

DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE
Department of the Navy

**FINDING OF NO SIGNIFICANT IMPACT FOR THE HOMEPORTING OF
CONSTELLATION-CLASS FRIGATES AT NAVAL STATION EVERETT,
WASHINGTON**

Pursuant to Council on Environmental Quality regulations (40 Code of Federal Regulations Parts 1500-1508) implementing the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA), Department of the Navy (Navy) NEPA Regulations (32 Code of Federal Regulations part 775), and the Office of the Chief of Naval Operations Instruction 5090.1E, the Navy gives notice that an Environmental Assessment (EA) has been prepared, and based on this Finding of No Significant Impact (FONSI), an Environmental Impact Statement is not required for homeporting Constellation-class guided-missile frigates (FFGs) at Naval Station (NAVSTA) Everett, Washington. The Navy finds that the Proposed Action through implementation of either Alternative 1 or 2 will not significantly impact the quality of the human environment. The analysis and information presented in the EA is incorporated by reference into this FONSI.

Proposed Action: The Proposed Action is to establish facilities and functions at NAVSTA Everett, Washington to support homeporting FFGs. Under the Proposed Action, the Navy will homeport up to 12 FFGs; construct training and support facilities for ships, commands, and crews; and station approximately 2,900 personnel, plus their family members. The Navy will phase in homeported ships over a 10-year time period, with personnel arriving and facilities established beginning no earlier than fiscal year 2026, and arrival of the first Constellation-class frigate no earlier than fiscal year 2028. Homeporting of FFGs and personnel will occur incrementally as existing homeported ships and personnel depart NAVSTA Everett. The two Coast Guard vessels and associated personnel are expected to maintain a consistent presence at NAVSTA Everett for the foreseeable future.

Under the Proposed Action, Constellation-class frigates will be berthed at NAVSTA Everett's existing piers. The Proposed Action does not involve structural modification of piers or any in-water structural work but does involve construction of two 200-square foot shelter additions on the pier deck and pier utility upgrades to include distribution lines and equipment for potable and non-potable water, sanitary sewer, compressed air, and electrical power.

Over an estimated eight-year period through 2032, the Navy ships currently homeported at NAVSTA Everett will gradually be reduced to zero through changes in homeport or changes in mission. Over that period, approximately 3,100 personnel associated with the departing vessels will also depart NAVSTA Everett. The total number of homeported vessels will fluctuate very little from the current 12 to an overall net increase of two vessels with an end state total of 14 homeported vessels at NAVSTA Everett when the Proposed Action is completed no earlier than fiscal year 2037. The Proposed Action does not include vessel movements beyond the port security barrier through Possession Sound or Puget Sound because regional Navy vessel movements and other training or testing activities are evaluated holistically in the Navy's Environmental Impact Statement (EIS)/Overseas EIS for Northwest Training and Testing.

Purpose and Need: The purpose of the Proposed Action is to provide the Pacific Fleet with the next generation of multi-mission small surface combatants with the ability to operate independently or as part of a strike group. The need for the Proposed Action is to provide capabilities for manning, training, and equipping combat-capable naval forces ready to deploy worldwide. In this regard, the Proposed Action furthers the Navy's execution of its congressionally mandated roles and responsibilities under 10 U.S. Code section 8062.

Alternatives Analyzed: In developing the proposed range of alternatives, the Navy considered mission characteristics, geographic requirements, training and support facility requirements, and existing Navy infrastructure. Based on the evaluation of reasonable alternatives using screening factors, two action alternatives at NAVSTA Everett were identified as best meeting the purpose of and need for the Proposed Action and are analyzed within the EA. The EA also evaluated the No Action Alternative under which the Navy would not homeport FFGs on the West Coast.

Alternative 1 and Alternative 2 (described below) both include homeporting up to 12 FFGs on the West Coast, stationing 2,900 personnel, and providing facilities for ships, commands, and crews at NAVSTA Everett that will be phased in over a period of approximately 10 years. Most facilities and support infrastructure would be similar for both alternatives with the difference being the size, location, and configuration of the proposed Administrative Support Facility, which would be constructed at one of several potential locations within the NAVSTA Everett

Administrative District. Facilities construction under Alternative 1 or Alternative 2 will occur within existing NAVSTA Everett property boundaries from approximately fiscal year 2026 to fiscal year 2028 (approximately 2.5 years).

No Action Alternative. Under the No Action Alternative, the Proposed Action would not occur. The Navy would not homeport FFGs on the West Coast. The infrastructure upgrades necessary to accommodate the FFG West Coast homeporting would not occur, and the personnel associated with the FFG homeporting would not relocate to NAVSTA Everett. The No Action Alternative would not meet the purpose of and need for the Proposed Action.

Alternative 1. Facilities construction under Alternative 1 would include a new Administrative Support Facility consisting of a stand-alone building or an addition to an existing building that would be up to three stories and approximately 50,000 square feet. Construction would also include two 200-square foot shelter additions on the pier deck and an approximately 41,000-square foot addition would be added onto the Fleet Region Readiness Center, which would provide additional classroom and training space. Other supporting facilities and infrastructure would include stormwater management facilities, electrical and mechanical utilities, and road and parking lot resurfacing.

Alternative 2. Facilities construction under Alternative 2 would include a new Administrative Support Facility consisting of a combination of a new, approximately 20,000-square foot addition to an existing building and approximately 30,000 square feet of interior renovations of existing buildings on NAVSTA Everett. All other facilities would be similar to those described for Alternative 1.

Alternatives Considered but not Carried Forward for Detailed Analysis: The Navy considered several other alternatives, but did not carry them forward for detailed analysis in the EA because they did not meet the purpose and need for the Proposed Action or satisfy the screening factors considered during the course of developing reasonable alternatives. Screening factors included: mission characteristics, geographic requirements, training and support facility requirements, and effective and efficient use of existing Navy infrastructure. Alternatives considered were:

- Other West Coast and Pacific Homeports

- Homeport FFGs at More than One Installation
- Renovation/Modernization Only of Existing Spaces on NAVSTA Everett
- Use of Leased Space off NAVSTA Everett

Environmental Effects: No significant direct, indirect, or cumulative environmental impacts will occur from implementing the Proposed Action alternatives. Certain environmental resources (i.e., cultural resources, geological resources, land use, visual resources, infrastructure, public health and safety, transportation, and hazardous materials and wastes) were not analyzed in detail in the Final EA because potential impacts were considered to be negligible or non-existent. Potential environmental impacts on air quality, water resources, noise, biological resources, American Indian traditional resources, socioeconomics, and environmental justice were analyzed in detail and are summarized below.

Air Quality. The Proposed Action alternatives will not result in significant direct or indirect impacts to air quality. Total air pollutant emissions associated with short-term construction activities and long-term operations under the Proposed Action will be below *de minimis* levels. Although the project area is in attainment (maintenance areas ended on October 11, 2016, for Carbon Monoxide and November 25, 2016, for Ozone in the Seattle area), *de minimis* levels were used because they provide an indicator of the level below which emissions are not likely to exceed the National Ambient Air Quality Standards.

The Proposed Action will generate temporary greenhouse gases during construction. However, in the end state when homeporting is completed, greenhouse gas emissions will be reduced because of the reduction in personnel, thus resulting in a combined negligible benefit to climate change.

Water Resources. Implementation of the Proposed Action alternatives will not result in significant direct or indirect impacts to groundwater, surface water, or floodplains at NAVSTA Everett. Construction and operation of the Proposed Action will not affect groundwater resources at NAVSTA Everett because the project will not extract groundwater, interfere with groundwater supply, or alter existing groundwater quality.

Prior to renovation of existing buildings or construction of new buildings or additions, the Navy will apply for coverage under

the Construction General Permit (CGP) that includes measures for managing stormwater runoff and preventing erosion and stormwater transporting soils offsite. Consequently, potential short-term impacts to water resources associated with stormwater runoff will not be significant.

The shelter additions will need to be located on the piers within the 100-year floodplain. Therefore, to comply with the Unified Facilities Criteria (UFC) specifications, the Navy will implement appropriate measures to alleviate flood risks. By complying with UFC specifications and other applicable guidance, the Proposed Action will have a minimal impact to flood risk.

With implementation of appropriate upgrades to stormwater infrastructure, flood risk management measures, and Best Management Practices, implementation of the Proposed Action will not result in significant impacts to water resources.

Noise. Construction activities from the Proposed Action alternatives will not be expected to cause a significant increase in ambient noise levels off-base in noise sensitive areas. Pile driving during building construction will generate a noise signature similar to noise levels experienced under baseline conditions during pile driving conducted as part of marine structure maintenance. Pile driving will occur only during the foundation phase of the proposed construction projects and will last for only a fraction of the expected 2.5-year overall construction timeline - a few weeks to a few months. People residing and working along haul routes may notice temporary increases in traffic noise levels while certain phases of construction are in progress (e.g., removal of construction debris). Impacts associated with construction noise will be limited to annoyance and activity interference, and will be temporary, with the highest noise levels being experienced only during pile driving. Based on the nature of these impacts, minimal noise impacts will occur as a result of short-term construction activities. During operations, typical pierside activities will result in minimal incremental increases in the tempo of certain noise-generating activities that currently occur at NAVSTA Everett, some of which will be expected to be offset by reduced maintenance needs of the new ships for many years. Long-term road traffic may decrease slightly resulting in minor roadway noise level reductions.

Biological Resources. Implementation of the Proposed Action alternatives will not result in significant direct or indirect impacts to biological resources at NAVSTA Everett. The Proposed

Action will have no significant impacts to terrestrial vegetation and wildlife. Short-term construction activities will not be expected to have a measurable impact on terrestrial mammals and will not result in take of eagles, as defined by the Bald and Golden Eagle Protection Act, or seabirds, shorebirds, or other birds protected under the Migratory Bird Treaty Act. The Proposed Action will have no effect on marine vegetation, sea turtles, fish, coral, or benthic invertebrates.

The Navy determined that the Proposed Action may affect, but is not likely to adversely affect, the marbled murrelet (*Brachyramphus marmoratus*), the only Endangered Species Act (ESA) listed species that occurs at or in the vicinity of NAVSTA Everett and has the potential to be affected by the upland construction associated with the Proposed Action. Considering the occurrence of intermittent impact pile driving activity over a few weeks to a few months at a distance exceeding the range for masking impacts and year-round low densities of marbled murrelets, the likelihood of marbled murrelets being exposed to masking effects during construction activities under the Proposed Action is discountable. Effects to marbled murrelets due to visual disturbance during construction and from increased personnel will be temporary, localized, and generally within baseline activity levels for operations at NAVSTA Everett. Therefore, behavioral effects to marbled murrelets from visual disturbance under the Proposed Action will be discountable. The Navy conducted informal consultation with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) for potential effects to the marbled murrelet. The USFWS concurred with the Navy's finding of may affect not likely to adversely affect the marbled murrelet in a letter dated July 19, 2024.

California sea lions (*Zalophus californianus*) and harbor seals (*Phoca vitulina richardii*) that are known to haul out at NAVSTA Everett may be exposed to airborne noise associated with the Proposed Action. Airborne noise from impact pile driving could potentially result in disturbance to pinnipeds that are hauled out. Using a sound level of 110 decibels (dB) at 50 feet for impact pile driving, the distances to behavioral harassment of California sea lions is estimated at 157 feet and of harbor seals is at 492 feet from the pile; these distances are based on the behavioral harassment threshold for California sea lions occurring at 100 dB and harbor seals occurring at 90 dB. No California sea lion haul-outs are located within the 100 dB airborne noise threshold distance (157 feet), therefore, no in-air noise above the behavioral harassment threshold will occur

at the California sea lion haul-out.

Harbor seals haul out at the smaller piers and floats within the 90 dB behavioral harassment threshold (492 feet from pile driving). To ensure noise from impact pile driving does not result in take of harbor seals by behavioral harassment, as defined by the Marine Mammal Protection Act, an observer positioned on the pier will visually monitor the floats and notify construction personnel to cease impact pile driving if harbor seals are hauled out within the behavioral harassment zone.

American Indian Traditional Resources. In accordance with Department of Defense and Navy policy, the Navy sent letters to tribal government representatives from the following tribes to invite them to initiate government-to-government consultation on the Proposed Action: the Stillaguamish Tribe of Indians, Suquamish Tribe, Swinomish Indian Tribal Community, and Tulalip Tribes of Washington. These federally recognized tribes have reserved off-reservation fishing rights at their Usual and Accustomed (U&A) fishing grounds and stations located in the vicinity of NAVSTA Everett. The Navy held meetings with tribal government representatives, as requested, to discuss the project. The Navy met with the Tulalip Tribes of Washington on February 20, 2024, the Suquamish Tribe on May 8, 2024, and the Swinomish Indian Tribal Community on May 30, 2024. Concerns that were discussed included potential impacts to local waterways from stormwater runoff, upland pile driving and, while outside the scope of this project, Navy vessel movements through Puget Sound.

Under the Proposed Action alternatives, there will be no impacts on marine habitats or marine species, including those associated with traditional aquatic resources, because the project will not involve any in-water construction, the project includes construction of new stormwater management facilities, and the effects of stormwater discharge and construction-related vessel traffic will be minimal. NAVSTA Everett will continue to monitor the number of openings of the port security barrier and will follow established notification procedures to minimize impacts on tribal access to U&A fishing grounds and stations near NAVSTA Everett. The Navy will continue to carefully consider and evaluate the extent of any impacts to traditional resources or access to those resources based on continued government-to-government discussions and further input from tribal governments.

Socioeconomics. Implementation of the Proposed Action

alternatives will not result in significant direct or indirect impacts to population, employment characteristics, schools and childcare, housing, economic activity, or tax revenue in Snohomish County. Incoming personnel and dependents will be staggered over a 10-year period and will be offset by the decrease in the number of personnel and dependents associated with the departure of the existing ships. The phased-in approach of homeporting ships and associated personnel will enable the Navy to comply with current policies and assess on- and off-installation housing and childcare demand and availability to determine whether additional Navy-controlled housing or childcare will be required. Construction of facilities and infrastructure will result in minor short-term direct and indirect economic benefits to the study area driven by an increase in construction spending.

Environmental Justice. The Navy analyzed concentrations of minority and low-income populations (environmental justice communities) that have the potential to be disproportionately impacted due to their proximity to project activities. The analysis included those populations located near the transportation network serving NAVSTA Everett. Based on the Navy's analysis, implementation of the Proposed Action alternatives will not result in disproportionately high and adverse human health or environmental effects on minority or low-income communities.

Cumulative Impacts. Based on the analysis of each resource potentially impacted by the Proposed Action alternatives, implementation of either Alternative 1 or Alternative 2 combined with the past, present, and reasonably foreseeable future projects, will not result in significant cumulative impacts. Cumulative impacts to all resources for Alternative 1 or Alternative 2 will be minor or non-existent.

Mitigation Measures: The analysis contained in the EA determined the Proposed Action alternatives will not result in significant environmental impacts. Therefore, no major mitigation actions are needed. However, several impact avoidance and minimization measures to be implemented for Alternative 1 or 2 are discussed above under Environmental Consequences and are included in Final EA Table 3.8-2 on page 3-58.

Public Involvement: The Navy prepared a Draft EA to inform the public of the Proposed Action alternatives and to allow the opportunity for public review and comment. Input from the public and from regulatory agencies was incorporated into the analysis

of potential impacts, as appropriate.

A Notice of Availability of the Draft EA, including information about where the Draft EA could be reviewed, the announcement of a 30-day public comment period, and dates and locations of two public open-house meetings, was published on February 9, 10, and 11, 2024, in the Seattle Times, and on February 9, 10, and 13, 2024, in the Everett Herald. The Draft EA was made available on the Navy's website, <https://www.nepa.navy.mil/FFGEEverett> and at local libraries (Everett Public Library and Everett Public Library-Evergreen Branch). The notice was also mailed to 38 local and state elected officials; federal, state, and local agencies; and community groups and organizations. The Navy issued a press release on February 9, 2024, and NAVSTA Everett posted the notice on social media. The public was invited to submit comments on the Draft EA via comment form at one of the public meetings; electronically on the project website; or by mail. Two comments were received during the public comment period. These comments were thoroughly analyzed, and where appropriate, changes were incorporated into the Final EA.

The Navy consulted with Indian tribal governments and the USFWS regarding the Proposed Action, as discussed above under Environmental Effects. The Navy consulted with the Washington State Historic Preservation Officer (SHPO), as required by Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act. The Navy determined that there will be no historic properties affected by the Proposed Action alternatives, and the SHPO agreed with the Navy's determination in a letter dated February 22, 2024. The Navy also sent letters to tribal governments of federally recognized American Indian tribes during the Section 106 consultation process. The Suquamish Tribe responded with a request to be a consulting party to the undertaking. The Navy coordinated with the Tribe regarding their concerns, and after the Navy provided the Tribe with an updated Inadvertent Discovery Plan to be used by construction workers, the Tribe responded that they had no further concerns. No other tribal governments responded to the Section 106 outreach.

A Coastal Consistency Determination was prepared in accordance with the Coastal Zone Management Act and submitted to Washington Department of Ecology (WDOE) via letter dated April 11, 2024. WDOE concurred with the Navy's determination that the Proposed Action will be consistent with Washington's Coastal Zone Management Plan.

Finding of No Significant Impact: 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), and in consideration of comments received during public review of the Draft EA and coordination with Indian tribal governments, the USEWS, SHPO, and WDOE, the Navy finds that the Proposed Action through implementation of either Alternative 1 or 2 will not significantly impact the quality of the human environment. Therefore, an Environmental Impact Statement will not be prepared.

The Final EA prepared by the Navy is on file and interested parties may obtain a copy by downloading the EA from the project website: <https://www.nepa.navy.mil/FFGEverett>. Electronic copies of the Final EA and FONSI may also be obtained by written request to: FFG EA Project Manager, Naval Facilities Engineering Systems Command, Atlantic (ATTENTION: Code EV21JB), 6506 Hampton Boulevard, Norfolk, Virginia 23508.

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Date



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