

CHAPTER 1.0

INTRODUCTION

1.1 PROPOSED AIR SERVICE AND FAA RESPONSIBILITY

This document is the Environmental Assessment (EA) prepared by the Town of Mammoth Lakes and United Airlines to analyze, document, and disclose potential environmental impacts of the proposed Operations Specifications Amendment approval by the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) related to the scheduled commercial air service into Mammoth Yosemite Airport (MMH) by United Airlines using CRJ700 aircraft. This EA has been prepared based in large measure on, and incorporates by reference, the Final Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) prepared by the FAA in 2008 for the approval of the Operations Specifications Amendment for Horizon Air that allowed the introduction of commercial service to MMH by Horizon Airlines using Q400 aircraft.

1.1.1 The Proposed Air Service at MMH

United Airlines proposes to conduct daily flights from San Francisco International Airport (SFO) to MMH using CRJ700 aircraft. A depiction of a CRJ700 aircraft is presented in [Figure 1.1-1](#). The CRJ700 proposed for use in the service can seat up to 66 passengers. United Airlines has provided the FAA with a letter of intent (LOI) to initiate the winter ski season passenger service to MMH in December 2010 with one flight per day for a period extending from mid-December to mid-April. [Appendix A-1](#) includes a copy of the United Airlines letter of intent.

1.1.2 FAA's Responsibilities

Certification Responsibilities

Title 14 Code of Federal Regulations (CFR) Part 119 governs the operations of all U.S. air carriers and commercial operators in air commerce. A person wishing to provide air carrier services must obtain an Air Carrier Certificate. Air Carrier Certificates include operations specifications that establish the authorizations, limitations, and certain procedures under which each kind of operation, if applicable, is to be conducted; and certain other procedures under which each class and size of aircraft is to be operated. Proposed amendments to an air carrier's operations specifications require approval by the FAA. The Administrator of the FAA may amend any operations specifications issued under 14 CFR Part 119 if:

- The Administrator determines that safety in air commerce and the public interest require the amendment; or
- The certificate holder applies for the amendment, and the Administrator determines that safety in air commerce and the public interest allows the amendment.

Environmental Responsibilities

This EA has been prepared to consider the potential environmental impacts of FAA approval of United Airlines' Operations Specifications Amendment to accommodate the proposed scheduled air carrier

service into MMH. The FAA is responsible for complying with the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) prior to taking any agency action regarding United Airlines' proposed service to MMH. Several types of environmental documentation are available to the FAA in meeting its NEPA obligation under FAA Order 1050.1E, *Policies and Procedures for Considering Environmental Impacts*, including Categorical Exclusions (CatEx), Environmental Assessments (EA), or Environmental Impact Statements (EIS). Approvals of Operations Specifications Amendments normally qualify for a Categorical Exclusion pursuant to Paragraph 308d of the Order when the proposed action does not significantly change the operating environment of the airport. However, pursuant to FAA Order 1050.1E, Section 401I (1), preparation of an EA for an Operations Specifications Amendment is required for authorizing an operator to use turbojet aircraft for scheduled passenger or cargo service into an airport when that airport has not previously been served by any scheduled turbojet aircraft.

The environmental evaluation of the Proposed Action within this EA is subject to a variety of laws, regulations, and agency directives to assess the level of potential impact to natural (e.g., fish, wildlife, plants), physical (e.g., water resources, air quality), and human (e.g., land use, environmental justice) environments. [Section 3.4](#) of this EA contain a list of Federal laws and statutes, Executive Orders (EO), pertinent Federal Aviation Regulations (FAR), Department of Transportation (DOT)/FAA Orders, and FAA Advisory Circulars (AC) considered in the development of this EA.

1.2 BACKGROUND

1.2.1 Description of the Airport

The Town of Mammoth Lakes is the owner and operator of MMH. The Town holds a Class I certificate for MMH pursuant to 14 CFR Part 139. Under this classification, scheduled air carrier operations can be provided using aircraft capable of carrying 30 or more passengers. The airport is located approximately six miles east of the Town of Mammoth Lakes and north of U.S. 395 in Mono County with a field elevation of 7,128 feet above mean sea level (see [Figures 1.2-1, 1.2-2, and 1.2-3](#)). The airport has one east-west oriented runway (9/27) with a parallel and connecting taxiway system. Runway 9/27 is paved with asphalt and is 7,000 feet long by 100 feet wide. A Global Positioning System (GPS) non-precision instrument approach is available to Runway 27. The airport intermittently experiences crosswind conditions that limit arrivals by light general aviation (GA) aircraft or require avoidance of a part of the runway. However, these conditions are not projected to substantially affect the operation of heavier aircraft such as the CRJ700. United Airlines has indicated that the maximum crosswind limit for the CRJ700 aircraft is 28 knots for takeoff and 30 knots for landing on a dry paved runway (SkyWest, 2010). These limitations are similar to those for the Q400 aircraft currently in use at MMH. Horizon Air has not experienced problems with crosswind conditions that have affected its air service at MMH.

H:\projects\Mammoth_Lakes\EA\12009122\Applications\Figures\Draft\Chapter 1\Figure 1.1-1, Photograph of CRJ700 Aircraft.mxd (pdf, bde, 02/09/10)



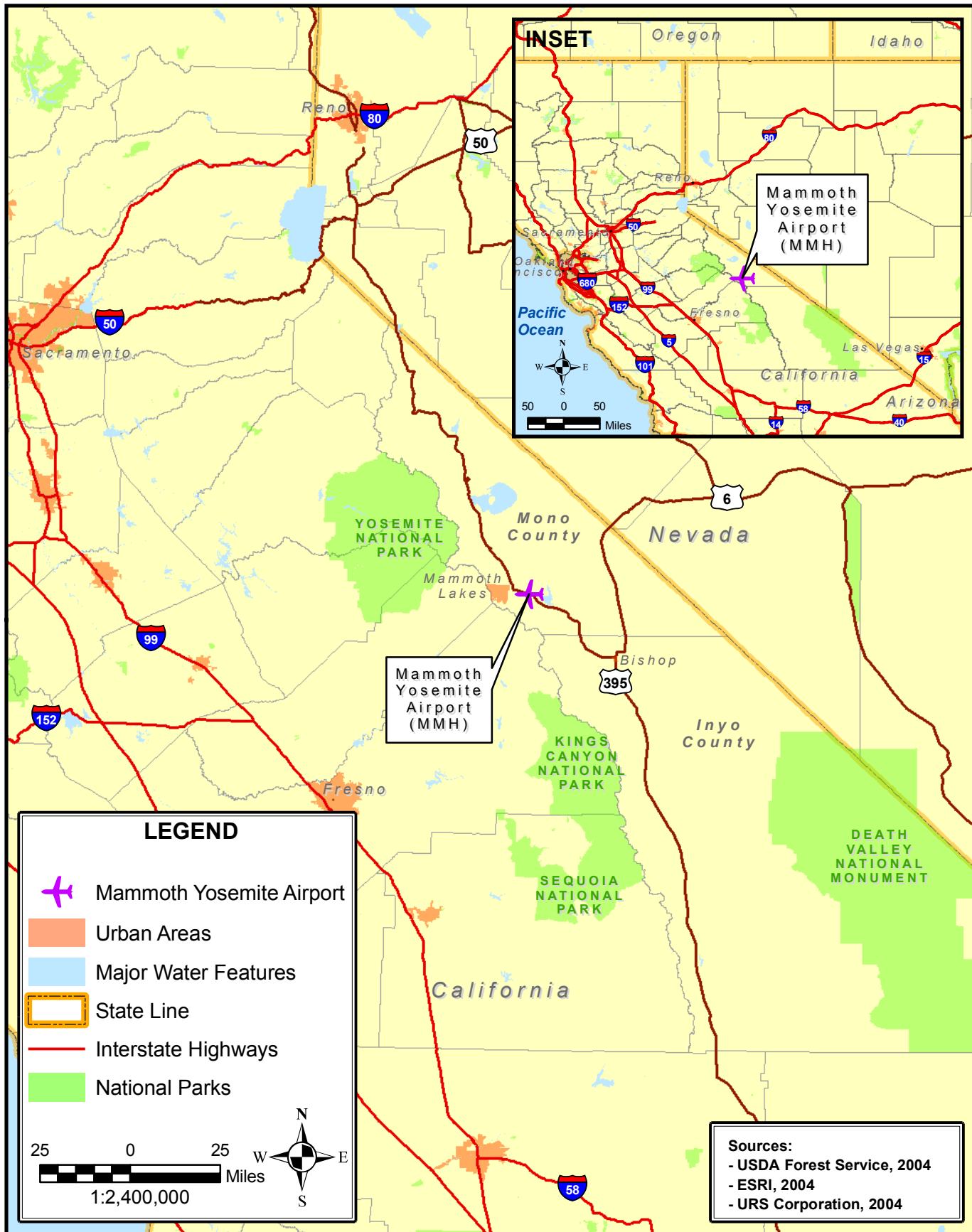
Sources: www.skywest.com, 2009



Environmental Assessment
Mammoth Yosemite Airport
United Airlines Operations Specifications
Amendment Service to/from MMH

PHOTOGRAPH OF CRJ700 AIRCRAFT

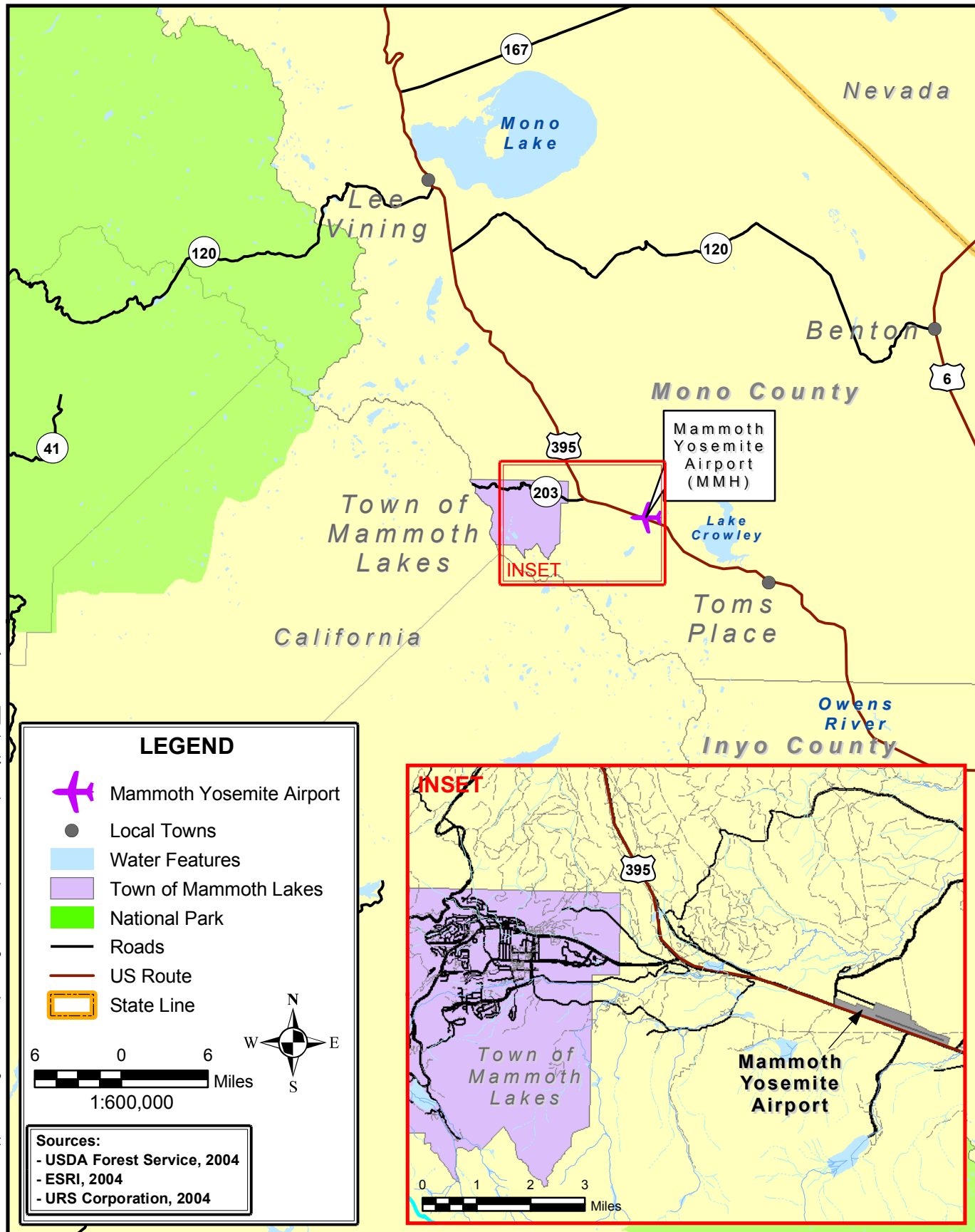
FIGURE
1.1-1



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Mammoth Yosemite Airport
 United Airlines Operations Specifications
 Amendment Service to/from MMH

VICINITY MAP

FIGURE
1.2-1

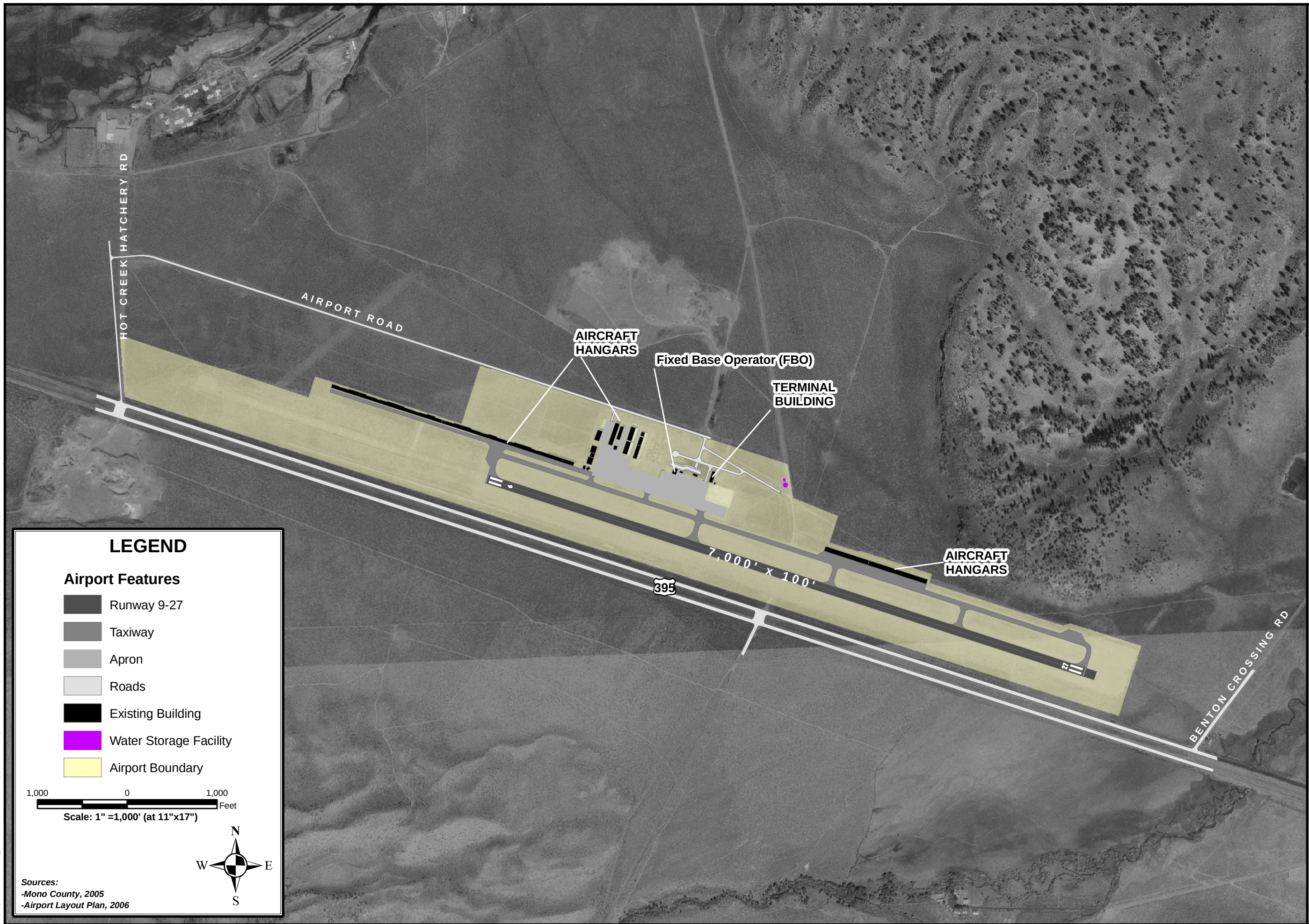


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Mammoth Yosemite Airport
 United Airlines Operations Specifications
 Amendment Service to/from MMH

AIRPORT LOCATION

FIGURE
1.2-2

H:\projects\Mammoth_Lakes\EA\12009122\Applications\Figures\Draft\Chapter 1\Figure 1.2-3, Existing Airport Facilities.mxd (pdf, hde, 04/19/10)



The airport provides facilities that can accommodate commercial airlines, commuter airlines, and support/maintenance for unscheduled operations. The airport also accommodates GA aircraft activity including aircraft hangars and outdoor tiedowns. The airport has six based aircraft and accommodates approximately 12,800 annual aircraft operations. Over the past 30 years, scheduled commercial service has been provided at the airport. From 1973 to 1980, MMH accommodated commercial airline service from Sierra Pacific Airlines using Convair 440 aircraft. In 1985, Trans World Express began commuter service to Los Angeles and San Francisco using 19-seat Beechcraft 1900 aircraft. During the 1987 ski season, service was provided by Royal West Airlines. During the winter seasons of 1992 and 1993, United Express operated 19-seat Jetstream 31 turboprop aircraft.

1.2.2 Current Air Service at MMH

Horizon Air began providing commercial air service between LAX and MMH in December 2008, following approval of an Operations Specification Amendment for Horizon Air to accommodate that service. The Horizon Air service began with one flight per day for a 16-week season from mid-December 2008 to mid-April 2009 utilizing Bombardier Q400 Dash 8 aircraft seating 76 passengers. The FAA prepared an EIS to consider the potential environmental impacts of FAA approval. The Final EIS was published in March 2008, and is included as a technical reference document for this EA as explained in [Chapter 4.0](#) (Affected Environment) and [Chapter 5.0](#) (Environmental Consequences).

During the 2008-2009 winter season Horizon Air operated 110 flights between LAX and MMH. Total enplanements for the period were 5,148, with an overall load factor of 62 percent. The term “enplanements” is used to measure airline passenger activity. An enplanement occurs when a passenger boards an aircraft. The term “load factor” refers to the percentage of available passenger seats occupied on each flight. For the 2009-2010 winter season Horizon Air expanded their service to include four flights per day for 115 days from mid-December 2009 to mid-April 2010. During this period service included two flights per day between MMH and LAX, and one flight per day between MMH and both Reno (RNO) and San Jose (SJC). In addition, Horizon Air has agreed to initiate summer service in April 2010 with one flight per day between MMH and LAX for 202 days over a period extending from mid-April 2010 to mid-December 2010. All flights have, and will continue to be, conducted during daylight hours.

1.3 AVIATION FORECASTS

The Town of Mammoth Lakes has developed a revised forecast of future commercial aircraft operations and enplanements at MMH. The forecast was prepared based on the existing and projected air service provided by Horizon Air, along with United Airlines’ intent to provide scheduled commercial air service to MMH. The commercial forecast is summarized in [Table 1.3-1](#). The FAA has reviewed this forecast and approved it for use in preparing this EA. A copy of the forecast approval letter is included in [Appendix D](#). The Terminal Area Forecast (TAF) for MMH updated by FAA in 2009 provides a projection of future total activity at MMH and is also included in [Appendix D](#).

Operations

Horizon Air is projected to continue to offer four flights per day during the 2010-2011 winter season. The proposed United Airlines service would add one flight per day during the same period. The Town forecast projects the addition of two winter season flights per day in 2011-2012 and 2012-2013 up to a maximum of eight flights per day. The total daily flights would not increase beyond eight due to the constraints of the one-gate terminal at MMH. The forecast also projects the continuation of the one flight per day summer season service throughout the forecast period. Which airlines provide a specific service would depend on commercial considerations such as which airline can more successfully fill aircraft seats.

Enplanements

The first year of winter service experienced a total of 5,148 enplanements, and an average load factor of 62 percent. Based on the experience of the first year and projected numbers of flights and load factors, it is anticipated that the total annual enplanements will increase to approximately 65,000 to 70,000 over the forecast period. These levels are similar to those projected in the March 2008 EIS for the current Horizon Air service.

1.4 ORGANIZATION OF THIS DOCUMENT

This EA is arranged by section and has several attached appendices that provide detailed technical information to supplement material in the body of the document. The sections and appendices, along with their primary subject area, are listed below:

- **Chapter 1.0** – Introduction
- **Chapter 2.0** – Purpose and Need
- **Chapter 3.0** – Alternatives
- **Chapter 4.0** – Affected Environment
- **Chapter 5.0** – Environmental Consequences
- **Chapter 6.0** – List of Preparers
- **Chapter 7.0** – Coordination and Public Involvement
- **Chapter 8.0** – References
- **Chapter 9.0** – List of Abbreviations and Glossary
- **Appendix A** – Agency Coordination
- **Appendix B** – Noise
- **Appendix C** – Information Concerning Species of Elevated Concern
- **Appendix D** – Aviation Forecast
- **Appendix E** – Public Involvement

TABLE 1.3-1
MMH COMMERCIAL AVIATION FORECAST

Year	No-Action							Proposed Action						
	Winter Days	Flights	Summer Days	Flights	Total Flights	Total Seats ³	Load Factor	Winter Days	Flights	Summer Days	Flights	Total Flights	Total Seats ³	Load Factor
2008-2009 ¹	110	1			110	8360	62%	110	1			110	8360	62%
2009-2010 ²	115	4	202	1	662	50312	70%	115	4	202	1	662	50312	70%
2010-2011	115	4	202	1	662	55312	75%	115	5	202	1	777	57902	75%
2011-2012	115	5	202	1	777	59052	80%	115	6	202	1	892	66642	80%
2012-2013	115	7	202	1	1007	76532	83%	115	8	202	1	1122	82972	83%
2013-2014	115	8	202	1	1122	85272	83%	115	8	202	1	1122	82972	83%
2014-2015	115	8	202	1	1122	85272	83%	115	8	202	1	1122	82972	83%
2015-2016	115	8	202	1	1122	85272	83%	115	8	202	1	1122	82972	83%
2016-2017	115	8	202	1	1122	85272	83%	115	8	202	1	1122	82972	83%

¹ Actual.
² Underway and projected.
³ Assumes 76-seat Q400 and 67-seat CRJ 700; assumes Q400 for summer service; 75% Q400 and 25% CRJ for winter service.