

FINDING OF NO SIGNIFICANT IMPACT FOR UTILITY BRIDGE REPLACEMENT AT NAVAL SUPPORT ACTIVITY ANNAPOLIS, ANNAPOLIS, MARYLAND

DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE

Department of the Navy

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Introduction: Pursuant to the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) of 1969 (42 U.S.C. 4321 et seq.), the Council on Environmental Quality (CEQ) regulations implementing NEPA (40 C.F.R. Parts 1500–1508), and Department of the Navy (DON) procedures for implementing NEPA (32 CFR Part 775), the DON gives notice that an Environmental Assessment (EA) has been prepared and that an Environmental Impact Statement is not required for replacement of a utility bridge across College Creek at Naval Support Activity (NSA) Annapolis in Annapolis, Maryland.

Description of the Proposed Action: The DON proposes to replace the utility bridge across College Creek at NSA Annapolis. The utility bridge carries utility lines over College Creek between the Upper Yard and the Lower Yard of the U.S. Naval Academy (USNA). If the bridge fails, utility services would be interrupted. The utility bridge is currently in a deteriorated state. The Proposed Action includes construction of a new utility bridge, connection of new utility lines, and demolition and removal of the existing bridge. This project would incorporate a system for personnel to safely access the new structure to conduct inspections, maintenance, and repairs. In addition, an underground utility option was analyzed per Alternative. Under this option, all utilities would be installed underground via directional boring in the banks of College Creek, except for one utility line. Construction of the proposed utility bridge is estimated to occur in fiscal year 2026.

Purpose and Need: The purpose of the Proposed Action is to ensure continued utility service to portions of the USNA. The Proposed Action is needed because the current utility bridge is in a severely deteriorated state and requires extensive repair. The utility bridge carries utility lines over College Creek between the Upper Yard and the Lower Yard of the USNA.

An inspection of the utility bridge in 2019 determined the bridge is in poor condition overall, and numerous deficiencies require correction within 12 months. The 2019 inspection report concluded that the superstructure is in fair condition while the substructure is in poor condition. Additionally, the inspection report determined that the lack of catwalks and ladders to provide access for future inspection, maintenance, or repair posed a safety concern. If the bridge fails due to impaired superstructure components, utility services would be interrupted. Sudden failure of the bridge could sever the utility lines that cross College Creek, resulting in a rupture that is capable of damaging nearby infrastructure or natural systems.

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Alternatives: Alternatives were developed for analysis based upon the following screening factors:

- The bridge abutments must be on DON property to provide security for military utility services.
- The utility lines need to be near existing infrastructure and utility connections; therefore, the utility bridge should be no further than approximately 350 feet to the northeast of the existing alignment.

The DON considered a No Action Alternative and three action alternatives that meet the purpose of and need for the Proposed Action.

Under the **No Action Alternative**, the Proposed Action would not be implemented. Routine maintenance to the bridge would continue, but no major repairs would occur. If the bridge fails, utility services would be interrupted, which could interfere with the training of midshipmen. The worst-case scenario under the No Action Alternative would be a sudden failure of the bridge, possibly severing the utility lines that cross College Creek. Instantaneous ruptures of pressurized lines could be capable of damaging nearby infrastructure or natural systems. Infrastructure systems that cross on the utility bridge have emergency shut off protocols in place to minimize the likelihood for catastrophic damage under this worst-case scenario.

Under **Alternative 1 (Preferred Alternative)**, the proposed utility bridge would be constructed within 50 feet of the existing utility bridge alignment, which is adjacent to the King George Street Bridge. Given that the King George Street Bridge and the installation boundary are directly south of the current utility bridge, the proposed bridge must be located to the northeast of the current utility bridge location. Therefore, under Alternative 1, the bridge could be constructed in any location between the current utility bridge alignment and 50 feet to the northeast. Upon completion of the new utility bridge, the existing bridge would be demolished, and the pile caps would be removed and hauled off-site. This is the DON's preferred alternative.

Under **Alternative 2**, the proposed utility bridge would be constructed within 115 feet of the Decatur Avenue Bridge. The utility bridge needs to be situated southwest of the Decatur Avenue Bridge to tie back into utility infrastructure without major realignment. Upon completion of the new utility bridge, the existing bridge would be demolished, and the pile caps would be removed and hauled off-site.

Under **Alternative 3**, the proposed utility bridge would be constructed between the locations of Alternatives 1 and 2 (i.e., the remaining approximate 250-foot-width between Alternatives 1 and 2, while also avoiding Hubbard Hall (Building 260) and its associated docks). Upon completion of the new utility bridge, the existing bridge would be demolished, and the pile caps would be removed and hauled off-site.

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Environmental Effects of the Preferred Alternative: The EA examined in detail the potential effects of the No Action Alternative, and the action alternatives (i.e., Alternative 1, Alternative 2, and Alternative 3) on the following resource categories: air quality, water resources, geological resources, cultural resources, biological resources, noise, infrastructure, public health and safety, and hazardous materials and wastes. The following contains a summary of the environmental consequences of the Proposed Action; differences among alternatives are noted for specific resources, if applicable.

Under the No Action Alternative, a worst-case scenario of bridge failure would result in short-term, minor-to-major, adverse effects from dust, debris, vibrations, materials discharges, and property damage of varying intensities across all resource areas. A partial or total bridge failure would result in major utility service interruptions while lines are being repaired and service restored. Infrastructure deterioration and associated impacts on public health and safety drive the need for the Proposed Action.

Air Quality: There would be no significant impacts on air quality under the action alternatives. Short-term, minor air emissions would occur during construction-related activities. The underground utility option would have additional, short-term, minor air emissions from boring equipment. Estimated construction emissions would be well below *de minimis* and major source thresholds.

Water Resources: There would be no significant impacts on water resources under the action alternatives. Short-term, minor increases in sedimentation and erosion would occur during in-water construction and demolition associated with the bridge piles and supports. Construction would directly affect surface water within College Creek and indirectly affect downstream surface water bodies. Use of best management practices such as turbidity or silt curtains would minimize underwater sediment transport and minimize the short-term impacts on water quality. The underground utility option would have additional, negligible impacts since utilities would be below the creek sediment bed, and the onshore area of disturbance would be small.

Specific construction methods have not been determined, but the action alternatives would require a joint license application from U.S. Army Corps of Engineers and Maryland Department of the Environment for the Alteration of Any Tidal Wetland and/or Tidal Waters in Maryland for any temporary or permanent impacts. The DON will comply with the provisions of this license. There would be no impacts on jurisdictional wetlands.

All action alternatives are within the 100-year floodplain associated with College Creek. Construction activities adjacent to the shoreline would have short-term, adverse impacts on the floodplain. After construction and demolition, disturbed areas would be restored to preconstruction conditions. No long-term increases in impervious surfaces would occur, so runoff characteristics within the floodplain would not change. Riprap and bulkhead shoreline

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structures along College Creek would be integrated or avoided during design or repaired, as necessary.

The DON submitted a Federal Consistency Determination to Maryland Department of the Environment concluding that the action alternatives are consistent to the maximum extent practicable with the enforceable policies of Maryland's Coastal Zone Management Program. The Critical Area Commission only noted that a one-to-one replacement for trees removed during construction is required. No further comments were made concerning the DON's determination. In accordance with the 60-day timeline specified in the Coastal Zone Management Act, concurrence is presumed.

Geological Resources: There would be no significant impacts on geological resources under the action alternatives. Short-term, minor increases in soil erosion and sedimentation would occur on-land. Use of best management practices such as silt fences or erosion-control matting would limit soil runoff into College Creek and areas downstream. Short-term, minor disturbance of creek sediments would occur during in-water construction. Use of best management practices such as turbidity or silt curtains would minimize underwater sediment transport; sediments would resettle to the creek bed following completion of in-water activities. The underground utility option would have additional, minor impacts, though the onshore area of disturbance would be small.

Cultural Resources: There would be no significant impacts on cultural resources. Under all alternatives, a Phase I survey would be completed prior to ground disturbance because of the possibility of unknown archaeological deposits in the southeast shoreline on the Lower Yard. No direct adverse effects on architectural resources would occur because the existing bridge is not eligible for the National Register of Historic Places (NRHP). The construction of a new bridge would introduce a new element within the viewshed to and from Halligan Hall, Hubbard Hall, and other NRHP-eligible resources in the Area of Potential Effect (APE) under all the action alternatives. The proposed bridge would be minimally visible from the St. Johns College Beneficial-Hodson Boathouse within the Colonial Annapolis Historic District, which is immediately adjacent to the King George Street Bridge.

- Under **Alternative 1** the DON's **preferred alternative**, the proposed bridge would be near the existing utility bridge; this location would be along the edge of the district line and along an existing roadway, minimizing obstructions of the view from Halligan Hall across College Creek to the Lower Yard. Furthermore, this location is near the current utility bridge, which was in place when the viewshed was determined contributing. From the St. Johns College Beneficial-Hodson Boathouse, visibility would be limited to the northern corner of that Historic District and partially obstructed by the King George Street Bridge. The DON has determined no adverse effects on viewsheds in the APE or on the Colonial Annapolis Historic District would occur.

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- Under **Alternative 2**, the proposed bridge may alter the visual connection between the Upper and Lower Yards, but its proximity to the Decatur Avenue Bridge minimizes its potential visual impact on surrounding viewsheds. This location would not be within the viewshed of the Colonial Annapolis Historic District. The DON has determined no adverse effects on viewsheds in the APE or on the Colonial Annapolis Historic District would occur.
- Under **Alternative 3**, the proposed bridge would be independent of other built resources and associated features that could minimize its visual impact. However, the new bridge would not obstruct the view from Halligan Hall across College Creek to the Lower Yard. From the St. Johns College Beneficial-Hodson Boathouse, visibility would be limited to the northern corner of that Historic District and partially obstructed by the King George Street Bridge. The DON has determined no adverse effects on viewsheds in the APE or on the Colonial Annapolis Historic District would occur.
- The underground utility option would introduce additional potential to encounter unknown archaeological resources. The DON would follow the specific procedures outlined in Standard Operating Procedure 4 of the Integrated Cultural Resources Management Plan in the event of an unanticipated discovery during underground utility boring.

The DON consulted with Maryland Historical Trust (MHT) pursuant to Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act on Alternative 1 as the preferred location for the proposed utility bridge. The DON considered a precast concrete bridge to be the most appropriate design at this location. MHT concurred that the Alternative 1 location with a precast concrete bridge would have no adverse effect on historic properties (February 18, 2022).

The DON will continue Section 106 consultation through the design and construction phases to mitigate any potential adverse effects associated with the presence of unknown archaeological resources. Archaeological surveys are planned along the shoreline to identify historic properties within the APE. Once the design is completed, an underwater archaeological APE will be prepared and consultation with the SHPO to determine if an underwater archaeological survey is needed. If any terrestrial or submerged historic property would be adversely affected, the DON will pursue a Memorandum of Agreement regarding adverse effects.

Biological Resources: There would be no significant impacts on biological resources. Short-term, minor effects from equipment noise, turbidity, and habitat alteration would occur, particularly on marine species present in College Creek. The underground utility option would introduce additional minor impacts from vibrations during directional drilling. Short-term impacts on essential fish habitat for bluefish, summer flounder, and windowpane flounder could occur from bridge demolition and pile driving for the new bridge as well as disturbances in the water column causing suspended sediments. Impacts would be temporary;

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following removal of the existing bridge, there would be a net gain of permanent benthic habitat. Based on surveys in June 2022, no submerged aquatic vegetation occurs in the project area. Consultation with National Marine Fisheries Service Habitat Conservation Division identified the following conservation measures that the DON will implement to minimize adverse effects on essential fish habitat pursuant to the Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act:

- During construction activities, cushion blocks, soft starts, and maximizing the use of vibratory hammers in lieu of impact hammers will be implemented to minimize underwater noise generated during pile installation.
- When demolishing the support structures of the existing utility bridge, the piers will be removed to a depth of two feet below the mudline (i.e., benthic substrate) to allow for naturalization of the mudline following removal.

Construction and demolition on-land could have short-term, minor impacts from noise, minor habitat alteration, and general disturbance. During review of the Draft EA, Maryland Department of Natural Resources recommended that no work potentially affecting waterfowl take place between November 15 and March 1 in any year to protect overwintering waterfowl along College Creek, which is an historic waterfowl concentration area (letters dated August 4, 2020, and July 24, 2020). Several trees are present along the shorelines. If any trees must be removed under any alternative, they would be replaced at a one-to-one ratio to retain tree canopy.

No effect on threatened or endangered species would occur under any action alternative. The DON coordinated with U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and National Marine Fisheries Service pursuant to the Endangered Species Act as well as the Maryland Department of Natural Resources.

Noise: There would be no significant impacts on the noise environment. Short-term, minor, adverse impacts on airborne and underwater receptors would occur during construction. The underground utility option would have additional, short-term, minor impacts from boring equipment noise emissions and vibrations.

Infrastructure: There would be no significant impacts on infrastructure. Short-term, minor interruptions of utility service could occur during interconnections. Long-term beneficial effects would be expected by providing a safer, more reliable utility conveyance between the Lower Yard and Upper Yard of USNA. The underground utility option could increase long-term utility reliability and protection from lines being underground.

Public Health and Safety: There would be no significant impacts on public health and safety. Short-term, minor, adverse safety risks would increase during construction and demolition activities. Bridge safety would be dramatically improved in the long term by providing a new

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bridge with improved safety features and accessibility for future inspections, maintenance, and repairs. The underground utility option would result in additional, minor safety risks during boring activities.

Hazardous Materials and Wastes: There would be no significant impacts from hazardous materials and wastes. Short-term increased use of common hazardous materials and generation of hazardous wastes would occur during construction activities. Due to the age of construction and major modifications of the existing utility bridge, special hazards such as asbestos, lead, and polychlorinated biphenyls (PCBs) are likely present. Demolished bridge wastes would be characterized and disposed of appropriately. The underground utility option would result in additional, minor quantities of hazardous materials and hazardous wastes.

Cumulative Impacts: Potential cumulative impacts of any of the alternatives in combination with other past, present, or reasonably foreseeable future actions were analyzed and found to be not significant.

Public and Agency Involvement: The DON prepared and circulated a Draft EA to inform the public of the No Action and action alternatives and to allow the opportunity for public review and comment. The review period began with a Notice of Availability published in the *Capital Gazette* beginning on June 26, 2020. The Draft EA was previously accessible on: https://www.cnic.DON.mil/regions/ndw/installations/nsa_annapolis/om/environmental/-environmental-assessment.html.

The Final EA and FONSI will be available at <https://ndw.cnic.DON.mil/Installations/NSA-Annapolis/Operations-and-Management/Environmental-Support/Environmental-Assessment/>.

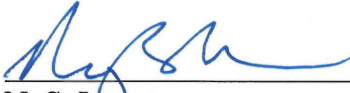
The DON coordinated or consulted with agencies including the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, National Marine Fisheries Service, U.S. Coast Guard, Maryland Department of the Environment, Maryland Department of Natural Resources, Maryland Department of Transportation, Maryland Historical Trust, Maryland Department of Planning (Maryland State Clearinghouse), and U.S. Army Corps of Engineers regarding the Proposed Action. In addition, a Federal Consistency Determination was submitted to Maryland Department of the Environment.

Finding: Based on the analysis presented in the EA, which is herewith incorporated by reference into this Finding of No Significant Impact, the DON finds that implementation of the Proposed Action (including Alternative 1 as the DON's Preferred Alternative), would not significantly affect the quality of the human or natural environment or generate significant controversy. Therefore, preparation of an Environmental Impact Statement is not required.

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Electronic copies of this EA and Finding of No Significant Impact may be obtained by written request to: Naval Facilities Engineering Systems Command, ATTENTION: Ms. Nik Tompkins-Flagg, 1314 Harwood Street SE, Building 212, Washington, DC, 20374, or by email at NAVFACWashNEPA1@DON.mil.

25 Jun 23
Date



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