

DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE
Department of the Navy

**FINDING OF NO SIGNIFICANT IMPACT/FINDING OF NO SIGNIFICANT HARM
FOR THE TRAINING AND TESTING OF EXTRA LARGE UNMANNED UNDERSEA
VEHICLES AND UNMANNED SURFACE VESSELS AT NAVAL BASE VENTURA
COUNTY, PORT HUENEME, CALIFORNIA
EAXX-007-17-USN-1732113538**

Pursuant to Council on Environmental Quality regulations (40 Code of Federal Regulations [CFR] Parts 1500-1508) (2022) implementing the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA); Executive Order (EO) 12114, *Environmental Effects Abroad of Major Federal Actions*; United States (U.S.) Department of the Navy (Navy) Regulations (32 CFR Part 775), and the Office of the Chief of Naval Operations Instruction 5090.1, the Navy gives notice that an Environmental Assessment/Overseas Environmental Assessment (EA/OEA) has been prepared, and based on this Finding of No Significant Impact/Finding of No Significant Harm (FONSI/FONSH), an Environmental Impact Statement/Overseas Environmental Impact Statement (EIS/OEIS) is not required for establishing training and testing support facilities and associated training and testing of up to six Extra Large Unmanned Undersea Vehicles (XLUUVs) and two Unmanned Surface Vessels (USVs) at Naval Base Ventura County (NBVC), Port Hueneme, California. The Navy finds that the Proposed Action would not significantly impact or harm the quality of the human environment. The analysis and information presented in the Final EA/OEA is incorporated by reference into this FONSI/FONSH.

Proposed Action: The Proposed Action includes construction of training support facilities in the Onshore Proposed Action Area, and the training and testing for up to six XLUUVs and two USVs in the Nearshore Proposed Action Area and in the Offshore Proposed Action Area.

The Proposed Action includes construction of approximately 123,000 square feet (ft) of permanent facilities to support administrative, maintenance, and training and testing needs of the unmanned systems at NBVC Port Hueneme. Permanent facilities include: laboratories; cranes; assembly/disassembly areas; a vehicle staging area; Command, Control and Coordination area; expeditionary support and material storage areas; locker rooms; applied instruction classrooms; multi-purpose training rooms; training simulator; watch area; areas to support research, development, testing, and evaluation (RDT&E, referred to hereafter as testing) activities; administrative space; battery

shop; warehouses; and a vehicle wash rack. Construction of permanent facilities and pierside renovations are anticipated to begin no earlier than 2026.

The Proposed Action also includes training and testing of the XLUUVs and USVs in the Pacific Ocean waters nearshore and offshore to the west and southwest of NBVC Port Hueneme. The unmanned systems would be evaluated for autonomous transit capability; system navigation and communications functionality; system mission execution capability; system response to abnormal situations; response to/recovery from major and minor failures; and their ability to reliably complete a representative operational mission. System at-sea functionality is evaluated in a range of sea states, water depth, activity length, surface and subsurface obstacle conditions, and with varying mission objectives. There are no explosive ordnance or detonation events anticipated as part of training and testing. The Final EA/OEA addresses training and testing that would occur in 2025. Training and testing beyond 2025 would be addressed under future NEPA documentation.

Purpose and Need: The Navy conducts both training and testing activities to be able to protect the U.S. against its potential adversaries, to protect and defend the rights and interests of the U.S. and its allies to move freely on the oceans, and to provide humanitarian assistance. The purpose of the Proposed Action is to improve unmanned vehicle assimilation into the fleet by providing training and testing for improved intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance; as well as electronic, undersea, and mine warfare capabilities at NBVC Port Hueneme.

The need for the Proposed Action is to support the Navy's execution of its congressionally mandated roles and responsibilities under 10 U.S. Code (U.S.C.) section 8062.

Alternatives Considered: Alternatives were developed for analysis based upon the following reasonable alternative screening factors: launch and wet berth capability; existing suitable land facilities for training and testing, maintenance, and administrative uses; proximity to large, open ocean Navy ranges; proximity to suitable airports capable of landing military aircraft for transportation of XLUUVs by air, and military-used ports for transportation of XLUUVs; proximity to XLUUV original equipment manufacturer; proximity to multiple warfare centers for maintenance, operation, and testing; proximity to existing industrial enterprises, facilities,

services, and personnel for maintenance of vehicles; ability to meet dynamic training and testing requirements to expedite unmanned systems into the fleet; availability of commercial logistics providers (cranes, trucks, etc.); and locations must support training in the Pacific Ocean.

Based on the reasonable alternative screening factors, one action alternative (Proposed Action Alternative) was identified as meeting the purpose of and need for the Proposed Action and was analyzed in the EA/OEA.

No Action Alternative. Under the No Action Alternative, the Navy would not conduct the proposed XLUUV and USV training and testing activities, nor construct the facilities associated with the Proposed Action. The Navy would not conduct the proposed live at-sea training and testing. Consequently, the No Action Alternative is inherently unreasonable in that it does not meet the Navy's purpose and need. However, the No Action Alternative is carried forward in order to compare the magnitude of the potential environmental effects of the Proposed Action with the conditions that would occur if the Proposed Action did not occur.

Proposed Action Alternative. The Proposed Action Alternative is the Preferred Alternative. The Proposed Action Alternative reflects the construction, support and maintenance, and training and testing necessary for XLUUV and USV readiness to meet the purpose and need for the Proposed Action. Under the Proposed Action Alternative, the Navy proposes to conduct XLUUV and USV training and testing activities in waters off NBVC Port Hueneme as necessary to meet current and future readiness requirements.

Environmental Effects: No significant direct, indirect, or cumulative environmental impacts would occur from implementing the Proposed Action Alternative. The NEPA regulations, EO 12114, and Navy policies and procedures specify that an EA/OEA should address those resource areas potentially subject to impacts. Airspace and airfield operations, cultural resources, geological resources, visual resources, socioeconomic, and transportation were not analyzed in detail in the Final EA/OEA because potential impacts were considered to be negligible or non-existent. Potential environmental impacts on air quality, water resources, noise, biological resources, infrastructure, public health and safety, hazardous materials and wastes, land use and

recreation, and environmental justice were analyzed in detail and are summarized below.

Air Quality. The Proposed Action Alternative is not likely to exceed the National Ambient Air Quality Standards. Estimated greenhouse gas (GHG) emission increases over the construction period and during training and testing are not likely to detract from achieving Department of Defense (DoD) and federal GHG goals. Thus, the Proposed Action Alternative would not result in significant impacts to air quality.

Water Resources. The Proposed Action Alternative would not result in significant impacts to groundwater, surface water, marine waters, wetlands, and floodplains; or short-term impacts associated with stormwater runoff. All potential impacts to wetlands and waters of the U.S. would be further minimized through use of Best Management Practices (BMPs). Therefore, implementation of the Proposed Action Alternative would not result in significant impacts to water resources.

Noise. Noise levels from short-term construction of facilities and from XLUV and USV training and testing would not significantly impact the environment.

Biological Resources. The Proposed Action Alternative would not result in significant impacts to biological resources with implementation of BMPs, Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs), and mitigation measures. Specifically, the Proposed Action would result in:

- No impacts to terrestrial vegetation;
- No significant impacts to terrestrial wildlife and no take of birds protected under the Migratory Bird Treaty Act and Bald and Golden Eagle Protection Act;
- No significant impacts to marine vegetation, marine invertebrates, and marine fishes;
- No significant impacts to marine mammals protected under the Marine Mammal Protection Act; and
- No adverse effects to essential fish habitat protected under the Magnuson Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act.

On September 24, 2024, the Navy received a letter of concurrence from National Marine Fisheries Service that the Proposed Action Alternative may affect, but is not likely to adversely affect Endangered Species Act-listed and proposed Endangered Species

Act-listed marine species, and designated or proposed critical habitat.

Infrastructure. The Proposed Action Alternative would fit within the installation's existing infrastructure capacity and therefore would not result in significant impacts to potable water, wastewater, stormwater, solid waste management, energy, or communications.

Public Health and Safety. The Proposed Action Alternative would not result in significant impacts to public health and safety.

- The Proposed Action Alternative would not impact existing regional and local geologic, tsunami, flooding, or inundation hazards to the general public. Potential hazards from existing infrastructure (i.e., natural gas lines) and cleanup sites would be avoided during the construction phase, and the potential for impacts during training and testing would be avoided through ongoing cleanup efforts, and appropriate design (e.g., location-specific building codes and engineering controls) for the facility.
- No significant impact on safety from maritime training and testing activities would be expected; SOPs would be implemented to prevent vessel-to-vessel or vessel-to-object incursions.
- There are no environmental health and safety risks associated with the Proposed Action Alternative that would disproportionately affect children.

Hazardous Materials and Waste. No significant impacts related to hazardous materials, hazardous waste, toxic substances, and contaminated sites associated with implementation of the Proposed Action Alternative. Minor short- and long-term increases in hazardous material use and hazardous waste generation from construction and testing activities would not exceed current management and disposal capacities.

Land Use and Recreation. No significant impacts to land use or recreation. Under the Proposed Action Alternative, a portion of the activities occur on land owned by the Navy (NBVC Port Hueneme) in an area already used for similar purposes so there would be no change to the existing land use. As defined in Section 304 of the Coastal Zone Management Act, the term "coastal zone" does not include "lands the use of which is by law subject solely to the discretion of or which is held in trust by the Federal Government." NBVC is owned and operated by the Navy and, therefore, is excluded from the coastal zone. The

Navy recognizes that actions outside the coastal zone may affect land or water uses or natural resources of the coastal zone via "spill over" and, therefore, are subject to the provisions of Coastal Zone Management Act.

Coastal resources are unlikely to be significantly impacted due to the implementation of BMPs, SOPs, and mitigation measures that would ensure activities do not result in adverse effects to sensitive biological resources in the coastal zone. The training and testing events associated with the Proposed Action Alternative would not interfere with any potential recreational activities in the coastal zone. Therefore, there would be no significant impacts to land use or coastal resources from implementation of the Proposed Action Alternative.

The Navy consulted with the California Coastal Commission and received concurrence on September 27, 2024, on the determination that the Proposed Action Alternative would not have significant effects on coastal zone resources.

Environmental Justice. The Proposed Action Alternative would not result in disproportionately high and adverse human health or environmental effects to minority or low-income populations.

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

Mitigation Measures: Based on the analysis contained in the Final EA/OEA, the Navy has determined that the Proposed Action Alternative will not have significant environmental impacts. However, to provide additional protections to marine biological resources, the Navy will incorporate the voluntary mitigations detailed in Appendix B of the Final EA/OEA in implementing the Proposed Action.

Public Involvement: The Navy published a Notice of Availability of the Draft EA/OEA for three consecutive days in the Ventura County Star starting on July 5, 2024, and for three consecutive weeks in the weekly Spanish publication, La Vida, starting on July 11, 2024. The notice described the Proposed Action, solicited public comments on the Draft EA/OEA, provided dates of the public comment period (July 5-August 4, 2024), and announced that a copy of the EA/OEA was available for review on the Navy's

website, www.nepa.navy.mil/XLUUV, and at the following libraries:

- South Oxnard Branch Library, 4300 Saviers Road, Oxnard, California 93033
- E.P. Foster Library, 651 East Main Street, Ventura, California 93001

The public was invited to submit comments by any of the following methods:

- electronically, via the project website www.nepa.navy.mil/XLUUV
- in writing, by mail to: XLUUV USV EA/OEA Project Manager, Naval Facilities Engineering Systems Command Atlantic, Attn: Code EV2, SS, 6506 Hampton Blvd, Norfolk, Virginia 23508

Three comments were received. One comment was received from the City of Camarillo related to the potential increase in noise from military flights associated with delivery of XLUUVs when training and testing has been completed. One comment was received from the County of Ventura Department of Toxic Substances Control Board related to maximum contaminant levels for drinking water and pointed out that the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency recently designated two types of contaminants, perfluorooctanoic acid (PFOA) and perfluorooctane sulfonic acid (PFOS), as hazardous substances under the Comprehensive Environmental Response, Compensation, and Liability Act. Both comments have been addressed through text revisions in the Final EA/OEA. The third comment was from the Santa Ynez Band of Chumash Indians who requested consultation, which has now been completed. In coordination with the Santa Ynez Band of Chumash Indians, the Navy has included agreed-upon procedures for Tribal observation and potential archaeological Tribal monitoring of the proposed construction site as a BMP and avoidance of tribal fishing areas. A Notice of Availability of the Final EA/OEA and FONSI/FONSH will be published in the Ventura County Star and La Vida. Copies of the documents will also be available at the two libraries and on the project website identified above.

Findings: Based on analysis presented in the Final EA/OEA, which has been prepared in accordance with the requirements of NEPA, EO 12114, and Navy policies and procedures (32 CFR Part 775), in consideration of comments received during public review of the Draft EA/OEA, and in coordination with the National Marine

Fisheries Service, California Coastal Commission, and the Santa Ynez Band of Chumash Indians, the Navy finds that implementation of the Proposed Action would not significantly impact or harm the quality of the human environment. Therefore, an EIS/OEIS will not be prepared.

The Department of the Navy (DON) is aware of the November 12, 2024 decision in *Marin Audubon Society v. Federal Aviation Administration*, No. 23-1067 (D.C. Cir. Nov. 12, 2024). To the extent that a court may conclude that the Council on Environmental Quality (CEQ) regulations implementing NEPA are not judicially enforceable or binding on this agency action, the DON has nonetheless elected to follow those regulations at 40 C.F.R. Parts 1500- 1508, 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.

The Final EA/OEA prepared by the Navy is on file and interested parties may obtain a copy by downloading the Final EA/OEA from the project website: www.nepa.navy.mil/XLUUV. Electronic copies of this Final EA/OEA and FONSI/FONSH may also be obtained by written request to: Naval Facilities Engineering Systems Command, Atlantic (ATTENTION: Code EV2, SS, 6506 Hampton Boulevard, Norfolk, Virginia 23508).

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J.R. Cuadros
Director, Fleet Installations and
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28 MAR 2025

Date

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