DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE
DEPARTMENT OF THE NAVY

FINDING OF NO SIGNIFICANT IMPACT FOR THE ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT FOR THE CONSTRUCTION AND OPERATION OF SOLAR PHOTOVOLTAIC SYSTEMS AT MULTIPLE INSTALLATIONS IN CALIFORNIA

Pursuant to the Council on Environmental Quality regulations (40 Code of Federal Regulations [CFR] Parts 1500-1508) implementing the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) and U.S. Department of the Navy (Navy) NEPA regulations (32 CFR Part 775), and Chief of Naval Operations Manual-5090.1, the Navy gives notice that an Environmental Assessment (EA) has been prepared and an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) is not required for the construction and operation of solar photovoltaic (PV) systems at multiple installations in California.

Proposed Action:
The purpose of the Proposed Action is to increase Navy Installation energy security, operational capability, and strategic flexibility through the development of renewable energy generating systems. The proposed project at Naval Weapons Station (NAVWPNSTA) Seal Beach also includes a battery system for energy storage.

Under the Proposed Action, the Navy would meet these goals by entering into agreements with one or more private parties to construct, operate, maintain and own solar photovoltaic and energy storage systems on five installations within Navy Region Southwest, including:

- Naval Air Facility (NAF) El Centro;
- Naval Support Activity (NSA) Monterey's Main Site and Navy Annex;
- NAVWPNSTA Seal Beach;
- NAVWPNSTA Seal Beach Detachment Norco; and,
- Naval Base Ventura County (NBVC) Port Hueneme.

The Proposed Action includes the following:

- Installation, operation, and maintenance of photovoltaic panels at five Navy installations (and battery energy storage systems at NAVWPNSTA Seal Beach);

- Modifications to existing infrastructure (e.g., building rooftops) to accommodate solar photovoltaic system installation;
- Site preparation (e.g., grubbing, grading, trenching for underground utility lines);
- Installation of solar photovoltaic array mounting structures (e.g., rooftop mounts, ground mounted poles, or vertical members/poles for carports);
- Installation and connection of electrical cables to points of connection that contain electrical equipment (e.g., electrical feed meters, switchgears, inverters, circuit breakers, transformers, and other small electrical equipment) and connects to the existing installation electrical grid;
- Installation of above-ground electrical poles; and,
- Use of best available science and appropriate design specifications during construction and operation of the projects to minimize impacts to wildlife.

The Navy and private parties would enter into agreements to allow the private parties to use Navy land to construct, operate, and own the PV systems. Construction is anticipated to last approximately four to six months. Upon termination, of the agreements, the private parties would be required to remove all systems and return the project sites to their original conditions.

Public Participation: The public participation process included the publication of a Notice of Availability (NOA) of the Draft EA in the following weekly newspapers: Monterey Weekly, Seal Beach Sun and Vida Newspaper Oxnard on February 19, 2015 and, in the following daily newspapers: Imperial Valley Press, Monterey Herald, Orange County Register, The Press-Enterprise and The Ventura County Star from February 20-22, 2015. A copy of the Draft EA was also available for public review at the following libraries: Mary Wilson Public Library in Seal Beach, California; Huntington Beach Central Library in Huntington Beach, California; Westminster Branch Library in Westminster, California; Ray D. Prueter Library in Port Hueneme, California; South Oxnard Library and Oxnard Main Library in Oxnard, California; Camarillo Public Library in Camarillo, California; E.P. Foster Library in Ventura, California; Wilfred J. Airey Library and Norco Public Library in Norco, California; Monterey Public Library in Monterey California; El Centro Public Library

in El Centro California and online at http://www.cnic.navy.mil/regions/cnrsw/om/environmental_support/Public_Review_of_Navy_Projects/NBVC_NAFEC_NWSSB_Solar_Photovoltaic_EA.html. The same public access and notification will be made available for the Final EA and FONSI.

A Notice of Public Meeting (NOPM) was included in the NOA for NAVWPNSTA Seal Beach Norco Detachment. An open house style public meeting was held on March 7, 2015 at NAVWPNSTA Seal Beach Detachment Norco. A total of 42 persons attended and 11 comments were submitted at the public meeting. Additionally, the Navy received one e-mail and two letters; one from the US Fish and Wildlife Service and one from the City of Norco. The Navy received comments on the following resource areas: Biological Resources, Visual Resources, Land Use, Utilities, and Cultural Resources. At the end of the 30-day public comment period, the Navy received 14 total comments. All comments were considered in the preparation of the Final EA.

Alternatives Analyzed:
Alternative 1: Under Alternative 1, the following installations would be developed with solar photovoltaic systems (and at NAVWPNSTA Seal Beach a battery energy storage system). The type of solar photovoltaic system and project area are listed below:

- NAF El Centro (10.0 acres) ground-mounted solar photovoltaic system, approximately 1,495 megawatt hours;
- NSA Monterey's Main Site and Navy Annex (3.68 acres and 1.56 acres) carport-mounted solar photovoltaic system, approximately 2163.9 megawatt hours;
- NAVWPNSTA Seal Beach (6.62 acres) ground-mounted solar photovoltaic system and a battery energy storage system, approximately 432.7 megawatt hours;
- NAVWPNSTA Seal Beach Detachment Norco (18.5 acres) ground-mounted solar photovoltaic system, approximately 2,250 megawatt hours; and,
- NBVC Port Hueneme (1.46 acres) carport-mounted solar photovoltaic system, approximately 432.8 megawatt hours.

Under Alternative 1, approximately 41.82 acres within five Navy installations would be developed to support an estimated total output of approximately 6,774.4 megawatt hours per year.

Alternative 2: Under Alternative 2, the following installations would be developed with solar photovoltaic systems. The type of solar photovoltaic system and project area are described below:

- NAF El Centro (8.0 acres) ground-mounted solar photovoltaic system, approximately 432.7 megawatt hours;
- NSA Monterey's Main Site and Navy Annex (3.68 acres and 0.48 acres) carport-mounted solar photovoltaic system, approximately 1875.3 megawatt hours;
- NAVWPNSTA Seal Beach (6.53 acres) ground-mounted solar photovoltaic system, approximately 432.7 megawatt hours;
- NAVWPNSTA Seal Beach Detachment Norco (18.5 acres) ground-mounted solar photovoltaic system, approximately 2,250 megawatt hours; and,
- NBVC Port Hueneme (1.46 acres) carport-mounted solar photovoltaic system, approximately 432.8 megawatt hours.

Under Alternative 2, approximately 38.65 acres within five Navy installations would be developed to support the estimated total output of approximately 5,423.5 megawatt hours per year.

No Action Alternative: Under the No Action Alternative, the Navy would not enter into agreements with private parties to construct, operate, and maintain solar PV systems. The Navy would continue to rely solely on conventional power from the current utility providers. This alternative would not meet the Navy's renewable energy goals.

Alternative to be Implemented: Alternative 1 has been selected as it best meets the purpose and need for the project and would not result in significant impacts to the human or natural environment.

Existing Conditions: Although several Federally-listed threatened or endangered plant and animal species have been documented within the boundaries of the five installations, there is no suitable habitat within the project sites for these species, therefore none of these species are expected to occur within the project areas. Long-term loss of upland habitat would result from the installation of ground-mounted solar photovoltaic systems at NAVWPNSTA Seal Beach and NAVWPNSTA Seal Beach Detachment Norco. However, impacts to wildlife would be minor due to the relatively small size of the impacted area and amount of habitat in surrounding areas. To minimize potential impacts to wildlife, best available science and appropriate

design specifications would be used and implemented during construction, which may include, but not be limited to, breaking up panel reflection with spacing and visual cues or bands and orientating the panels so that they are neither fully-vertical not fully-horizontal.

There are no Waters of the U.S. and no critical habitat for Federally-listed wildlife species within the project areas.

No cultural resources have been documented at any of the five installation project areas; however, there is the possibility of unanticipated resources being discovered during construction. Section 106 provides for consultation with the State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO) regarding the effects of an undertaking on historic properties. NAF El Centro has a Programmatic Agreement (PA) in place that specifies how cultural resource issues are to be handled and delegates the project review authority to the facility. The four remaining installations did not have negotiated PAs; therefore, standard Section 106 consultation was conducted. SHPO concurrence letters are included as Appendix E of the Final EA.

Environmental Impacts and Conservation Measures: Conservation and construction measures described in Section 2.4 of the EA and discussed below would be implemented. The following is a summary of the environmental impacts of the selected alternative:

Air Quality: Construction activities of Alternative 1 would generate minor, temporary (short-term) air emissions, such as fugitive dust emissions from earth moving activities and exhaust emissions from construction equipment and vehicles. Operational emissions from Alternative 1 would be limited to minor area-source emissions from the maintenance of the solar photovoltaic systems. Air quality conservation measures identified in Section 2.4.2 of the EA will be adhered to, which will result in reduced impacts to air quality. Neither short nor long term air emissions would exceed federal *de minimis* levels for criteria air pollutants emissions. Emission reductions realized by reduced consumption of grid-supplied electricity would more than offset the short-term construction emissions within the first year of operation. Records of Non-Applicability (RONAs) have been completed for project development at the NAF El Centro, NAVWPNSTA Seal Beach, NAVWPNSTA Seal Beach Detachment Norco, and NBVC Port Hueneme sites in accordance with the Clean Air Act and are included as Appendix C. Therefore, implementation of

Alternative 1 would not result in significant impacts to air quality.

Biological Resources: Long-term minor impacts would occur to vegetation communities from installation of ground-mounted solar panels at previously disturbed sites at NAF El Centro, as well as, temporary minor impacts due to trenching and transmission line installation. Long-term loss of upland habitat would result from the installation of ground-mounted solar photovoltaic systems at NAVWPNSTA Seal Beach and NAVWPNSTA Seal Beach Detachment Norco. Individuals of less mobile species could be impacted by site preparation. Mobile species would be expected to move to surrounding areas with suitable habitat and resume use of the area post-construction. Burrowing owls and subterranean species could be impacted by compaction and grading of soils during construction. Impacts to burrowing owls would be minimized by construction and conservation measures identified in section 2.4.3.3 of the EA. Alternative 1 would result in avian species being impacted or displaced through loss of nests and nest structures, disturbance and loss of foraging and nesting habitat. Site preparation would be conducted during non-breeding season, where practicable. If site preparation is conducted during breeding season, a nest survey would be conducted and buffers would be established to protect nesting birds. However, impacts to wildlife would be minor due to the relatively small size of the impacted area and amount of habitat in surrounding areas. There could be some indirect but insignificant potential "lake effect" impacts associated with bird strikes on the solar PV arrays. The likelihood of bird mortality associated with mistaking a solar PV panel array as a water body containing food sources is considered slight and any potential impacts would not rise to a level of significance under NEPA. There are no Waters of the U.S., no Federally-listed plant species, and no critical habitat for Federally-listed wildlife species within the project areas. Therefore, implementation of Alternative 1 would not result in significant impacts to biological resources.

Cultural Resources: No recorded historic properties or other cultural resources are located within the area of potential effect for Alternative 1 project sites. Two historic districts are located near NSA Monterey's Main Site area of potential effect; however, the proposed project site at this installation is outside the boundaries of these historic districts. A historic district is also present at NAVWPNSTA Seal

Beach Detachment Norco, but the proposed project site at this installation is outside the boundaries of the historic district. Minor impacts to the viewshed of the district may occur, but these would not be significant. Although no effects on historic properties and no significant impacts to cultural resources at the installations would occur with implementation of Alternative 1, conservation and construction measures would be employed to further reduce or entirely avoid impacts to any previously unknown, subsurface archaeological deposits that could be disturbed during construction at the installations. These measures would include cultural resources monitoring at NSA Monterey and NBVC Port Hueneme during ground disturbing construction activities. In accordance with Section 106 consultation, information was provided to the State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO) documenting the determination of the area of potential effect and a determination of no historic properties affected. SHPO concurrence with these findings is included as Appendix E. Therefore, no significant impacts to recorded historic properties or other cultural resources would result from implementation of Alternative 1.

Land Use: At NSA Monterey, NAVWPNSTA Seal Beach, and NBVC Port Hueneme, the projects would be in alignment with the land use designations from the applicable installation's Activity Overview Plan for the sites; therefore, the project would not introduce any incompatible land use activities at these installations. At NAVWPNSTA Seal Beach Detachment Norco, the project would not conflict with a land use designation for the site since there is no applicable Navy land use plan for the installation. At NAF El Centro, a permanent land use change from historic agricultural use to renewable energy development is proposed; however, development of the NAF El Centro site for renewable energy generation would be compatible with the adjacent uses on the installation (e.g., utility, residences, and aircraft operations) and the planned land use for the site (Utilities), as designated by the NAF El Centro Master Plan. Implementation of Alternative 1 would not change any land use patterns or land ownership in the project areas, and all sites would remain under Navy use. Therefore, no significant impacts to land use would result from implementation of Alternative 1.

Socioeconomics: In the EA, socioeconomics was only carried forward for detailed analysis for the NAF El Centro project. For all of the other locations, socioeconomic impacts were considered but not carried forward for detailed analysis. At

NAF El Centro, the project would remove land from an existing agricultural outlease on the installation. With Alternative 1, there would be no increase in military or civilian area populations or housing demands in the NAF El Centro vicinity. Local contractors would travel to the project site for project construction, and local contractors would also be used for project maintenance during project operation. Ten acres of an agricultural outlease would be discontinued as part of Alternative 1; however, local agricultural workers farm a number of fields in the area and do not solely depend on this site for employment so no job losses would occur. In addition, 10 to 12 local workers would be employed for the approximately four-month construction period. Alternative 1 would be constructed within the boundary of NAF El Centro, which is designated for military use, and would not be in proximity to minority or low-income housing areas. In addition, Alternative 1 would not result in significant adverse impacts to human health or the environment. An on-installation family housing development and Child Development Center and Youth Center are within 0.2 mile (0.32 kilometer) of the proposed PV site; however, Alternative 1 would not result in disproportionately high or significant adverse impacts to environmental health or safety risks to children. Therefore, no significant impacts to socioeconomics, including population, employment and income, housing, and environmental justice would result from implementation of Alternative 1.

Utilities: Under Alternative 1, electrical wiring would either be trenched into the ground, installed overhead, or a combination of both to connect to the power grid. The PV system would generate electrical power, which would offset existing electrical demands and result in a positive effect on utilities. Direct energy requirements would be limited to those necessary to operate vehicles and equipment. Proposed new construction would comply with applicable local, state, and federal codes designed to promote energy efficiency and the use of renewable energy resources. No significant impacts to natural gas, water, wastewater, solid waste services or electricity availability and delivery would occur at any of the installations under Alternative 1. Therefore, implementation of Alternative 1 would not result in significant impacts to utilities.

Visual Quality. All project sites are contained within installation boundary fencing which would obstruct public views of the proposed PV systems. PV panels and support structures would be dull and drab in color and appearance and would not

create a significant contrast with existing view-sheds. Although no significant impacts to visual resources would occur, implementation of the applicable conservation and construction measures (e.g., reducing contrast in color between the metal project components and nearby structures, reducing potential glare, and shielding and directing lights downward) would further minimize impacts of color contrast, glare and lighting at these locations. Therefore, implementation of Alternative 2 would not result in significant impacts to visual quality.

Water Resources. Surface disturbance (e.g. grading and localized excavation) would occur during construction of the solar PV panels and trenching for underground electrical conduits. During construction, storm water runoff from the project sites could result in a slight increase in turbidity; however, this would not degrade the local water quality or adversely affect current uses of local surface waters. Project structures would not increase the potential for flooding in local surface water bodies, restrict or redirect runoff flows, or cause localized flooding at project areas. Construction of Alternative 1 would not require the use of groundwater. As discussed in Section 2.4.6, the Navy would be required to obtain a Construction General Permit for discharges from construction activities for each of the five installations from the California State Water Resources Control Board prior to construction of Alternative 1. The Navy would install and maintain effective erosion- and sediment-control measures as necessary to comply with the Construction General Permit. The Navy would also develop Storm Water Pollution Prevention Plans (SWPPPs) for the proposed construction prior to implementation of Alternative 1. The SWPPPs would describe and ensure implementation of practices that would minimize pollutants in storm water discharges associated with construction at the applicable project site and ensure compliance with the terms of the Construction General Permit. Therefore, implementation of Alternative 1 would not result in significant impacts to water resources.

Coastal Zone Management: There would be no reasonably foreseeable impacts to coastal uses and resources from implementation of the proposed alternatives, therefore Coastal Zone Management was considered but not carried forward for analysis. In accordance with the Coastal Zone Management Act of 1972, as amended, Section 307 (c) (1), a Coastal Consistency Negative Determination was submitted to the California Coastal

Commission. The Coastal Commission's letter of concurrence is included as Appendix G.

Cumulative Impacts: The impacts from the implementation of the Alternative 1, when combined with the impacts of other past, present and foreseeable actions in the project vicinities with the potential to result in cumulative impacts, would not result in significant cumulative impacts.

Finding: Therefore, based upon inter-governmental coordination performed with the Cities of Seal Beach, Norco, Port Hueneme, Monterey and El Centro, discussion with Native American organizations, and in concurrence with specified findings presented to the California State Historic Preservation Officer and California Coastal Commission, and having evaluated the environmental impacts analysis presented in the EA, the Navy finds that implementation of Alternative 1, will not significantly impact the quality of the human or natural environment or generate significant controversy.

The EA prepared by the Navy addressing this action is on file, and interested parties may obtain a copy by contacting Ms. Lori Megliola, NEPA Planner/Project Manager, Naval Facilities Engineering Command Southwest, 1220 Pacific Highway, Building 131, San Diego, CA 92132, telephone (619) 532-3146, or email lori.megliola@navy.mil.

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