

FINDING OF NO SIGNIFICANT IMPACT

St. George Harbor Improvement Feasibility Study St. George, Alaska

The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, Alaska District (Corps) has conducted an environmental analysis in accordance with the National Environmental Policy Act of 1969, as amended. The Environmental Assessment (EA) dated May 2020, for the St. George Harbor Improvement Feasibility Study addresses existing navigational inefficiencies opportunities and feasibility in the Pribilof Island community of St. George, Alaska. The final recommendation is contained in the Chief's Report dated 13 August 2020.

The EA, incorporated herein by reference, evaluated various alternatives that would address existing navigational inefficiencies in the study area. The Recommended Plan is the best buy plan per the Cost Effective Incremental Cost Analysis (CE/ICA) and includes:

- Dredging of a 450-foot wide by 550-foot-long mooring basin dredged to -20 feet mean lower low water (MLLW) producing approximately 146,000 cubic yards (CY) of dredge material (includes 2 foot of over-depth to -22 feet MLLW)
- Construction of a 1,731-foot-long north breakwater with approximately 219,000 CY of rock
- Construction of a 250-foot-long spur breakwater at the west edge of the basin with approximately 20,500 CY of rock
- Dredging of a 250-foot wide navigation channel dredged to -25 feet MLLW producing approximately 210,000 CY (includes 2 foot of over-depth to -27 feet MLLW) of dredge material.
- Construction of 3.55 acres of uplands area filled to +10 feet MLLW with a 300-foot-long pile-supported dock and a concrete boat launch ramp to -5 feet MLLW for full tide launching access. Approximately 45,000 CY of dredge material may be used for the creation of uplands.

In addition to a “no action” plan, eleven alternatives were evaluated. The alternatives included multiple iterations of improvements to an existing small boat harbor on the south side of St. George Island and designs of a small boat harbor on the north side of the island that incrementally satisfied different navigational objectives of the harbor's potential users. The full array of alternatives is presented in Section 2 of the EA. Sixteen non-structural and seventeen structural measures were compared against the project objectives in order to develop the preliminary array of alternatives. A determination was made that no standalone non-structural measure would meet all of the project objectives, but offshore anchorage area, real-time monitoring features and marine navigational aids met one or more of the project objectives. Combining these

non-structural measures with the structural measures resulted in the development of the eleven alternatives.

For all alternatives, the potential effects were evaluated, as appropriate. A summary assessment of the potential effects of the Recommended Plan are 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 checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Air quality	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Aquatic resources/wetlands	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Invasive species	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Fish and wildlife habitat	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Threatened/Endangered species/critical habitat	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Historic properties	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Other cultural resources	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Floodplains	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Hazardous, toxic & radioactive waste	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Hydrology	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Land use	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Navigation	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Noise levels	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input 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 type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Tribal trust resources	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Water quality	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Climate change	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>

All practicable and appropriate means to avoid or minimize adverse environmental effects were analyzed and incorporated into the proposed plan. Best management practices (BMPs) as detailed in the EA would be implemented, if appropriate, to minimize impacts. Avoidance and minimization actions focus primarily upon the timing of project related confined underwater blasting; the Corps proposes establishing work windows that do not coincide with protected species' utilization of the habitat. BMPs would include the implementation of invasive species preclusion actions

and the application of stormwater pollution prevention actions. Section 4.2 of the EA describes in which instances these would be employed.

The Alaska Department of Environmental Conservation indicated in correspondence dated July 23, 2020 that sediments adjacent to the proposed harbor site contain lead-based paint chips and petroleum contamination from an active contaminated site known as the Electrical and Plumbing Shop. While there is a low risk that the construction activities would result in a release of contaminated materials, testing of material associated with construction activities will take place during the Preconstruction, Engineering and Design phase.

In coordination with the National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS), avoidance, minimization and mitigation actions were established for adverse effects to Essential Fish Habitat (EFH). Avoidance and minimization actions include in-work windows, vessel restriction timing, and the implementation of BMPs to reduce the likelihood of oil spills. Offsetting the permanent loss of EFH is accomplished by the creation of new, complex, vertical habitat at the dredge material placement area and also by the implementation of the breakwater structures. The Corps has concluded consultation with NMFS regarding impacts to EFH (Appendix B).

The Recommended Plan will result in unavoidable adverse impacts to the Seal Island's Historic District National Historic Landmark (XPI-00002) by permanently altering the viewshed. There would also be unavoidable adverse impacts to two of the National Historic Landmark's contributing structures, the St. George Inside Landing (XPI-00195) and the St. George Outside Landing (XPI-00194). Sections 4.6.3 and 8.0 of the EA discuss unavoidable adverse impacts. Per 36 CFR § 800.6, the adverse effect on historic properties will be resolved through the implementation of mitigation identified in the signed *Memorandum of Agreement among the Corps, SHPO, and the City of St. George Regarding the St. George Harbor Improvement*. This mitigation is likely to include the creation of an artistic landscape of the St. George North Anchorage viewshed during three periods of history: prior to the settlement of the community, the Russian Period, and the U.S. Territorial period. These depictions would likely be displayed from the vantage of the same North Anchorage viewshed, on a hill west of the community where a monument to the historic Fur Seal Industry is already emplaced.

Pursuant to Section 7 of the Endangered Species Act (ESA) of 1973, as amended, the Corps has coordinated their preliminary effects determinations for ESA listed marine mammal species. The Corps determined that the recommended plan is likely to adversely affect the ringed seal, bearded seal, steller sea lion and humpback whale, requiring formal consultation with NMFS. The ESA listed marine mammals are also protected under the Marine Mammal Protection Act (MMPA). Coordination with NMFS under the MMPA is concurrent with ESA coordination. The details necessary to initiate formal consultation on the listed marine mammals are not known until later in project development; therefore, the Corps will defer formal consultation for ESA and MMPA to the Pre-construction, Engineering and Design phase of the project when more detailed construction information is obtained. Details are necessary to determine the

incidental take/harassment for acoustic impacts associated with construction (underwater blasting/pile driving). Refer to Appendix C, Draft Biological Assessment, for potential mitigation strategies based upon similar projects that required confined underwater blasting. Under jurisdiction of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS), three threatened species and critical habitat were identified. The USFWS concurred by letter dated December 17, 2019 with the Corps determination of “may affect, not likely to adversely affect” the polar bear, Steller’s eiders, spectacled eiders, or critical habitat for these species.

Pursuant to section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966, as amended, the Corps determined that historic properties may be adversely affected by the proposed plan. The Corps and the Alaska State Historic Preservation Officer signed a Memorandum of Agreement (MOA) on 06 May 2020 to address the adverse effect identified for the project. All terms and conditions resulting from the agreement shall be implemented in order to minimize adverse impacts to historic properties.

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 A of the EA.

In compliance with Section 401 of the CWA, the Corps has received a Certificate of Reasonable Assurance from the Alaska Department of Environmental Conservation, Water Quality Division dated 15 January 2020.

By operation of Alaska State law, the federally approved Alaska Coastal Management Program expired on July 1, 2011, resulting in a withdrawal from participation in the Coastal Zone Management Act (CZMA) - National Coastal Management Program. The CZMA Federal consistency provision, section 307, no longer applies in Alaska.

All applicable environmental laws have been considered. Coordination with the NMFS will continue for impacts to marine mammals. The Corps concluded coordination with the USFWS under the Fish and Wildlife Coordination Act (Appendix D) and received a Fish and Wildlife Coordination Act Report dated 01 October 2019.

Technical, environmental, and economic criteria used in the formulation of alternative plans were those 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 evaluation of alternatives. Based on this EA, the reviews by other Federal, State and local agencies, Tribes, input of the public, and the review by my staff, it is my determination that the Recommended Plan would not cause

significant adverse effects on the quality of the human environment; therefore, preparation of an Environmental Impact Statement is not required.

12 April 2021

Date



DAMON A. DELAROSA
COL, EN
Commanding