

DRAFT ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT FOR EELGRASS HABITAT EXPANSION SAN DIEGO BAY, SAN DIEGO, CALIFORNIA

Project Fact Sheet

Introduction

The U.S. Navy has prepared a Draft Environmental Assessment pursuant to the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) to analyze the potential impacts of expanding eelgrass habitat in San Diego Bay.

The Navy is requesting public review of the Draft Environmental Assessment to ensure that community concerns are considered and appropriately addressed. This fact sheet describes the proposed project and how the public can be involved in the environmental review process.

Since its celebrated establishment in 2008, the Navy has used credits in the Navy Region Southwest San Diego Bay Eelgrass Mitigation Bank (Bank) to offset unavoidable impacts from Navy infrastructure projects and testing and training activities in San Diego Bay.

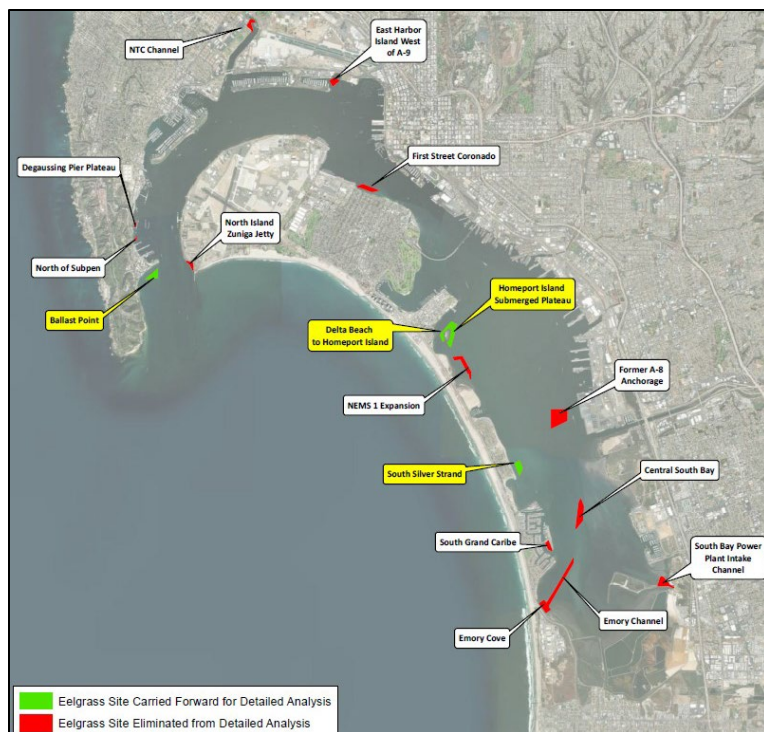
The Navy anticipates that future projects and activities in support of future Navy mission requirements could have unavoidable negative impacts on eelgrass habitat in the bay. The proposed expansion of eelgrass by the Navy would allow these mission-critical projects to be implemented using credits in the Bank to offset potential unavoidable negative impacts to eelgrass habitat.

The Navy proposes to add to the existing Bank by expanding eelgrass habitat at one or more of the potential alternative sites identified below. The purpose of the Proposed Action is to support Navy mission requirements while ensuring the continued commitment to conservation of the San Diego Bay ecosystem. The Proposed Action is needed to facilitate the implementation of future Navy projects and activities in San Diego Bay that may have the potential to impact eelgrass.

About the Project

The Navy has identified four potential alternative sites for expanding eelgrass in San Diego Bay (shown on the right):

- Ballast Point
- Delta Beach to Homeport Island
- Homeport Island Submerged Plateau
- South Silver Strand



Location of the potential eelgrass expansion site alternatives carried forward (in yellow/green) and eliminated (in white/red). Note that the two Homeport Island sites are distinct sites.

Draft Environmental Assessment

In accordance with the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) of 1969, the U.S. Navy has prepared a Draft Environmental Assessment. The Navy evaluated the alternative sites and the No Action Alternative in the Draft Environmental Assessment. The Navy invites public comments on the Draft EA to ensure that community concerns are considered and appropriately addressed.

The Draft EA considered potential impacts to the following resource areas: Marine Water Resources and Bathymetry, Marine Biological Resources, Land Use, Air Quality, Geological Resources, Cultural Resources, Visual Resources, Airspace, Noise, Infrastructure, Transportation, Public Health and Safety, Hazardous Materials and Wastes, Socioeconomics, and Environmental Justice.

The NEPA Process & Public Involvement

The Navy is committed to a transparent and thorough environmental review. The public's input helps to ensure all relevant issues are appropriately addressed.

The National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) requires federal agencies to consider the potential environmental impacts of their actions before making a decision. The public has an opportunity to provide input at key phases of the NEPA process:

During Draft Environmental Assessment review period

The public evaluates and comments on the analysis of the Proposed Action and Alternatives as contained in the Draft Environmental Assessment.

The Draft EA did not identify any significant impacts that would result from implementing the Proposed Action. While there would be short-term adverse impacts to marine water quality and some marine species, there would be long-term beneficial impacts to most resource areas. The Proposed Action would also be compatible with existing military and public land use.

The Navy may select one or more alternatives for implementation by preparing and publishing a Final Environmental Assessment and Finding of No Significant Impact or publishing a notice of intent to prepare an Environmental Impact Statement.

National Environmental Policy Act Process and Estimated Timeline

1. Public Comment Period to Identify Scope for Environmental Assessment (EA) (Completed).
January 6, 2023 – January 27, 2023.
2. Preparation of Draft Environmental Assessment. Winter 2023 – Summer 2023.
3. Public Review and Comment on Draft Environmental Assessment.(Current Phase) July 5, 2023 – August 14, 2023. Opportunity for Public Involvement.
4. Preparation of Final Environmental Assessment. Fall – Winter 2023 – 2024.
 - a. If warranted, a Finding of No Significant Impact (FONSI) would be prepared.
 - b. After completion of the EA and FONSI a Notice of Availability of Final EA/FONSI would be issued.
 - c. If the EA analysis results in significant impacts a Notice of Intent to Prepare an Environmental Impact Statement would be issued.

Note that this schedule is tentative and may be updated.

How to Submit Comments

Submit Written Comments to:

Naval Facilities Engineering Systems Command Southwest

Attention: Code EV26.SVR

750 Pacific Highway (12th Floor, Environmental)

San Diego, CA 92132-5190

e-mail: navfac_sw_eelgrass_ea_public_outreach@us.navy.mil

Attend the Virtual Public Meeting:

Wednesday, July 19, 2023, at 5:30 P.M. PDT via zoom: <https://zoom.us/j/96780700762>

Or via phone: (669) 900-6833, then enter the Meeting ID: 967 8070 0762; you do not need to enter a participant ID. Just enter “#” to connect when prompted

For More Information:

Contact the Navy Region Southwest Public Affairs Office

619-705-5244

brian.k.orourke.civ@us.navy.mil

Comments are requested by the close of the Draft Environmental Assessment public review period on August 14, 2023. All timely and substantive comments will be considered in preparation of the Final Environmental Assessment

For additional project information, visit: <https://www.cnic.navy.mil/navysouthwestprojects>