Tab B – DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE

DEPARTMENT OF THE NAVY

DRAFT FINDING OF NO SIGNIFICANT IMPACT FOR UNDERWATER TEST TANK FACILITY AT NAVAL SUPPORT FACILITY INDIAN HEAD, MARYLAND

Introduction

Pursuant to provisions of the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA), Title 42 United States Code (U.S.C.) Sections 4321 to 4347, implemented by the Department of the Navy (Navy) procedures for implementing NEPA (32 CFR Part 775), the Navy gives notice that an Environmental Assessment (EA) has been prepared and that an Environmental Impact Statement is not required for the construction and operation of an aboveground underwater test tank (UTT) facility at Naval Support Facility (NSF) Indian Head in Indian Head, Maryland.

For purposes of this EA, the Department of the Navy (DON) has voluntarily elected to generally follow those Council of Environmental Quality regulations at 40 C.F.R. Parts 1500– 1508 that were in place at the outset of this EA, in addition to DON's procedures/regulations implementing NEPA at 32 C.F.R. Part 775, to meet the agency's obligations under NEPA, 42 U.S.C. §§ 4321 et seq.

Proposed Action

The Proposed Action includes the construction and operation of an aboveground UTT facility to conduct controlled underwater explosions of up to 500 grams (equal to 1.1 pounds) Net Explosive Weight (NEW) of Trinitrotoluene (TNT) equivalent explosives. The aboveground UTT would simulate necessary conditions to develop new underwater technologies and energetic systems for Navy Explosive Ordnance Disposal (EOD) divers, such as newly developed disruptors and sensors and methods of addressing emerging threats. The facility would include the aboveground UTT with metal canopy, wastewater holding tank, a build-up shed, and a control room, all resting on concrete pads, as well as associated utilities, storm water management structures, pavement and driveways/parking areas. Splash guards and a containment dike would be installed around the UTT facility and a tree clearing of 50 feet around the facilities would be required for a fire break. Personnel and traffic would not increase as a result of the Proposed Action.

Purpose of and Need for Proposed Action

The purpose of the Proposed Action is to provide the facilities to develop new EOD underwater technologies and energetic systems for Navy EOD divers. The need for the Proposed Action is to develop advanced tactics and technologies that assist in clearing underwater hazards.

Alternatives

Alternatives were developed for analysis based on a set of screening factors. The primary factors considered for the Proposed Action included:

- Availability of sufficient developable land within a controlled security area of the installation
- Compatibility with explosive safety siting requirements
- Compatibility with surrounding land use
- The site should be in a location proximate to other existing facilities and operations that strategically align or have similar programs

Additional screening factors considered include:

- The site should be in close proximity to existing utilities so that new infrastructure could be connected to support a main distribution panel, surge protectors, and other on-site utilities (such as water, wastewater, electrical, and communications)
- The facility should be located in an area that minimizes direct effects to cultural and natural resources (wetlands, forests, surface waters, floodplains, sensitive, rare, and threatened and endangered species)

Based on the screening factors, the Navy identified two action alternatives that meet the project purpose and need and also considered a No Action alternative.

Alternative 1 (Preferred Alternative). The Proposed Action would be constructed at the corner of Lewis Road and Archer Avenue. The site is forested and would be cleared and graded to accommodate development. This would include approximately 43,560 square feet (sq ft) (1 acre) of earth disturbance and 39,006 sq ft (0.9 acres) of tree removal. New utilities would tie into existing utilities adjacent to the site. This area has the potential for unexploded ordnance (UXO); therefore, UXO Support would be needed throughout the planning and construction processes.

Alternative 2. The Proposed Action would be constructed at Stump Neck Annex off Archer Avenue. At this location, the site would be graded to accommodate development and the existing forested area cleared. This would include approximately 43,560 sq ft (1 acre) of earth disturbance and 34,394 sq ft (0.79 acres) of tree removal. Currently, the site does not have usable utilities for mechanical infrastructure. New infrastructure would be installed and connected to existing utilities adjacent to Archer Avenue, next to the site entrance. This area has the potential for UXO; therefore, UXO Support would be needed throughout the planning and construction processes.

No Action Alternative. Under the No Action Alternative, the Proposed Action would not be implemented. The Navy would not be able to develop new EOD underwater technologies and energetic systems to address emerging threats and assist Navy personnel with clearing explosive hazards at this location.

Environmental Effects of the Preferred Alternative

The EA examined in detail the potential effects of Alternative 1, Alternative 2, and the No Action Alternative on the following resource categories: air quality, water resources, geological resources, cultural resources, noise, biological resources, land use, infrastructure, public health and safety, and hazardous materials and waste. The following is a summary of the environmental consequences of Alternative 1, the Navy's Preferred Alternative.

Air Quality: Fugitive dust and combustion emissions from construction activities and operations would not significantly impact air quality. During the construction and operations phases, emissions associated would be well below *de minimis* thresholds and would not interfere with state or local air quality implementation plans. No long-term increases in emissions would be expected from operation of the UTT facility. In addition, no increase in personnel is expected for the UTT facility, and there would be no on-site generators or heating using propane or natural gas.

Water Resources: No new groundwater demand or use is anticipated. Alternative 1 would result in approximately 13,068 sq ft (0.3 acres) of new impervious (non-porous) surface, which would decrease the area available for water infiltration back into the ground. Appropriate best management practices (BMPs) would be implemented. There would be no direct effects on wetlands. Potential minor effects on an ephemeral drainage area would occur. No effects on floodplains or shorelines would occur. Indirect, short-term effects on groundwater and surface water would occur during construction; implementation of BMPs would minimize effects.

Geological Resources: There would be direct soil disturbance of 1 acre. With the use of BMPs, there would be minor, short- and long-term effects on soils from construction, grading, and increased impervious surfaces. Direct, long-term effects would be expected from localized changes in soil and topography; however, with BMPs implemented, these effects would be minor.

Cultural Resources: There would be no effects on known archaeological sites from Alternative 1. Site 18CH631 is located adjacent to the proposed UTT complex; however, it is not within areas of ground disturbance and this site has been determined not eligible for the National Register of Historic Places (NRHP). There would be no direct effects from construction to architectural resources. If there was an accidental detonation, the Navy would follow emergency procedures for Section 106 and NEPA to consult and address any adverse effects. The Maryland Historical Trust concurred that construction of the UTT for NSF Indian Head would have no adverse effect to historic properties under Alternative 1.

Noise: Short-term effects would include intermittent noise from construction activities. In the long-term, nearby populations at installation facilities and along the Potomac River may experience increased noise from operations, but this would only include a small area around the UTT facility. This general area is already affected by noise from existing ranges; therefore, noise effects would be minor.

Biological Resources: Alternative 1 would remove approximately 0.90 acres of existing trees. Effects on pollinator species would be negligible. There would be a slight increase in stormwater runoff that would cause negligible, long-term effects on adjacent vegetative communities. Minor, short- and long-term effects would occur to wildlife from construction noise, displacement, tree removal, and permanent habitat loss. No effects would occur to great blue heron rookeries with the implementation of time-of-year restrictions. Short- and long-term effects on nesting bald eagles from construction and operational noise would be less than significant, given ongoing U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service consultation and minimization measures, including time-of-year restrictions. Adverse effects on potentially occurring federal- or state-listed species, including bats, are not likely to occur.

Land Use: The UTT facility is not expected to have an effect on adjacent land uses outside the installation's boundary. Much of the land to the south and east of Stump Neck Annex is state-owned forests and agriculture, which are generally compatible with installation activities. The UTT facility would comply with explosive siting requirements including explosive safety arcs. Effects on land use would be minor.

Infrastructure: Construction activities could result in minor, short-term localized effects on infrastructure due to planned disruptions. In the long-term, operation of the UTT facility may result in minor effects on potable water usage. However, there would not be a significant increase in infrastructure demand or capacity in the long-term.

Hazardous Materials and Wastes: Alternative 1 would result in short-term, minor effects from construction, and the ground disturbance associated with the Environmental Restoration Program sites. Long-term minor effects from the handling of hazardous materials and wastes would occur.

Environmental Justice: Due to recent revocation of Executive Orders, while environmental justice was analyzed in the EA, it will not be considered in the decision to sign the FONSI or to implement the Proposed Action.

Cumulative Effects: The Navy analyzed potential cumulative effects of all of the alternatives in combination with other past, present, or reasonably foreseeable future actions and determined there would be no significant cumulative impacts.

Public and Agency Involvement

The Navy prepared and circulated a Draft EA to inform the public of the environmental analysis and to allow the opportunity for public review and comment. The review period began with a Notice of

Availability for the Draft EA in the *Maryland Independent* on December 6 and 13, 2024. The Draft EA was accessible on an NSA South Potomac website; the Final EA will also be available on the same website. The Navy held a public meeting on Wednesday December 18, 2024, to describe the environmental effects of the Proposed Action and alternatives and to receive comments on the Draft EA.

The Navy coordinated or consulted with Federal and local agencies regarding the Proposed Action. Agency responses were received from the Maryland Department of Natural Resources, Environmental Protection Agency, the Maryland Clearinghouse, Maryland Historical Trust, and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. The Navy did not receive any public comments.

Many of the comments received during agency engagement were addressed through revisions of the EA to include incorporating additional, clarifying information as requested. Other comments and concerns expressed will be addressed through ongoing coordination and consultation associated with the federal and state permitting processes.

Finding of No Significant Impact

Based on the analysis presented in the EA, which is herewith incorporated by reference into this Finding of No Significant Impact, the Navy finds that implementation of the Proposed Action (including Alternative 1 as the Navy'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.

The EA prepared by the Navy addressing this action is on file. Interested parties may obtain a copy by sending an email to Naval Facilities Engineering Systems Command Washington at NAVFACWashNEPA1@navy.mil.

SIGNATURE PAGE

23 APR 2025

Date

D.J. Faehnle
Rear Admiral, U.S. Navy
Commandant
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Date

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