

DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE
DEPARTMENT OF THE NAVY

FINDING OF NO SIGNIFICANT IMPACT FOR THE ENVIRONMENTAL
ASSESSMENT FOR THE CONSTRUCTION, OPERATION, AND MAINTENANCE OF A
SOLAR PHOTOVOLTAIC SYSTEM AT NAVAL WEAPONS STATION SEAL BEACH,
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, operation, and maintenance of a solar photovoltaic (PV) system at Naval Weapons Station (NAVWPNSTA) Seal Beach, California.

Proposed Action:

The purpose of the Proposed Action is to increase Navy Installation energy security, operational capability, strategic flexibility, and resource availability through the development of renewable energy generating systems.

The Proposed Action is required to meet the renewable energy standards put forth by the One Gigawatt Initiative and Secretary of the Navy (SECNAV) Energy Goals. A solar PV system would be developed to generate renewable energy at NAVWPNSTA Seal Beach based on the Navy's Renewable Energy Initiative. The Navy and a local electric utility provider (private partner) would enter into an agreement to allow the private partner to use Navy land to construct, operate, and own the PV systems. The Navy would receive compensation for the lease, but would not directly receive the power generated by the PV system.

Public Participation: The public participation process included the publication of a Notice of Availability of the Draft EA in the Orange County Register from June 5-7, 2015, the Seal Beach Sun on June 4, 2015, and the Huntington Beach Independent on June 4, 2015. Copies of the Draft EA were also available for public review at the Mary Wilson Public Library in Seal Beach, California; Huntington Beach Central Library in Huntington Beach, California; Westminster Branch Library in Westminster, California; and online at <http://www.cnic.navy.mil/NWSSBSolarPV>.

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The same public notification will be made available for the Final EA and FONSI.

A 15-day public review and comment period was provided from June 4 through June 19, 2015. The Environmental Quality Control Board (EQCB) of the City of Seal Beach and the Community Development Department forwarded comments in a letter dated June 17, 2015. The EQCB have no objections relative to the EA, however, they wanted to make note of the following items for the record:

1. The EQCB requests that all construction vehicles access the project site through the Westminster Avenue gate to reduce impacts along Seal Beach Blvd.
2. The EQCB believes that a complete review and adequate determination cannot be thoroughly assessed for view-shed impacts without a specific project design. The City recommended planting vegetation to minimize visual impacts.

An email dated June 30, 2015 from the Associate Planner for the City of Huntington Beach stated that the City supports the proposed project and has a few comments for consideration:

1. Notify residents adjacent to Site A prior to the commencement of construction activities.
2. Coordinate with the City's Public Works Department for use of Bolsa Chica Street or other streets in the City of Huntington Beach.
3. The City recommends that the fabric for the perimeter fence be colored for consistency with the surrounding landscape.
4. The City requests that there be consideration of off-site glare in an effort to reduce the potential for any visual impacts towards the residents east and south of project Site A.

All comments received were considered in the preparation of the Final EA.

Alternatives Analyzed:

1. **Alternative 1:** Under Alternative 1, approximately 138 acres within Sites A (approximately 64 acres) and B (approximately 73 acres) would be developed to support the construction and operation of a 25 megawatt (MW) solar PV system.
2. **Alternative 2:** Under Alternative 2, the solar PV system would be constructed, operated, and maintained only on Site A totaling approximately 64 acres, with a renewable energy

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generation asset of up to 10 MW. While the EA states that Alternative 1 is the Navy's Proposed Action, a letter from the NAVWPNSTA Seal Beach, date August 15, 2015, further explained why Alternative 2 (Site A) has been identified as a parcel of land that is non-mission and underutilized. In addition, Inhabited Building Distance (IBD) or Public Traffic Route (PTR) Explosives Safety Quantity Distance (ESQD) arcs from surrounding explosives ordnance operations do not currently encumber Site A.

3. **Alternative 3:** Under Alternative 3, the solar PV system would be constructed, operated, and maintained only on Site B totaling approximately 73 acres, with a renewable energy generation asset of up to 15 MW.
4. **No Action Alternative:** Under the No Action Alternative, the Navy would not enter into an agreement with a private partner to construct, operate, and maintain a solar PV system at NAVWPNSTA Seal Beach.

For each action alternative, the solar PV system would connect to the public electrical grid, and the private partner would develop a conceptual design that allows for the most efficient placement and configuration of solar PV panels on each site.

Alternative to be Implemented: Alternative 2 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 species have been documented in the larger area that encompasses NAVWPNSTA Seal Beach, none of these species has been documented or is expected to occur within the biological study area (BSA) for Site A. Three special status wildlife species have the potential to occur within the BSA; however, these species have not been documented within Site A.

Vegetation communities and land cover types for Site A consist of active cultivated land, roads, and otherwise developed or disturbed land. As such, the agricultural land and unplanted fields within Site A represent suitable foraging habitat for raptors and small passerine birds, and potentially shorebirds that are resident species or migrating into and/or through the area via the Pacific Flyway; however, more suitable habitat exists at the Seal Beach National Wildlife Refuge to the southwest of the station and other areas nearby.

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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.

Environmental Impacts and Mitigation Measures:

Avoidance/minimization measures described in Section 2.6 of the EA and discussed below would be implemented. The following is a summary of the environmental impacts of the selected alternative:

Land Use and Coastal Resources. There would be a long-term change in land use from agricultural use to renewable energy development under Alternative 2. This change would shift one secondary use for another and would convert approximately 2.7 percent of the total agricultural land on the station. No land currently designated as Prime or Unique Farmland or Farmland of Statewide Importance would be converted and the land would remain under Navy use. Implementation of the Alternative 2 at Site A would be compatible with surrounding land uses (Industrial, Ordnance). Therefore, implementation of the Alternative 2 would not result in significant impacts to land use.

The Alternative 2 would be located in an area restricted from the public and would not change any existing public or recreation access to coastal areas. Due to the distance of the sites from the shoreline, Alternative 2 would not obstruct any views of the coast. Implementation of Alternative 2 at NAVWPNSTA Seal Beach would not result in significant adverse impacts to coastal resources.

Cultural Resources. Two archeological resources, and isolated artifact (metavolcanic flake) and a historic period archeological site are found at Site A. However, the archeological site has been recommended as ineligible for the National Register of Historic Places (NRHP). Although it is highly unlikely that any additional artifacts would be encountered within the project sites during construction activities, if identification occurs, a halt-work order for that area would be issued immediately and the Station Cultural Resources Manager or a designated qualified cultural resources specialist would examine the site to determine the existence of other resources and evaluate site conditions. Three historic structures are located within Site B. Because none of the

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historic properties within the undertaking's Area of Potential Effect are eligible for the NRHP, implementation of the Alternative 2 would not result in significant adverse impacts to cultural resources.

Biological Resources. Potential insignificant temporary direct and indirect impacts to less mobile wildlife species and nearby migratory bird habitat from construction and/or demolition could occur. Construction equipment within the project footprint or in off-site area near Site A and the introduction of new permanent structures could provide perching for raptors and other avian predators and increase predation on nearby or adjacent nesting birds. Trenching for installation of electrical conduit and transmission lines could result in minor impacts to individuals of less-mobile wildlife species at Site A. Areas disturbed during trenching activity would be restored to their original condition following construction, resulting in no long-term impacts. Construction of the PV solar facilities would result in the removal of approximately 64 acres of a combination of active agricultural, unplanted land, and ruderal vegetation along the edges of the solar site. Implementation of the Alternative 2 would result in less than significant impacts to vegetation communities and land types. No Federally-listed species are likely to occur and no critical habitat has been designated within the direct impact footprint or surrounding areas. Noise, dust, or other construction-related effects would not adversely affect Federally-listed species associated with the Seal Beach National Wildlife Refuge (SBNWR) because all project activities would be restricted to Site A. There could be some loss of potential foraging habitat for non-Federally listed rare birds and mammal species due to construction activities; however, because the project site was previously disturbed, this loss represents an insignificant impact. There could be some indirect but insignificant potential "lake effect" impacts associated with bird strikes on the solar PV arrays. Two Federally-listed wildlife species have the potential to fly over the Biological Study Area. These species breed within the SBNWR, which is located approximately 3,000 feet (914 meters) from Site A. 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. Therefore, implementation of the Alternative 2 would not result in significant impacts to biological resources.

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Noise. A temporary increase in noise levels during construction and decommissioning activities (approximately 65 dBA) would be experienced by receptors at the closest residential areas (approximately 400 feet from the construction area), and by pedestrians walking near the station boundary. This noise level would be lower than the USEPA 70 dBA 24-hour standard for prevention of hearing loss. During operations, noise related to electrical lines and equipment would be minimal or nonexistent. Therefore, implementation of Alternative 2 would not result in significant impacts from noise.

Topography, Geology, and Soils. Excavation and grading activities associated with implementation of Proposed Action/Alternative 2 would not be excessive due to the relatively flat topography of the construction site and implementation of erosion control measures. Soils may be cut and moved around the vicinity of the sites to level the grading, but no significant soils would be removed from the project sites during construction or decommissioning. Therefore, implementation of Alternative 2 would not result in significant impacts to topography, geology, or soils.

Water Resources. Surface disturbance (e.g., grading, 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 2 would not require the use of NAVWPNSTA Seal Beach-supplied groundwater. Therefore, implementation of Alternative 2 would not result in significant impacts to water resources.

Air Quality/Climate Change. There would be localized, short-term effects on air quality at NAVWPNSTA Seal Beach. Emissions would occur during construction as the result of combustion of fuel in off-road construction equipment and on-road vehicles. Impact avoidance and minimization measures for dust abatement would be followed to minimize emissions. During operation, emissions of nitrogen oxide (NOX), sulfur dioxide (SO₂), and carbon dioxide equivalent (CO₂e) would be reduced by lower consumption of grid-supplied electricity, and would more than

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offset the short-term construction emissions within the first year of operation. Therefore, implementation of Alternative 2 would not result in significant impacts to air quality.

Traffic and Circulation. Under Alternative 2, construction vehicles using local roadways to travel through the Westminster Gate to NAVWPNSTA Seal Beach would contribute to overall traffic in the area. The construction contractor would coordinate entrance requirements as part of pre-construction planning to avoid delays or routine ingress of traffic. The addition of 40-60 vehicles per day contributing to local/regional traffic would have a negligible impact on the local traffic and circulation conditions and would not affect current level of service for any of the principal roadways that serve NAVWPNSTA Seal Beach and the surrounding cities, including SR-1 and I-405. Additionally, prior to construction, the construction contractor would incorporate approved route considerations into the pre-construction planning. Therefore, implementation of Alternative 2 would not result in significant impacts to traffic and circulation.

Utilities. Since there are no existing storm water facilities within the Alternative 2 area, there is no potential for impact on site. Electrical wiring would either be trenched into the ground, installed overhead, or a combination of both to connect to the public 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. Therefore, implementation of Alternative 2 would not result in significant impacts to utilities.

Public Health and Safety. Because Alternative 2 would be sited on land currently or historically used for agriculture, and no fire-related structures are located in the vicinity, there would be no impacts to public health and safety from non-ordnance fire hazards. No new sources of hazardous electromagnetic radiation would be introduced through construction, maintenance, or decommissioning phases of the project. Therefore, implementation of Alternative 2 would not result in significant impacts to public health and safety.

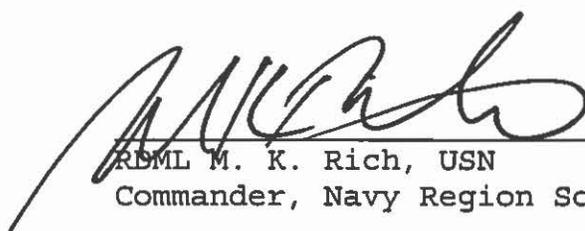
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Visual Quality. The visual landscape surrounding Site A would be temporarily affected by construction of the proposed PV system and ancillary features. The project would be contained within the station boundaries behind existing perimeter fencing, which would obstruct views of the proposed PV system. 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. Therefore, implementation of Alternative 2 would not result in significant impacts to visual quality.

Finding: Therefore, based upon inter-governmental coordination performed with the Cities of Seal Beach, Westminster and Huntington Beach, 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 2, 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. Wanda Green, NEPA Planner/Project Manager, Naval Facilities Engineering Command Southwest, 1220 Pacific Highway, Building 131, San Diego, CA 92132, telephone (619) 532-1035, or email wanda.s.green@navy.mil.

3 Nov 2015
Date


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