by not releasing information or ignoring public concerns. Commenters suggested that the Air Force would attempt to hide potential significant impacts related to a proposal. Further, commenters indicated that when a federal agency holds a public scoping meeting in a given community they must return to that same community to hold hearings on the DEIS.

Response: The Air Force includes the affected public in all its NEPA compliance actions (see 2 and 3 above) for the initiation of a proposal through the final decision (initial scoping process, the public review and comment process and responding to concerns raised by individuals, organizations and other federal agencies).

Section 1506.6. of the CEQ regulations requires agencies to make "diligent efforts" to involve the public in the agency's NEPA procedures. The Air Force includes the public as fully as is practicable in the NEPA decision-making process. Section 989.23, Public notification mandates not only legally required public involvement, but also encourages equally effective means for including public participation in the Air Force's NEPA process.

When the Air Force is preparing an EIS for an action that could potentially impact on a specific community, it is the Air Force's intent to fully incorporate the community in the process of scoping and public hearings. In the case where the action was carried no further than the scoping stage, because it may have been discontinued, the Air Force would not hold a public hearing. For continuing actions the Air Force will return to the scoping venue to hold public hearings on the DEIS, unless the scoping process has indicated a lack of interest. On the other hand, if