

DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE

DEPARTMENT OF THE NAVY

FINDING OF NO SIGNIFICANT IMPACT FOR THE SUPPLEMENTAL ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT OF MOLE PIER FLOATING DRY DOCK PROJECT AT NAVAL BASE SAN DIEGO SAN DIEGO, CALIFORNIA

Pursuant to the Council on Environmental Quality (CEQ) Regulations for Implementing the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) (40 Code of Federal Regulations [CFR] Parts 1500-1508), Navy Regulations for Implementing NEPA (32 CFR Part 775), and Chief of Naval Operations Environmental Readiness Program Manual 5090.1, the Department of the Navy (Navy) gives notice that a Supplemental Environmental Assessment (SEA) has been prepared and an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) is not required for the Mole Pier Floating Dry Dock (FDD) Project at Naval Base San Diego (NBSD), San Diego, California.

**Proposed Action:** The purpose of the Proposed Action is to provide floating dry dock space necessary to support the U.S. Pacific Fleet's forecasted surface ship maintenance requirement as identified by the Commander of the U.S. Pacific Fleet. The berthing and operation of a new floating dry dock (FDD) would help ensure NBSD's capability to conduct surface ship maintenance operations consistent with the Navy's mission.

The Proposed Action, the Mole Pier FDD, remains essentially as analyzed in the "Final Environmental Assessment for the Floating Dry Dock Project at Naval Base San Diego" of 2020. The SEA analyzes the newly available design information relating to the NBSD Mole Pier - South Berth FDD and potential environmental impacts associated with the project, and addresses the resulting regulatory consultations. The SEA does not include project aspects or resource analyses which are unchanged since finalization of the 2020 EA. The Proposed Action would include berthing and operation of a floating dry dock, including all required dredging and sediment disposal, and demolition and construction activities. The following list summarizes the new project design information analyzed in the SEA:

1. The Proposed design dredge depths and dredge footprint have been revised. The proposed FDD sump design depth increased from a depth of -53 to -56 feet Mean Lower Low Water (MLLW). The proposed FDD approach channel dredge depth is unchanged at a dredge depth of -37 feet MLLW. The proposed turning basin dredge depth has decreased from -36 to -35 feet MLLW. The resulting overall project dredge volume changed from approximately 86,121 cubic yards (cy) over 4.79 acres to a new dredge volume of approximately 110,960 cy over 9.98 acres. The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency and U.S. Army Corps of Engineers approved a project dredge material disposal determination allowing 93,248 cy of dredge material to be taken to the LA-5 Ocean Dredge Material

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Disposal Site (ODMDS). The balance of the project dredge material, 17,712 cy, would be taken to an approved upland disposal site.

2. The proposed waterfront operations of an FDD at the Mole Pier - South Berth, are comprised of ship repair activities such as: welding, blasting, solvent and adhesive application, surface coating, portable equipment use, and stationary diesel emergency generator use.
3. The proposed pier upgrade project elements have been revised and now include: mooring wharf demolition activities (demolition of decking, utilities, certain structural piles, and the existing ramp pier), construction of facility improvements (construction of a new ramp pier, new permanent structural piles, wharf-pier attachments, seismic upgrades, and a cast concrete deck), upland facility demolition activities (demolition of mechanical utilities, quay wall repairs, removal of unneeded wharf improvements), and construction of a new electrical switch station building and parking, and landscaping. The FDD mooring facility, a shore facility, will displace the existing NAVFAC Crane Lot currently located at Mole Road and Kidd Street.

**Public Participation:** A Notice of Availability (NOA) for the Supplemental Draft EA was published in the San Diego Union Tribune from 4 to 6 August 2023, and in the El Latino News from 4 to 10 August 2023, and a second publication from 11 to 17 August 2023. These notices initiated a public comment period, which ended on 3 September 2023. The Draft Supplemental EA was also made available to the public at three local public libraries, and on the Navy Region Southwest public website. No public comments were received on the Supplemental Draft EA. One request was received for a hard copy of the EA. Also, upon request the Navy met with the Air Pollution Control District (17 Nov 2023) and with the Portside Community Steering Committee (28 Nov 2023) to discuss the proposed action.

**Alternatives Analyzed:** Only the Proposed Action, the construction and operation of the floating dry dock at NBSD Mole Pier - South Berth, was evaluated in the Supplemental EA. However, the Supplemental EA also presumes the construction impacts of the commercial outlease floating dry dock which was fully analyzed in the 2020 NBSD Floating Dry Dock EA, for which a Finding of No Significant Impact was signed, and which is now under construction.

The 2020 Final EA also fully analyzed the potential impacts of the No Action Alternative and found that it would have no significant impact to environmental resources. Under the No Action Alternative, no new FDD would be berthed at the Mole Pier - South Berth. There are no updates or changes to the No Action Alternative that would change its analysis or findings. Therefore, the 2020 Final EA's analysis of the

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No Action Alternative is complete and accurate, and the No Action Alternative is not re-analyzed in the Supplemental EA.

**Alternative to Be Implemented:** The Navy has selected the Proposed Action for implementation as it best meets the purpose and need for the project and it would have no significant impacts.

**Environmental Effects:** The SEA addressed the following resource areas in detail: air quality/climate change, water resources, biological resources, noise, transportation, and hazardous materials and wastes.

Air Quality/Climate Change: Potential short-term construction-related emissions would result from dredging, transportation, and sediment disposal activities as well as construction activities. The use of tugboats, heavy trucks, and heavy equipment would generate exhaust emissions. However, the total project duration, including dredging and construction activities, would be fairly short and therefore project air emissions would be minor and would not exceed any federal, state, or local *de minimis* thresholds. Annual emissions for operations would result from ship maintenance activities including welding, mobile source emissions, blasting, solvent usage, coating application, adhesives application, portable equipment, and stationary diesel emergency generators. These operational emissions are also well below applicable screening thresholds. A Record of Non-Applicability was completed for the project. Therefore, implementation of the Proposed Action would not result in significant impacts to air quality.

Water Resources: The Proposed action would consist of dredging, in water construction, and operations of an FDD at the NBSD Mole Pier - South Berth. Physical disturbance during dredging and sediment disposal would last for approximately 90 days, demolition would occur over 13 weeks, and construction activities are expected to last for approximately 60 weeks. Construction would comply with a site-specific construction Storm Water Pollution Prevention Plan. The Plan would specify Best Management Practices to prevent construction pollutants from contacting storm water, eliminate or reduce non-storm water discharges, and perform inspections.

Following berthing of the FDD, operations would be performed slowly and would not substantially disturb the underlying sediments. Ballast water pumps would be built into the FDD and operated to comply with the requirements of the Uniform National Discharge Standard for Vessels of the Armed Forces. These standards would dictate the Marine Pollution Control Device performance standards necessary to control the vessel's discharges.

Operations of the FDD would follow the Commander Navy Region Southwest Storm Water Best Management Practices Manual and Mole Pier FDD specific Best Management Practices.

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The Navy prepared a Coastal Consistency Negative Determination, and the California Coastal Commission concurred, that there would be no adverse effects on coastal resources or uses. The Navy will obtain a Clean Water Act Section 401 Water Quality Certification from the San Diego Regional Water Quality Control Board, and a Clean Water Act Section 404/Rivers and Harbors Act Section 10 permit from the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers.

The Proposed Action would not have significant impacts to water resources.

Biological Resources:

The Proposed Action would result in the short-term loss of marine benthic organisms and cause insignificant amounts of turbidity in the bay waters at the project site. Following berthing, operation of the floating dry dock could result in minimal sediment resuspension. Dry docking evolutions (i.e., lowering and raising the floating dry dock) are slow (approximately 6 hours) and would not substantially disturb the underlying sediments.

Dredging, construction and demolition activities would result in the temporary displacement of marine birds and minimal alterations to foraging conditions and/or prey availability. These impacts would not be significant because of their limited scale and duration. Under the Migratory Bird Treaty Act a pre-construction survey would be performed for migratory birds in the project area.

Underwater noise generated during dredging, demolition, and pile extraction/driving would disturb fish and marine mammals within the vicinity. As a result, fish and marine mammals may temporarily leave or avoid the project area. The Navy obtained an Incidental Harassment Authorization (IHA) from the National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) for the Proposed Action which commits the Navy to implementation of a shutdown zone adherence in order to avoid Level A (injury) take of marine mammals during project pile driving. However, implementation of the Proposed Action would result in a calculated Level B (behavioral) takes of three species: California sea lions (118 takes), Coastal Bottlenose dolphin (59 takes), and Harbor Seal (59 takes). NMFS IHA issuance reflects concurrence with this amount of marine mammal take.

Potential impacts on green turtles from implementation of the Proposed Action would primarily be from impact pile driving. However, with the imposition of monitoring and shutdown zones for green turtles, the potential for acoustic injury would be avoided.

The FDD would be transported using a heavy-lift ship, from Mobile, Alabama to San Diego Bay via the Gulf of Mexico, around Cape Horn at the southern tip of South America, and then up the eastern Pacific coast of South and Central America. The trip would take approximately

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90 days with average speeds of up to 10 knots, and maximum speeds of up to 14 knots. During the FDD transit, different species would be encountered in the different water bodies; however, the potential for, and types of, impact would remain the same regardless of the water body. Considering that the FDD transit will occur only once, the vessel will not remain in one place for any extended length of time, and noise generated by the heavy-lift vessel will be consistent with other ships in the shipping lanes, the Navy finds that any effects from elevated noise may affect, but is not likely to adversely affect ESA-listed turtles or marine mammals.

Vessel strikes can result in lethal and sub-lethal injuries to marine species particularly when the heavy lift vessel is traveling at speeds of 14 knots or faster. While there is a potential for encountering Endangered Species Act-listed marine mammals and green sea turtles during transit, the anticipated speeds of the heavy-lift vessel would generally be less than what would be expected to cause severe or lethal injury. With the vessel generally traveling at approximately 10 knots, below the lethal strike average speed, and since the FDD transport is comprised of a single unrepeated trip, strikes are unlikely to occur. Therefore the Navy finds that the FDD transit may affect, but is not likely to adversely affect ESA-listed turtles or marine mammals.

The FDD is built to accommodate multiple classes of ships with multiple hull designs. The FDD would be open on both ends, allowing water to leave the FDD via the open ends, and thereby "flushing out" any wildlife that could otherwise remain in the FDD as it is raised and lowered. Any green sea turtles in the vicinity of the FDD would likely be transitory and would not be expected to spend significant periods of time in the Project Area. BMPs will be utilized to reduce the likelihood of a green sea turtle or other protected marine species entering the FDD while it is lowered or before it is raised. The Navy has determined, and the National Marine Fisheries Service has concurred, that the FDD lowering and raising may affect, but is not likely to adversely affect green sea turtles and federally listed species and/or federally designated critical habitats.

Despite the Proposed Action's dredging footprint, volumes, and depth increases since 2020, new analysis indicates that only slight changes to ecological functions and water column productivity at the project site would occur.

The Proposed Action over-water structures would increase bay shading from 0.014 to 0.027 acres, depending on whether certain structures are retained or removed. This would cause a reduction in the ecological function and value of un-vegetated soft bay bottom and therefore cause an increase from 0.084 acres to 0.137 acres of required eelgrass equivalency mitigation (habitat credits through the Navy Eelgrass

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Mitigation Bank which Navy Region Southwest has agreed will be used to offset project impacts).

The Navy submitted to NMFS an Essential Fish Habitat Assessment Re-initiation. On 6 September 2023, NMFS concurred stating that there is no objection to the Navy's assessment and NMFS had no additional EFH conservation recommendations.

The Proposed Action would comply with all applicable BMPs and implement additional construction-related avoidance and minimization measures intended to reduce the potential for construction-related impacts to biological resources. These measures include the establishment of multiple monitoring and shutdown zones for underwater construction or demolition activities which are intended to reduce the potential for construction-related impacts to biological resources.

Potential impacts on green turtles from implementation of the Proposed Action would primarily be from impact pile driving. However, with the imposition of monitoring and shutdown zones for green turtles, the potential for acoustic injury would be avoided.

The Proposed Action would not have significant biological impacts.

Noise: Under the Proposed Action, airborne noise would be produced from heavy machinery and vehicles required for demolition, construction, dredging, and facility operations. Demolition and construction activities required under the Proposed Action would occur during daylight hours over a period of approximately 60 weeks and would involve the use of standard construction equipment ranging from trucks and cranes to pile drivers, all of which would create noise. The tugboat used to move and position the crane barge would also generate some noise, but the noise would be consistent with the ambient noise environment characteristic of NBSD. The sound level of the impact pile driver during construction would dominate and would almost exclusively determine the total sound level emanating from the south berth of the Mole Pier. Dredging and sediment disposal as well as required demolition and construction activities, including overnight work, would not increase ambient outdoor noise levels at the nearest sensitive receptor to greater than 65 decibels (dB) DNL and would not conflict with the City of San Diego construction noise ordinance.

The Proposed Action would not have significant noise impacts.

Transportation:

Under the Proposed Action, landside traffic impacts would include construction worker commutes and construction equipment/materials deliveries that do not arrive via barge on the water-side of the south berth of the Mole Pier. However, these trips would be temporary and

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would add a negligible amount of traffic to the existing transportation network.

The primary source of traffic-related impacts related to ocean dredge material disposal would be vessel transportation within San Diego Bay and the Pacific Ocean. The ocean disposal project element would involve loading 93,248 cy of dredged sediment into barges and transporting them to LA-5 ODMS. Approximately one barge trip per day would be necessary over the approximate 90 day dredging operation duration. Project barge tug/barge traffic levels in San Diego Bay and the Pacific Ocean would be temporary and negligible.

The primary source for traffic-related impacts related to upland dredge material disposal would be truck trips between NBSD and an approved upland disposal landfill. The upland disposal project element would involve loading 17,712 cy of dredged sediment from the project's Confined Drying Facility (CDF) to an approved landfill such as the Otay Landfill. This would require approximately 1,704 truck trips over the duration of the Proposed Action. These truck trips would account for less than 1 percent of the existing average daily trips (ADT) along the haul route, including Interstate 5 (I-5) and I-805.

The NBSD Pier 12 Replacement project generated more than seven times the amount of material that would be generated by the Proposed Action and Pier 12 was determined to not have a significant traffic impact. The Proposed Action is a much smaller action which would likewise not have a significant traffic impact.

Utility upgrades required for the project would intermittently require short term and phased road closures primarily on portions of Cummings Road and on certain parallel roads. Normal traffic counts on these road segments are relatively low. Utility upgrades work would not extend further across the base or beyond NBSD. The construction contractor would be required to prepare a Traffic Control Plan which would need to be reviewed and approved by NBSD.

Proposed Action transportation activities would comply with applicable Best Management Practices, and additional construction-related avoidance and minimization measures intended to reduce the potential for construction-related impacts. Specifically, haul truck trips associated with upland disposal would be scheduled such that they avoid the weekday and weekend peak hour traffic periods along local and regional roads and highways.

The Proposed Action would not have significant transportation or traffic related impacts.

Hazardous Materials and Wastes:

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Project sediments testing for the Proposed Action resulted in 93,248 cy of project dredge material being found suitable for unconfined aquatic disposal at the LA-5 ODMDS. The remaining 17,712 cy of dredge material would be unsuitable for unconfined aquatic disposal and instead would be taken to an approved upland disposal site, such as the Otay Landfill. On 18 July, 2023 USACE and USEPA issued a Suitability for Unconfined Aquatic Disposal (SUAD) determination concurring with these findings. All dredged sediment disposal operations performed for the Proposed Action would comply with Clean Water Act (CWA) Section 404 and would be in accordance with a dredging permit issued by USACE, and a CWA Section 401 Water Quality Certification from the San Diego Regional Water Quality Control Board (RWQCB).

Contractors would be subject to all Federal, state, and San Diego County requirements for hazardous materials and hazardous waste management and would be required to follow the Hazardous Waste Management Plan (HWMP). In addition, a site-specific construction Storm Water Pollution Prevention Plan would be developed and implemented by the demolition and construction contractor that would incorporate Best Management Plans designed to minimize the potential for hazardous material releases during demolition and construction activities. Any hazardous materials and wastes generated during construction and operational activities would also be subject to installation-wide Emergency Planning and Community Right-to-Know Act (EPCRA) 312 and 313 reporting requirements.

Dredge materials requiring upland disposal and considered to be potentially hazardous will be screened for munitions and explosives of concern and radiological commodities, as necessary.

For the operation of the FDD any hazardous materials and waste would be subject to the conditions in the Hazardous Waste Management Plan and all applicable Federal, state, and County of San Diego requirements.

The Proposed Action would not have significant hazardous materials and wastes related impacts.

**Cumulative Impacts:** Potential cumulative effects of the Proposed Action, in combination with other past, present, and foreseeable actions were analyzed and found to be not significant. Therefore, implementation of the Proposed Action would result in no significant cumulative impacts.

**Finding:** Based on the analysis presented in the Final SEA, and in coordination with National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) NMFS Southwest Region and California Coastal Commission, implementation of the Proposed Action, the Selected Alternative, would



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not significantly affect the quality of the human environment. Therefore, preparation of an EIS is not necessary.

The Final Supplemental EA is on file and interested parties may obtain a copy from: Department of the Navy, Naval Facilities Engineering Systems Command, Southwest, 750 Pacific Highway, 12<sup>th</sup> Floor, San Diego, CA 92132, or email [Lisa.a.seneca.civ@us.navy.mil](mailto:Lisa.a.seneca.civ@us.navy.mil).

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