

https://rapidcityjournal.com/news/local/bill-seeks-million-to-help-protect-ellsworth-air-force-base/article_c7784ad3-4907-567c-a03c-9ee919c22542.html

TOP STORY

Bill seeks \$1.8 million to help protect Ellsworth Air Force Base

Seth Tupper Journal staff 5 hrs ago

TRY 1 MONTH FOR 99¢



A B-1B Lancer lands at Ellsworth Air Force Base on Oct. 30, 2018.

Airman 1st Class Thomas Karol

The Legislature is scheduled to consider a bill this week that would appropriate \$1.845 million for the Ellsworth Development Authority to continue clearing the area around Ellsworth Air Force Base of incompatible land uses.

Senate Bill 175 is scheduled for a hearing Monday before the Joint Committee on Appropriations. The bill was filed at the request of Gov. Kristi Noem, who proposed the funding during her budget address to the Legislature in January.

At a meeting of the Ellsworth Development Authority on Wednesday at the Great Western Bank building in Rapid City, the authority's executive director, Scott Landguth, said the money is needed.

“We do have properties stacked up that are waiting in the program for those matching funds,” he said.

The program Landguth referenced is the federal Readiness and Environmental Protection Integration program, known by the acronym REPI. Eligible REPI projects receive 75 percent federal funding and 25 percent state funding.

According to the Ellsworth Development Authority's latest bi-annual report, which was filed in January, the 10-year-old authority has used the REPI program on 70 properties totaling 3,200 acres. The authority consists of seven board members appointed by the governor and a staff of three.

In one example from 2018, the authority participated in a \$3.88 million deal to acquire and remove a mobile-home park consisting of 25 mobile homes and 22 modular units adjacent to an Air Force perimeter fence line. In such transactions, occupants of the homes are typically given one-year relocation notices.

Such transactions are part of a broader strategy to make Ellsworth Air Force Base, which is just east of Rapid City, less vulnerable to potential future base closures. Ellsworth was considered for closure by the federal government in 2005.

The authority's land deals include the placement of easements on the land to prevent certain future uses, such as residential dwellings, that are deemed incompatible with areas including the Accident Potential Zones around the base.

After the authority has cleared land of incompatible uses, it has sold or otherwise conveyed some of the land to entities including private landowners and the city of Box Elder.

Contact Seth Tupper at seth.tupper@rapidcityjournal.com

Seth Tupper

Enterprise Reporter

Enterprise reporter for the Rapid City Journal and author of "Calvin Coolidge in the Black Hills." Receiving encrypted news tips through Peerio with the user name seth_tupper.

