

DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE

DEPARTMENT OF THE NAVY

FINDING OF NO SIGNIFICANT IMPACT FOR THE ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT OF
PIER 5000 NORTH SIDE OUTER BERTH AND APPROACH DREDGING PROJECT AT NAVAL
BASE POINT LOMA, SAN DIEGO, CALIFORNIA

Pursuant to the Council on Environmental Quality (CEQ) regulations (40 Code of Federal Regulations [CFR] Sections 1500-1508) implementing the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) and Navy NEPA regulations (32 CFR 775), and Chief of Naval Operations Environmental Readiness Program Manual 5090.1D, the Department of the Navy (Navy) gives notice that an Environmental Assessment (EA) has been prepared and an Environmental Impact Statement is not required for the Pier 5000 North Side Outer Berth and Approach Dredging Project at Naval Base Point Loma (NPBL), San Diego, California.

A Notice of Availability of the Draft EA for this project was published on 5 April 2019 in the San Diego Union Tribune. Copies of the draft EA were made available for public review at the San Diego Central, Ocean Beach, and Point Loma/Hervey libraries, and the document was made available for download at:
[https://www.cnrc.navy.mil/regions/cnrsw/om/environmental/support/Public Review of Navy Projects.html](https://www.cnrc.navy.mil/regions/cnrsw/om/environmental/support/Public%20Review%20of%20Navy%20Projects.html).

The 15-day public review period ended on 20 April 2019. No public comments were received on the Draft EA. A Notice of Availability of the Final EA and Finding of No Significant Impact (FONSI) will be published in the newspaper, and the EA and FONSI will be made available for public review at the same public libraries and on the Navy Region Southwest website.

Proposed Action: The purpose and need for the Proposed Action is to ensure NBPL's capability to berth all classes of submarines in the Pacific Fleet that require an operational depth of -42.5 feet (ft) mean lower low water (MLLW) pursuant to Naval Sea Systems Command (NAVSEA) Memo 3120 39T236/088. The Proposed Action involves the dredging of sediment within a 679,451 sq-ft (15.6-acre) footprint along the Pier 5000 North Side Outer Berth and Approach areas.

Depths within the dredge footprint currently vary from approximately -36 ft MLLW and -40 ft. and so require dredging from 2.5 to 6.5 ft in order to reach a design depth of -42.5 ft MLLW. Including an overdredge allowance of -2 ft, the approximate total dredge volume of the Proposed Action is 110,619 cubic yards (cy).

Dredging would be conducted during approximately 90 days and would be accomplished using a barge-mounted clamshell or backhoe dredge.

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The Proposed Action includes unconfined aquatic disposal of the dredged sediment, using beneficial reuse at a nearshore replenishment site.

Existing Conditions: The approximately 15.6-acre project site is located at NBPL in San Diego, California. NBPL is on the west side of San Diego Bay, near the mouth of the Bay directly opposite Naval Air Station North Island. NBPL is bordered to the north by the residential communities of La Playa and Sunset Cliffs, to the south and west by the Pacific Ocean, and to the east by the San Diego Bay (Bay).

Two federally listed threatened or endangered species have the potential to occur in the general area of the project site, the California least tern and the Green Sea Turtle. To reduce potential impacts to these species, project dredging activities would occur outside of the California least tern nesting season, 1 April through 15 September. Instead, instead dredging would occur during colder winter months, when both terns and Green Sea Turtles are not likely to be present in the project area, outside California least tern nesting season.

Green Sea Turtle monitors would be employed during all dredging activities to ensure that activities cease if a turtle is observed in the project site. Although the entire Bay is designated as Essential Fish Habitat under the Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act, project implementation would result in no adverse effects on Essential Fish Habitat given the short duration of the project and the ability of fish to temporarily leave the project area upon dredging startup and return to the area after dredging completion.

Alternatives Analyzed: The EA analyzed an additional alternative for dredging over a smaller (652,789 square feet - 15.0 acre) footprint, as an alternative to the Proposed Action (679,451 square feet - 15.6 acre). The smaller dredging footprint alternative would provide more limited submarine maneuverability and reduced access capacity at Pier 5000 relative to the Proposed Action while still meeting the purpose and need for the project.

The No Action Alternative was also analyzed in the EA. Under this alternative, no dredging would occur at Pier 5000 and sediment surface would not be altered by dredging activities. Under this Alternative, Pier 5000 would not meet berthing of all classes of submarines as established in NAVSEA Memo 3120 Ser 39T236/088.

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The Proposed Action is selected over the other alternatives as it most suitably meets the purpose and need for the project and would not result in significant impacts to the human and natural environment.

Environmental Effects: The following is a summary of the environmental consequences of the Proposed Action:

Air Quality/Climate Change: Construction activities related to the Proposed Action would generate a small amount of temporary exhaust emissions from the use of heavy equipment and barges. However, as the total duration of the project is likely to be approximately 90 days, the emissions of pollutants into the air would be minor, short-term, and would not exceed any Federal, State, or local de minimis threshold. Therefore, implementation of the Proposed Action would not result in significant impacts to air quality.

Water Resources: Implementation of the Proposed Action would include dredging underwater sediments of the Bay bottom, loading the material onto barge(s), transporting the material to disposal locations via barge, and direct underwater disposal at nearshore location(s) for beneficial reuse. This in-water work would increase water turbidity associated with suspension of bottom sediments. However, increases in water turbidity would be short-term in duration as sediments would settle back to the Bay floor following cessation of dredging activities.

Best management practices implemented as part of the Proposed Action that would reduce, minimize, or avoid increases in water turbidity or improper sediment disposal include: vessel speed limits, a prohibition on hydraulic dredging, spill control and GPS monitoring of sediment transport barge(s), and controls and limits on dredge volumes and rate of production. Therefore, implementation of the Proposed Action would not result in significant impacts to water resources.

Marine Biological Resources: Implementation of the Proposed Action would result in temporary noise and sediment disturbance to the habitat of benthic organisms; however, as the habitat would be re-colonized after project completion, this impact is not considered significant.

Project activities would result in the temporary displacement of marine birds and minimal alternations to their foraging conditions and/or prey availability; however, these impacts would be minor because of the project's limited scale and duration. No dredging activities would occur during the California least tern breeding season without prior consultation with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service.

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Furthermore, sediment disposal at nearshore replenishment sites would occur offshore and would not affect western snowy plover habitats along the coast, including those at Naval Air Station North Island. Therefore, implementation of the Proposed Action would not have a significant adverse effect under the Migratory Bird Treaty Act. There are no significant impacts to other non-migratory marine bird species and their habitats, or to federally listed bird species.

Underwater noise generated during dredging activities would cause minor disturbance to fish and essential fish habitat within the immediate project vicinity where the geographic scope is less than one percent of the Bay. Fish may temporarily leave the project area during the period of time when dredging was occurring. However, the underwater noise condition during dredging would not vary substantially from normal noise levels in the area. Fish would return to project area upon project completion. Therefore, implementation of the Proposed Action would not have a significant impact on Essential Fish Habitat.

Underwater noise generated during dredging activities would disturb marine mammals in the vicinity and they may leave the project area during the duration of dredging activities. However, implementation of avoidance and minimization measures would prevent impacts to fish and marine mammals. Additionally, increased underwater noise and activity would not vary substantially from normal levels of activity in the immediate area and would cease when dredging activities ended.

No long-term noise effects would occur as a result of the proposed project. Underwater noise levels associated with dredging are below marine mammal thresholds for both behavior and injury and impacts to these species would not be significant.

Eelgrass is the only special aquatic site found in the vicinity of the project area and is found approximately 1,000 ft north of the project area.

If the invasive seaweed species *Caulerpa* is found anywhere in the project area, then National Marine Fisheries Service-approved *Caulerpa* Control Protocols would be followed including additional surveys and eradication (mechanical or chemical removal) if necessary. Therefore, dredging activities would not result in significant impacts to marine plants or special aquatic sites.

Green sea turtles are not common in the project area but do occur throughout the Bay. Dredging activities have the potential to disturb sea turtles through vessel movement, construction-related noise, and water quality degradation. Visual monitoring for sea turtles will be required, as described below, to ensure no significant impacts to turtles occur.

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Implementation of the following best management practices would ensure there would be no significant effect on these resources: (1) dredging activities would occur between 16 September and 31 March to avoid the nesting season of the California least tern; (2) a pre-dredging survey for *Caulerpa*, would be conducted; and (3) monitoring for Green Sea Turtle and marine mammals and a prohibition on hydraulic dredging methods during all dredging activities would occur if they are observed. Therefore, there would be no significant impacts to biological resources from implementation of the Proposed Action.

Noise: Noise associated with implementation of the Proposed Action would be of short duration and generally consistent with existing noise levels at the project site which is a military working waterfront. The nearest sensitive receptor to the project site is a child development center 0.4 miles away. The project would not significantly permanently alter either the airborne or underwater noise environment. Therefore, implementation of the Proposed Action would not result in significant noise-related impacts to sensitive noise receptors.

Transportation and Traffic: The primary source of traffic from the Proposed Action would be sediment transport barges transiting between the Pier 5000 site and the beneficial reuse site. Project vessel traffic in and around the Bay would abide by existing charts and buoyed navigation channels and would occur for a limited duration and be comparatively negligible in volume relative to the existing vessel traffic in and around the Bay. Therefore, implementation of the Proposed Action would not result in significant traffic-related impacts.

Hazardous Materials and Wastes: Implementation of the Proposed Action would result in no change to the storage, use, transportation, or disposal of hazardous substances or wastes. Further, through laboratory testing and consultation with the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency and the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers the dredged sediments have been found to be sufficiently free of contaminants and to be suitable for unconfined aquatic disposal and beneficial reuse. Therefore, implementation of the Proposed Action would not result in significant impacts related to hazardous materials and wastes.

Finding: Based on analysis presented in the Final EA and in coordination with the United States Environmental Protection Agency Region IX, United States Army Corps of Engineers Carlsbad Field Office, National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration's National Marine Fisheries Service Southwest Region, and California Coastal Commission, the Navy finds that the implementation of the Proposed Action would not significantly affect the quality of the human

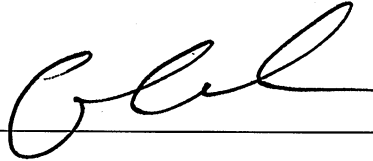
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environment. Therefore, preparation of an Environmental Impact Statement is not necessary.

The Final EA prepared by the Navy addressing this action is on file and interested parties may obtain a copy from: NBPL Pier 5000 NSO and Approach Dredging EA, Department of the Navy, NAVFAC Southwest, Coastal EV, 937 N. Harbor Drive, Bldg 1, San Diego, California, 92106.

16 Jul 19

Date



B. BOLIVAR

Rear Admiral, U. S. Navy
Commander, Navy Region Southwest