DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE
DEPARTMENT OF THE NAVY

FINDING OF NO SIGNIFICANT IMPACT FOR THE ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT FOR HOMEPORTING OF THE COLUMBIA CLASS SUBMARINE AT NAVAL SUBMARINE BASE KINGS BAY, GEORGIA

Pursuant to Council on Environmental Quality (CEQ) regulations (40 Code of Federal Regulations [CFR] Parts 1500-1508) implementing the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA), Navy Regulations (32 CFR part 775), and Chief of Naval Operations Instruction 5090.1E, the Department of the Navy (Navy) gives notice that an Environmental Assessment (EA) has been prepared and an Environmental Impact Statement is not required for the homeporting of the Columbia Class submarines at Naval Submarine Base (NSB) Kings Bay.

Proposed Action: The Navy proposes to establish facilities and functions at Naval Submarine Base (NSB) Kings Bay to support the homeporting of Columbia Class submarines as replacements for the retiring Ohio Class submarines currently homeported at NSB Kings Bay. Under the Proposed Action, the Navy would construct eight facilities, modify five facilities, and demolish three facilities across three locations on NSB Kings Bay. Facility changes and development activities would be phased over a period of five years and completed coincident to the arrival of the first Columbia Class submarines in 2028. The Proposed Action does not modify any existing dry-docks or conduct any in-water activity.

During the fiscal year (FY) 2028-2042 transition period from the Ohio Class to the Columbia Class and at completion, the Columbia Class Nuclear Powered Ballistic Missile Submarines (SSBNs) will be phased in as the Ohio Class SSBNs are phased out. Thus, total numbers of submarines homeported at NSB Kings Bay during this time will not exceed the number of Ohio Class SSBNs currently homeported at the base. Considering facility sustainment and planning efforts, the support operations and personnel numbers associated with the Columbia Class SSBNs are projected to be comparable to those associated with the Ohio Class SSBNs. Maintenance activities associated with the Columbia Class SSBNs would occur at the NSB Kings Bay Dry Dock as they do for the Ohio Class SSBNs, and the transition of submarine class would not result in any changes to existing pier side activities. The Proposed Action does not include submarine movements to offshore military operating areas. Submarine movement, as well as

training and testing activities, will be evaluated separately in the upcoming Phase IV Atlantic Fleet Training and Testing Supplemental Environmental Impact Statement/Overseas Environmental Impact Statement.

Lastly, personnel numbers associated with the facilities and functions of the Proposed Action are also not anticipated to increase. Therefore, the Proposed Action will not increase the number of personnel employed at NSB Kings Bay, although an increase in temporary workers will result during the demolition, modification, and construction of 16 facilities and various functions scheduled for completion in 2028.

Purpose and Need: The purpose of the Proposed Action is to ensure the uninterrupted continuation of the Navy's Sea-Based Strategic Deterrence mission at NSB Kings Bay by introducing a technologically advanced SSBN into the Atlantic Fleet. The Columbia Class SSBNs will require use of the same supporting facilities and infrastructure as the Ohio Class SSBNs, which are not replicated elsewhere on the Atlantic Coast. Therefore, NSB Kings Bay is the only Atlantic Coast location that can serve as a homeport for the Columbia Class SSBNs.

The Proposed Action is needed because the Ohio Class SSBNs are reaching the end of their service lives and need to be replaced before degrading to unacceptable conditions. Indefinite life extension of the existing Ohio Class SSBN fleet is not possible and would not meet future mission requirements. Even with additional maintenance, these submarines would continue to suffer from reduced reliability and increased costs associated with the obsolescence of legacy Ohio system components. The Columbia Class submarines are the next phase of submarines necessary to ensure the U.S. can meet current and future threats with up-to-date nuclear submarine technology in support of national defense objectives and policies.

Alternatives Analyzed: The EA analyzed the potential environmental impacts of one action alternative for the Proposed Action as well as the No Action alternative.

Alternative 1: Proposed Action. The Proposed Action would establish facilities and functions at NSB Kings Bay to support the homeporting of Columbia Class submarines as replacements for the retiring Ohio Class submarines currently homeported at NSB Kings Bay. No anticipated personnel changes are expected with the homeporting of the Columbia Class submarines. The

homeporting of the Columbia Class submarines requires various facilities and infrastructure construction improvements. These major construction elements are associated with Military Construction project P-684 (Trident Refit Facility [TRF] Columbia Expansion). P-684, TRF Columbia Expansion, is composed of demolition, construction, and/or modification of 16 facilities across three different locations on NSB Kings Bay.

No Action Alternative. Under the No Action Alternative, the Proposed Action would not be completed. NSB Kings Bay would not have the facilities and functions in place to support the replacement and sustainment requirements of the Columbia Class submarine fleet. The Ohio Class submarines would be extended past their useful lives, thereby adversely impacting the United States' strategic deterrence mission. Maintenance frequency and costs would increase, resulting in a decrease in crew readiness and overall mission capability. The No Action Alternative does not meet the purpose of and need for the Proposed Action; however, the No Action Alternative is used to analyze the consequences of not undertaking the Proposed Action and provides a benchmark for comparative analysis to enable decision makers to compare the magnitude of environmental effects of the action alternatives. The No Action Alternative is carried forward for analysis as required by NEPA regulations and Navy policy.

Environmental Effects: As summarized below, the environmental resource areas analyzed in the EA include air quality, water resources, cultural resources, biological resources, and hazardous materials and wastes. Because potential impacts were considered to be negligible or nonexistent, the following resource areas were not evaluated in detail in the EA: land use, visual resources, geological resources, transportation, public health and safety, utilities and infrastructure, socioeconomics, and environmental justice and protection of children.

The level of detail in the summary analysis is commensurate with the level of potential effect to the resource.

Air Quality: The area is considered in attainment for all criteria pollutants. NSB Kings Bay operates under a Title V Air Operating Permit No. 9711-039-003-V-04-0 that includes air quality requirements for combustion units (boilers for steam heat and industrial use); internal combustion engines (diesel emergency generators); surface coating operations for maintenance of marine vessels, vehicles, and facilities; abrasive blasting related to marine vessel and equipment

maintenance; and woodworking shops for facility maintenance, packing, and shipping. Under the Proposed Action, the short-term, transitory emissions associated with the construction, demolition, or renovation activities would be minimal and temporary (less than 10.02 tons per year). Further, best management practices (BMPs) suggested by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (USEPA) to reduce particulate matter emissions could be incorporated, such as covering or watering piles and/or access roads; limiting the speed of grading and earth moving equipment to 15 miles per hour or less; operating water trucks for stabilization of surfaces under windy conditions; installing wind fencing; and phasing grading operations.

None of the estimated air pollutant emissions would result in significant air quality impacts in Camden County, Georgia for the years when the Proposed Action construction activities would occur. The new buildings, once operational, would also be sources of air pollution, though the emissions are expected to be minor. Once specific equipment for the facilities is known, they would require evaluation to verify exemption and/or inclusion as a permitted source in the installation's Title V permit. It is not likely that any emissions associated with new facilities would cause or contribute to any exceedance of the National Ambient Air Quality Standards or other regulatory thresholds. Because these types of stationary sources are already included in the NSB Kings Bay Title V permit, it is anticipated that only minor revisions and updates to the permit would be required to include new sources and remove those taken out of service. It is assumed that much of the emissions from the use of paints, solvents, and abrasive materials would be similar in scope to those in previous years, and any increase in emissions would be small and incremental. There would be no significant impacts to air quality from the Proposed Action.

While the emissions generated from the construction and operations associated with the Proposed Action at NSB Kings Bay alone would not be enough to cause global warming, in combination with past and future emissions from all other sources they would contribute incrementally to the global warming that produces the adverse effects of climate change. Design and construction standards would be implemented into the proposed facilities in order to work toward the Navy's objective of achieving 50-percent reduction in greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions from buildings by 2032. USEPA and Georgia Environmental Protection Division require GHG permits only for the largest emitters. Typically, only very large facilities such

as power plants and refineries reach the thresholds necessary. Given the minor amount of GHG emissions and compliance with the Navy's Climate Action plan there would be no significant impacts to GHG emissions from the Proposed Action.

Water Resources: No impacts to groundwater, wetlands, or floodplains are anticipated under the Proposed Action. None of the construction, modification, or demolition projects involve any in-water construction work. Therefore, no additional permitting for Section 404 of the Clean Water Act would be required and impacts to surrounding water quality (i.e., Crooked River and Kings Bay) would not be expected. Construction activities would create additional impervious surfaces at NSB Kings Bay which would increase the amount of stormwater runoff. However, the stormwater drainage system has enough capacity to meet the existing flows and those of new required facilities. BMPs would be incorporated as part of the Proposed Action during construction and later operationally to minimize erosion, runoff, and sedimentation, consistent with the installation's Stormwater Pollution Prevention Plan (SWPPP). Additionally, construction projects that would result in more than one acre of ground disturbing activities would require a National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System (NPDES) Construction General Permit. The construction contractor would obtain coverage under the Construction General Permit, prepare a construction-specific SWPPP, and implement construction-specific BMPs. All other storm water would be managed under the NSB Kings Bay NPDES General Permit for Storm Water Discharges Associated with Industrial Activity (IGP), Permit No. GAR050000.

The Proposed Action is consistent to the maximum extent practicable with the enforceable policies of the federally approved Georgia Coastal Management Program. A Coastal Consistency Determination was completed and sent to the Georgia Department of Natural Resources for concurrence. The Coastal Resources Division of the Georgia Department of Natural Resources responded with a letter of concurrence on May 5, 2023.

Cultural Resources: The Proposed Action would not diminish or adversely affect the significance or integrity of the historic properties in the project area at NSB Kings Bay. NSB Kings Bay initiated consultation with the Georgia State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO) on these findings. The Georgia SHPO responded in a letter dated May 8, 2023, that the Proposed Action will have "no adverse effect" to historic properties that are eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic

Places (NRHP), as defined in 36 CFR Part 800.5(d)(1), and will meet the Secretary of the Interior's *Standards for the Treatment of Historic Properties*.

There are no NRHP-eligible or listed archaeological sites within or in the vicinity of the three locations, therefore, it is not expected that undiscovered archaeological resources would be found during implementation of the Proposed Action at NSB Kings Bay. However, in the event of an inadvertent discovery during ground disturbing operations, the following specific actions would occur. The Project Manager would cease work immediately and the discovery would be reported to the NSB Kings Bay Cultural Resources Manager. The Cultural Resources Manager would secure the location and ensure that all cultural items are left in place and that no further disturbance is permitted to occur. The Cultural Resources Manager would then contact a qualified archaeologist to inspect the site and would continue to follow Standard Operating Procedure No. 5, *Inadvertent Discoveries*, as outlined in the NSB Kings Bay Integrated Cultural Resources Management Plan (ICRMP).

There are no known traditional cultural properties or Native American sacred places at NSB Kings Bay. Government-to-government consultation between the Navy and each federally recognized Tribal Nation associated with NSB Kings Bay was conducted for this action in recognition of their status as sovereign nations, to provide information regarding Tribal concerns per Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act, as well as information on traditional cultural properties that may be present on or near the Base. Government-to-government consultation letters were sent on April 28, 2023, to five federally recognized Tribal Nations with whom the NSB Kings Bay must consult per the ICRMP.

Biological Resources: Construction activities would have negligible impacts to vegetation, as the area is highly disturbed and developed. Impacted vegetation would consist of maintained grasses and shrubs. Habitat impacts resulting from the removal of a small area of such vegetation would be negligible. Invasive plant species are not known to occur in areas that would be disturbed by construction or demolition activities. With continued implementation of the Landscaping/Grounds Maintenance Plan, impacts related to invasive species would not be expected. There would be no significant impacts to vegetation under the Proposed Action.

Wildlife near the project sites could be disturbed or displaced by construction and demolition activities. It is expected that such effects would be temporary and would only affect animals near the project areas, as noise levels would decrease with increasing distance from the source. Displaced animals would be able to use habitats within and near the project areas after completion of activities. Resident wildlife could potentially be habituated to noise and human activity to some degree due to the ongoing daily activities on developed portions of NSB Kings Bay (e.g., marine operations and vehicle traffic). There would be no significant impacts on terrestrial wildlife under the Proposed Action. Habitat removal would be negligible.

Two species (wood stork and eastern indigo snake) listed as threatened under the Endangered Species Act and one species proposed for listing as endangered (tricolored bat) could occur within or near the study area of the Proposed Action. These species could potentially occur in areas of maintained vegetation adjacent to existing and proposed facilities or in wooded or wetland habitats near the three project locations. Wood storks would not be expected to occur directly within areas where construction, demolition, and modification activities would occur, but foraging and resting storks could occur in association with nearby wetlands, stormwater drainage features, and surface waters. Noise impacts to foraging or resting individuals located near construction and demolition sites would potentially include disturbance and displacement. Such effects would be temporary and would only affect wood storks near the project areas. Any displaced individuals would be able to use nearby similar habitats. Removal of maintained or landscaped vegetated areas near proposed construction sites would not negatively impact wood stork habitat availability because such areas are not typically used by storks for feeding, roosting, or nesting. The Proposed Action may affect, but is not likely to adversely affect, wood storks.

The potential for eastern indigo snakes to occur within areas subject to construction, demolition, and modification activities, or in nearby areas of natural habitat, is low. However, the possibility of occurrence cannot be discounted. Potential impacts to indigo snakes would be similar to those described above for wildlife in general and include noise, disturbance, and displacement. There is potential for any individuals present in areas of construction, demolition, or modification activities to be struck by vehicles or equipment. The potential for strikes would be reduced by adherence to

actions contained in the Standard Protection Measures for the Eastern Indigo Snake. Applicable measures consist of educating construction contractor personnel on requirements related to the species, ceasing activities if an indigo snake is sighted, and notifying appropriate installation personnel if an indigo snake is sighted, among others. Therefore, the Proposed Action may affect, but is not likely to adversely affect, eastern indigo snakes.

Construction, demolition, and modification activities would occur only during the day and would, therefore, not affect tricolored bat foraging. From spring to fall, tricolored bats could potentially roost in structures at the three project locations, although roosting would more likely occur in trees. Because bats in general are susceptible to disturbance when roosting in buildings and other human-made structures, noise or structural vibrations resulting from project activities could potentially disturb any roosting individuals present, causing them to leave their roost sites. Any bats roosting in structures that would be demolished would be displaced. Individuals affected by noise or demolition could likely find other nearby suitable roosting habitat on or near the installation, although bats that flee disturbed areas during the day could be exposed to predators. Any tricolored bats roosting in structures that are demolished could potentially detect human activities and leave the structure before being physically harmed by equipment or materials. However, surveys for tricolored bats are recommended prior to demolition of structures that contain features conducive to roosting (e.g., crevices). The Proposed Action may affect, but is not likely to adversely affect, tricolored bats.

In summary, construction, demolition, and modification activities could result in short-term impacts from disturbance to the wood stork, eastern indigo snake, and tricolored bat, but they would not further threaten the existence of any protected species or critical habitats. Additionally, NSB Kings Bay personnel would continue to manage habitats according to the Integrated Natural Resources Management Plan (INRMP), which is designed to protect and benefit threatened and endangered species. The Navy initiated Endangered Species Act Section 7 informal consultation with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and received concurrence with the determinations in a letter dated June 15, 2023.

Under the Proposed Action, impacts to Migratory Bird Treaty Act-bird species would be similar to those for wildlife in general. Effects would be temporary and would cease after completion of proposed project activities. Any migratory bird present at a construction or demolition site would leave the area before physical harm could occur. The Proposed Action would not be expected to result in mortality, injury, or other forms of incidental taking of migratory birds, as defined in 50 CFR section 10.12. The Proposed Action would not be expected to result in incidental take of bald eagles, including disturbance, as defined in 50 CFR section 22.6.

Hazardous Materials and Wastes: During demolition and construction activities, fuel may be temporarily stored in the construction staging areas for refueling operations. The contractor would be required to follow all federal regulations and NSB Kings Bay requirements pertaining to storage and fueling practices. In addition, the construction contractors would prepare an Environmental Protection Plan, project-specific Spill Prevention, Control and Countermeasure (SPCC) Plan, project-specific Hazardous Materials Management Plan (HMMP); and a project-specific SWPPP. Demolition of any existing structures may require remediation of asbestos containing material (ACM), lead based paint (LBP), and polychlorinated biphenyls (PCBs). Both the demolition and construction phases would generate potentially hazardous construction and demolition debris, in addition to ACM, PCBs, and LBP/Lead (Pb) contaminated materials, which the construction contractor(s) would be required to characterize, containerize, label, manage while awaiting transfer, and ultimately transfer off-site for disposal at an appropriately licensed facility. In addition, Buildings 5055 and 5073 are likely to contain hazardous paint and/or oil waste residue. The contractor will be required to conduct inspection and testing and provide proper documentation that is generated and maintained to validate the absence of these hazardous materials and wastes prior to demolition. Specific to the Proposed Action, paints have the potential to be considered hazardous waste (HW) depending on the components in the paint mixture but if these materials are consumed in the construction process HW would not be generated. The project-specific HMMP would include an HW management section that delineates the measures required to handle and dispose of any HW or excess hazardous materials.

The *Specification 01 57 19.01 25 for Supplemental Temporary Environmental Controls for NSB Kings Bay* requires the

construction contractor to establish and maintain a 90-day HW accumulation storage area in compliance with 40 CFR section 262.34 and applicable Georgia and local regulations. Individual waste streams will be limited to 55 gallons of accumulation (or 1 quart for acute HWs). In addition to the 90-day accumulation storage area, a temporary less-than-90-day satellite accumulation area will be established upon contract award to minimize the number of trucks traveling to and from the 90-day satellite accumulation storage area.

Demolition of Building 5073 would require disposal or closure-in-place of the active 1,000-gallon used oil underground storage tank. Additional use and storage permitting may be required to introduce a new hull treatment into usage. It is anticipated that hazardous materials similar in type and quantity to those currently used at NSB King Bay would be procured, received, handled, managed, and used in the future, with the exception of the new hull treatment product. Buildings 5073 and 5085 will store and dispense a new hull treatment product. This hull treatment will be added to the HW manifest before its use in submarine maintenance operations begins, in accordance with all HW management regulations. During the construction or renovation phase associated with the action alternatives, it is anticipated that hazardous materials typically used in commercial and industrial construction would be utilized, including paints and coatings, paint thinners and other common solvents, adhesives, sealants, lubricants, and fuels (e.g., gasoline and diesel fuel).

In accordance with the guidance documents and management plans to include the installation HWMP, Facility Response Plan, SPCC Plan and *Hazardous Waste and Non-Hazardous Waste Management Guide for Visiting Contractors*, the Navy would include requirements to minimize procurement and use of hazardous materials and generation of HWs to the extent possible in the construction, operation, and maintenance of NSB Kings Bay. With adherence to federal and state laws, as well as Navy guidance documents and project-specific plans, there would be negligible to minor adverse impacts from hazardous materials and waste with the implementation of the Proposed Action.

Cumulative Impacts: After a review of other past, present, and reasonably foreseeable future actions within the study area of the Proposed Action, implementation of the Proposed Action in conjunction with the other identified actions would not

represent a significant cumulative impact on environmental or human resources addressed in the EA.

Public Involvement: A Notice of Availability of the EA was published in the *Florida Times-Union* on May 26-28, 2023, as well as the NSB Kings Bay Facebook page. The review period was extended, and the EA was made available for download/review for 60 days via the Navy website at the following link: https://www.nepa.navy.mil/Columbia-Class/. Ten public comments were received on the publicly released Draft EA. Primary concerns identified by the commenters included: possible impacts from nuclear radiation in the event of a nuclear incident and general opposition to the continued use of nuclear submarines by the Navy; impacts to the North Atlantic Right Whale; and the scope of the Proposed Action. These primary concerns were considered and addressed in the Final EA, and revisions or clarifications were made in the applicable sections of the Final EA, as needed.

Finding: Based on analysis presented in the EA, which has been prepared in accordance with the requirements of NEPA and Navy policies and procedures (32 CFR Part 775), the Navy finds that implementation of the Proposed Action (Action Alternative) will not significantly impact the quality of the human or natural environment. Therefore, the preparation of an Environmental Impact Statement will not be required.

The EA prepared by the Navy is on file and interested parties may obtain a copy by downloading the EA from the Navy website: https://www.nepa.navy.mil/Columbia-Class/.

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Date

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