

FINDING OF NO SIGNIFICANT IMPACT

Unalaska (Dutch Harbor) Channels

Unalaska, Alaska

The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, Alaska District (USACE) has conducted an environmental analysis in accordance with the National Environmental Policy Act of 1969, as amended. The final Integrated Feasibility Report and Environmental Assessment (IFR/EA) dated July 2019 for the Unalaska (Dutch Harbor) Channels project addresses dredging opportunities and feasibility in Unalaska, Alaska. The final recommendation is contained in the report of the Chief of Engineers, dated 7 February 2020.

The final IFR/EA, incorporated herein by reference, evaluated various alternatives that would improve navigation efficiency and safety in the study area. The recommended plan is the National Economic Development (NED) Plan and includes a dredged channel to a depth of -58 feet MLLW comprising of 182,000 cubic yards (cy) and covering 437,000 square feet. Maintenance dredging, to be performed at year 25, will comprise of 16,000 cy and covering 437,000 square feet. The disposal will be a site on the east side of the mouth of Iliuliuk Bay with a 110-foot depth. The channel will be approximately 600 feet in length and 600 feet in width.

In addition to a "no action" plan, eight alternatives were evaluated. The alternatives included dredging in 2-foot increments between -46 feet MLLW and -58 feet MLLW plus an increment at -66 feet MLLW. Section 6 of the IFR/EA describes alternative formulation and selection. Nonstructural alternatives were considered but eliminated from detailed analysis. Nonstructural alternatives would result in environmental impacts.

For all alternatives, the potential effects were evaluated, as appropriate. A summary assessment of the potential effects of the recommended plan is listed in Table 1.

Table 1: Summary of Potential Effects of the Recommended Plan

	Insignificant effects	Insignificant effects as a result of mitigation*	Resource unaffected by action
Aesthetics	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Air quality	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Aquatic resources/wetlands	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Invasive species	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Fish and wildlife habitat	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Threatened/Endangered species/critical habitat	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Historic properties	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Other cultural resources	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Floodplains	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Hazardous, toxic & radioactive waste	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Hydrology	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Land use	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Navigation	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Noise levels	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Public infrastructure	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Socio-economics	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Environmental justice	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Soils	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Tribal trust resources	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Water quality	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Climate change	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

All practicable and appropriate means to avoid or minimize adverse environmental effects were analyzed and incorporated into the recommended plan. Best management practices (BMPs), as detailed in the IFR/EA, will be implemented, if appropriate, to minimize impacts. Mitigation measures for Threatened or Endangered species and noise levels include industry-standard stemming of charges and delays between charges to reduce the consequences of the confined underwater blasts. Impacts to Threatened and Endangered species are also mitigated by shutdown zones near the blast site to protect marine mammals from permanent injury or mortality. A discussion of mitigation measures is included in Section 7.1.3.

No compensatory mitigation is required as part of the recommended plan.

Public review of the draft IFR/EA and FONSI was completed on 2 March 2019. All comments submitted during the public review period were responded to in the Final IFR/EA in Section 9.1 and this Finding of No Significant Impact (FONSI). A 30-day state and agency review of the final IFR/EA was completed on 2 March 2019. As a result of state and agency review, the final IFR/EA was revised to include minor technical changes to the marine mammals and Threatened and Endangered species Sections 3.2 and 8.2.

Pursuant to Section 7 of the Endangered Species Act (ESA) of 1973, as amended, the USACE has coordinated their preliminary effects determination for ESA listed species. The USACE determined that the recommended plan is likely to adversely affect the Northern sea otter, Steller sea lion, and humpback whale (Mexico Distinct Population Segment (DPS) and Western North Pacific DPS), requiring formal consultation with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and the National Marine Fisheries Service (Services). The ESA listed marine mammals are also protected under the Marine Mammal Protection Act (MMPA), where an Incidental Harassment Authorization will likely be necessary. The USACE will continue coordination with the Services under ESA and MMPA later in project development when additional details on acoustic impacts associated with construction (underwater blasting and pile driving) are known.

Pursuant to Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966, as amended, the USACE determined that historic properties would not be adversely affected by the recommended plan. The Alaska State Historic Preservation Office concurred with the determination on 6 March 2019.

The State of Alaska does not currently have an active Coastal Zone Management Program. As of July 1, 2011, the Coastal Zone Management Act (CZMA) Federal consistency provision no longer applies in Alaska. Federal agencies shall no longer provide the State of Alaska with CZMA Consistency Determinations or Negative Determinations pursuant to 16 U.S.C. 1456(c)(1) and (2), and 15 CFR part 930, subpart C.

The National Marine Fisheries Service provided concurrence that consultation under Section 305(b) of the Magnuson-Stevens Act Fishery Conservation Act and associated Essential Fish Habitat consultation has been satisfied.

Pursuant to the Clean Water Act of 1972, as amended, the discharge of dredged or fill material associated with the recommended plan has been found to be compliant with Section 404(b)(1) Guidelines (40 CFR 230). The Clean Water Act Section 404(b)(1) Guidelines evaluation is found in Appendix F of the IFR/EA.

A water quality certification pursuant to Section 401 of the Clean Water Act was obtained from the Alaska Department of Environmental Conservation. All conditions of the water quality certification shall be implemented to minimize adverse impacts on water quality.

Technical, environmental, economic, and cost effectiveness criteria used in the formulation of alternative plans were specified in the Water Resources Council's 1983 Economic and Environmental Principles and Guidelines for Water and Related Land Resources Implementation Studies. All applicable laws, executive orders, regulations, and local government plans were considered in the evaluation of alternatives. I determine that the recommended plan would not cause significant adverse effects on the quality of the human environment based on this report, the reviews by other Federal, State, and local agencies, Tribes, the public's input, and the review by my staff. Therefore, the preparation of an Environmental Impact Statement is not required.

16 November 2020

Date

DAMON A. DELAROSA
COL, EN
Commanding