

DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE

Department of the Navy

Record of Decision for the Final Supplemental Environmental Impact Statement for Developing Homeport Facilities for Three NIMITZ-Class Aircraft Carriers in Support of the U.S. Pacific Fleet at Naval Air Station North Island, Coronado, California

AGENCY: Department of the Navy, Department of Defense

ACTION: Notice of Record of Decision

SUMMARY: The Department of the Navy (the Navy), after carefully weighing the operational and environmental consequences of the proposed action, announces its decision to upgrade carrier berthing (Berth LIMA) at Naval Air Station (NAS) North Island to comply with current nuclear-powered aircraft carrier (CVN) facility requirements. The minor infrastructure improvements include construction of a fender system, mooring bollards, security building, and antiterrorism (AT)/force protection (FP) improvements, as well as the installation of information systems, electrical and mechanical utility upgrades, paving, drainage, and site improvements. In addition, the Navy announces its intent to implement additional vehicular traffic mitigation measures to address new facts and circumstances relevant to traffic. Although the 2008 Traffic Study included in the 2008 Final Supplemental Environmental Impact Statement (SEIS) shows that direct traffic impacts have not changed significantly since they were studied in the 1999 Final Environmental Impact Statement (FEIS), additional traffic mitigation measures will minimize the cumulative effects of vehicular traffic when three homeported aircraft carriers are simultaneously in port.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Mr. Robert Montana, Naval Facilities Engineering Command Southwest, 2730 McKean Street, Building 291, San Diego, CA 92136, telephone 619-556-8509.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION: Pursuant to Section 101, et seq. of the National Environmental Policy Act of 1969 (NEPA), 42 U.S.C. Section 4321, et seq.; Council on Environmental Quality (CEQ) Regulations (40 CFR 1500-1508); and Department of Navy regulations (32 CFR Part 775), the Navy announces its decision to supplement its 2000 Record of Decision (ROD) regarding homeport facilities and infrastructure for CVNs at NAS North Island as analyzed in the 1999 FEIS for Developing Homeport Facilities for Three Nimitz-Class Aircraft Carriers in Support of the U.S. Pacific Fleet.

BACKGROUND: Historically NAS North Island has been in continual use as a carrier homeport since 1917 when the first Navy aircraft carriers were commissioned. Since 1978, NAS North Island has been the homeport for three conventional carriers (CVs). In addition, NAS North Island has supported operational requirements for transient carriers.

In 1993, the Base Realignment and Closure Commission (BRAC) ordered the closure of NAS Alameda, which required the relocation of one CVN to San Diego. The 1995 BRAC FEIS was prepared to analyze facilities and infrastructure necessary to support one homeported CVN and preserve existing capability to accommodate one transient CVN at NAS North Island, which required dredging and construction of a carrier wharf. The 1995 BRAC FEIS indicated that traffic and socioeconomics associated with the proposed CVN homeporting at NAS North Island were not significant because there had historically been three CVs homeported at NAS North Island. The 1995 ROD included several mitigation measures to reduce parking on city streets, to construct a new Third Street Gate, to barge equipment and materials during wharf construction and to encourage ride sharing and mass transit programs. As CVs reached the end of their service life, they were replaced with CVNs; therefore in 1999, the Navy needed to create the capability to homeport the larger, wider and deeper draft CVNs. The 1999 FEIS analyzed the environmental consequences of homeporting CVNs at four locations. The Navy decided in its 2000 ROD to create a homeport at NAS North Island to accommodate two additional CVNs (for a total of three) in support of the Navy's Pacific Fleet Force Structure consisting of six aircraft carriers as later recommended by the 2006 Quadrennial Defense Review (QDR). Homeports for five Pacific Fleet CVNs have already been assigned to Navy installations in the continental U.S. and overseas. The sixth CVN is currently undergoing maintenance at the Newport News Shipyard in Virginia. On March 30, 2007, the Secretary of Navy announced that USS CARL VINSON (CVN 70) would move its homeport to NAS North Island following the completion of a SEIS. The move would be consistent with the 2006 QDR, the 1999 FEIS, and the 2000 ROD, which analyzed and recorded the decision to create the capacity to homeport three CVNs at NAS North Island.

The 2000 ROD specified that traffic impacts were less than significant, but that mitigation would be implemented for the average 13 intermittent, nonconsecutive days per year when three CVNs assigned to NAS North Island were simultaneously in port. The 2000 ROD specified mitigation measures may include staggering work hours, encouraging carpools and vanpools,

subsidizing the use of public transportation by military personnel and civilian employees, and monitoring effectiveness of these traffic mitigation measures. The 2008 Final SEIS fulfills the commitment of the Navy in the 2000 ROD to monitor the effectiveness of traffic mitigation measures.

The 2008 Final SEIS analyzes information that was not available at the time the 1999 FEIS was completed, and focuses on potentially significant new circumstances or information relevant to environmental conditions that have occurred since the 2000 ROD for the 1999 FEIS. Information or circumstances that have not undergone significant change since the 2000 ROD were not reexamined. By supplementing the 1999 FEIS, the 2008 Final SEIS advances the purpose of NEPA of informing Navy decision-makers and the general public about the environmental effects of the government's action.

PURPOSE AND NEED: The 2008 Final SEIS was prepared for the limited purpose of supplementing the 1999 FEIS and 2000 ROD with current circumstances and information. Pursuant to the 2000 ROD to homeport two additional CVNs (for a total of three) at NAS North Island, the Proposed Action analyzed in the 1999 FEIS was executed in 2004. The 2008 Final SEIS does not propose any changes to the Proposed Action analyzed in the 1999 FEIS. Rather, the 2008 Final SEIS analyzes new circumstances and information relevant to environmental conditions that have occurred since the 2000 ROD and regarding the proposed minor infrastructure improvements to Berth LIMA. Particular attention was given to the topics covered by the 1999 FEIS, public scoping comments from fall 2007 and public comments on the Draft SEIS from summer 2008. Circumstances and information that have changed since the publication of the 2000 ROD include: traffic and transportation, new design requirements for CVN homeport facilities, and public scoping comments regarding shoreline erosion along First Street in the City of Coronado, California. Therefore, the 2008 Final SEIS analyzed the following: traffic and transportation, air quality, noise, biological resources, marine water quality, and coastal processes (erosion). Information or circumstances that have not changed significantly since the 2000 ROD are not reexamined in the 2008 Final SEIS.

The 2008 Final SEIS analyzed the changes in traffic and transportation circumstances in the City of Coronado which included: the removal of the tolls on the San Diego-Coronado Bay Bridge (State Route [SR]-75); construction of the NAS North Island Main Gate at Stockdale Boulevard (Third Street), which opened on July 9, 2007; and a six percent increase in daily traffic trips by all users of the San Diego-Coronado Bay Bridge

since 2000. Another circumstance affecting CVN related traffic is the adjustment for the 2003 Fleet Response Plan, which affects CVN deployment and maintenance cycles. The average number of days per year that three CVNs will be in port simultaneously has increased from 13 intermittent, nonconsecutive days to an average of 29 intermittent, nonconsecutive days. The 2008 Final SEIS evaluated vehicular traffic and traffic issues related to these new circumstances and evaluated the effectiveness of traffic mitigation measures implemented pursuant to the 2000 ROD.

The 2008 Final SEIS analyzed the minor infrastructure improvements to Berth LIMA to comply with the Unified Facilities Criteria 4-159-03 - Policy and Procedures for Design of Moorings for U.S. Department of Defense Vessels; Interim Technical Guidelines - Facility Homeporting Criteria for Nimitz-Class Carriers; and Interim Technical Guidelines for AT/FP and Physical Security of Waterfront Facilities. In addition, the minor infrastructure improvements repair normal deterioration that has occurred over the last 9 years due to age, use and exposure to the marine environment. The minor infrastructure improvements are connected to the action analyzed in the 1999 FEIS and are therefore included in this ROD. Berth LIMA has historically been used for both transient and homeported CVNs. The minor infrastructure improvements include the construction of a fender system, mooring bollards, security building and AT/FP improvements, as well as the installation of information systems, electrical and mechanical utility upgrades, paving, and drainage and site improvements. No additional dredging will be required.

Public scoping comments raised a concern related to shoreline erosion along First Street in the City of Coronado. Specific scoping comments asserted that shoreline erosion was caused by previous dredging actions and by wave action associated with ongoing boat and ship traffic in the San Diego Bay. Therefore, the 2008 Final SEIS analyzed coastal processes in comparison to past and projected future conditions.

PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT: The Navy initiated a mutual exchange of information through early and open communications with interested groups and individuals on October 18, 2007, with the publication of a Notice of Intent (NOI) to prepare the SEIS. The NOI was published in the Federal Register (72 FR 59084) and three local newspapers, and announced in notification letters sent to federal, state and local agencies and officials and interested groups and individuals. The NOI announced the start of a 30-day public scoping comment period. In response to local

wildfires in the San Diego area, the Navy extended the normal 30-day public scoping comment period in a second NOI published in the Federal Register (73 FR 46269) on November 13, 2007. The public scoping comment period officially ended on December 3, 2007. Public scoping comments were used to identify public concerns to be analyzed in the Draft SEIS.

A Notice of Availability (NOA) and Notice of Public Hearing for the Draft SEIS were published in the Federal Register (73 FR 46249) and three local newspapers on August 8, 2008, and were announced in notification letters sent to federal, state and local agencies and officials, and interested groups and individuals. An open house and public hearing was held on the Draft SEIS on September 3, 2008, in Coronado, CA. The Draft SEIS was distributed to various federal, state and local agencies, as well as other interested groups and individuals. In addition, copies of the Draft SEIS were available for public review at six local libraries and were available for review and download on the project website (<http://www.nimitzcarriersseis.com>).

Forty-nine individuals (including city officials and organizations) submitted 55 comments on the Draft SEIS during the 45-day public comment period from August 8 through September 22, 2008. All oral and written comments were considered in the preparation of the 2008 Final SEIS. The NOA for the 2008 Final SEIS was published in the Federal Register (73 FR 75716) and three local newspapers on December 12, 2008. In addition, public notices and news releases announced the availability of the 2008 Final SEIS at six local libraries and on the project website beginning on December 12, 2008, and notification letters were sent to federal, state and local agencies and officials, and interested groups and individuals.

ALTERNATIVES CONSIDERED: The 2008 Final SEIS supplements the 1999 FEIS by analyzing new circumstances and information relevant to environmental facts and circumstances associated with implementation of the 2000 ROD. Therefore, the 2008 Final SEIS did not revisit the alternatives analysis in the 1999 FEIS.

This 2008 Final SEIS does analyze the construction of minor infrastructure improvements to Berth LIMA to meet current Navy standards for CVN homeport facilities. However, there are no practical construction alternatives as the minor infrastructure improvements are located specifically at Berth LIMA and performed in a manner consistent with regulations and guidelines. The 2008 Final SEIS analyzes the No Action Alternative as a point of comparison to evaluate the effects of the proposed minor infrastructure improvements. The No Action Alternative

maintains the status quo and therefore does not impact the existing environment. It is the environmentally preferred alternative. However, it does not meet the operational objectives to provide fully functional facilities as defined by the current CVN homeport facility standards.

SUMMARY OF ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACTS: The Navy evaluated whether there were significant new circumstances and information relevant to the original homeporting decision as analyzed in the 1999 FEIS. The 2008 Final SEIS evaluated traffic and transportation, air quality, noise, biological resources, marine water quality, and coastal processes (erosion). The Navy concluded that changes in direct and indirect environmental consequences are less than significant; however, there are significant cumulative impacts with regard to traffic. This ROD summarizes the environmental consequences of the proposed action and measures the Navy will take to avoid or reduce environmental impacts.

TRAFFIC: Traffic studies conducted in conjunction with the 2008 Final SEIS show direct traffic impacts have not changed significantly since they were studied in the 1999 FEIS. The 2008 Traffic Study compared the peak hour traffic associated with two additional CVNs with the 1999 FEIS predicted peak hour trips. There would be roughly the same levels of traffic (23 fewer trips in the morning peak hour and 25 more trips in the afternoon peak hour), and thus the change in direct traffic impacts will not be significant. In the 2000 ROD, the Navy committed to use and monitor traffic mitigation measures when three CVNs are in port; such as, staggering CVN work shifts, encouraging carpools and vanpools and subsidizing the use of public transportation. The 2008 Final SEIS evaluated these measures and found them to be effective in reducing both peak hour and managing total traffic on the local road network. The staggering of CVN work shifts reduces the severity of the peak 1-hour traffic volumes for inbound and outbound traffic within existing peak travel periods during the 29 intermittent, non-consecutive days per year when the three CVNs are in port. Instead of a peak hour of 4,176 vehicles on the road, the estimated peak traffic would be managed resulting in 1,679 vehicles in a morning peak hour and 1,727 in an afternoon peak hour. Comparing the three CVNs with staggered work shift scenario to having only 1 CVN in port, the former would generate only 287 additional vehicles during the morning peak hour and 335 during the afternoon peak hour. This illustrates the effectiveness of staggering CVN work shifts in reducing and managing the traffic volumes during existing peak travel periods. In addition, the sixteen additional days that three CVNs will be

in port simultaneously is not considered significant because the days occur intermittently throughout the year and the number of additional vehicles is insignificant with respect to current conditions.

Note that the 2008 Final SEIS Subsection 6.2.4-Potential External Intersection Improvements (page 6-14) incorrectly states, "For example, the 1999 FEIS assessed three CVNs in port assuming 3,115 sailors per ship while the 2008 Traffic Study assessed an updated number using 3,217 sailors per CVN." This statement also appears in the corresponding section of the Executive Summary (page ES-12). In fact, the 1999 FEIS correctly assumed 3,115 sailors for the crew of a CV and 3,217 sailors for a CVN. The 1999 FEIS and the 2008 Final SEIS are consistent with one another in the use of 3,217 sailors per CVN in their respective traffic analyses. The misstated information was not used in the 2008 traffic analysis and does not affect the conclusion of the 2008 Final SEIS that direct traffic impacts associated with three CVNs have not changed significantly since they were studied in the 1999 FEIS. It is clearly stated on page 2-9 of the 2008 Final SEIS that "the SEIS traffic evaluation considers the same traffic scenario studied by the 1999 FEIS: traffic generated by three CVNs homeported at NAS North Island, with 3,217 personnel associated with each carrier".

Traffic-related impacts to air and noise in vicinity of NAS North Island have also been examined with respect to changes in traffic conditions and the 16 additional days that three CVNs will be in port simultaneously. While air and noise emissions would increase, the effects would not be significant because the air emissions are well below de minimis levels and noise is consistent with an urban environment.

MINOR INFRASTRUCTURE IMPROVEMENTS: The proposed minor infrastructure improvements to Berth LIMA do not directly, indirectly or cumulatively affect the human environment. Estimated air emissions have been calculated and are well below de minimis levels. The construction noise would be negligible and would not appreciably alter the average baseline noise environment. Short-term impacts from construction related activities near Berth LIMA may potentially affect biological resources including plankton, eelgrass and algae, invertebrates, fishes, birds and marine mammals. In addition, short-term impacts from construction related activities may affect but are not likely to adversely affect three species listed under the federal Endangered Species Act: green sea turtle, California brown pelican and California least tern. The entire coast of

California is broadly identified as Essential Fish Habitat (EFH) for West Coast groundfish and coastal pelagic species. The construction activities associated with the Berth LIMA will adversely affect EFH but these effects are expected to be short-term/temporary, localized and adequately offset pursuant to the Magnuson-Stevens Act as concurred with by National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS).

No marine mammals would be impacted by the in-water construction for Berth LIMA. As marine mammals are occasionally found in the project area, those in the immediate vicinity of in-water construction activities could be temporarily displaced by noise associated with pile driving activities. The Navy will implement measures to avoid or minimize potential effects to marine mammals as described under the biological resource mitigation section of this ROD. Given the anticipated low levels of disturbance, limited numbers of these animals in the project area, and implementation of preventative measures, project activities would not adversely affect marine mammals.

The minor infrastructure improvements would have short-term, localized, and less than significant effects on two federally listed birds, the California brown pelican and the California least tern. No nesting habitats would be impacted. Due to the mobile nature of these species and the absence of nesting areas near the project area, the proposed activities may affect, but are not likely to adversely affect these federally listed bird species. In addition, the proposed construction of minor infrastructure improvements to Berth LIMA may affect, but is not likely to adversely affect green sea turtles. The Navy is monitoring tagged green sea turtles for presence and distribution in San Diego Bay through January 2009 as part of a joint Navy-Port of San Diego-NOAA Fisheries effort to detect green sea turtles in the bay. The Navy has been in informal consultation with NMFS since the beginning of the green sea turtle study (December 2007). The first year's findings indicate that green sea turtles do move randomly though the southern part of San Diego Bay and may loaf and forage as far north as the project site. One visual sighting of a green sea turtle within the project area has been confirmed.

Driving fender piles for Berth LIMA will impact marine water quality, but these impacts would be short-term and less than significant. The Navy will implement measures to avoid or minimize potential effects to water quality and comply with federal and state permit conditions.

COASTAL PROCESSES (EROSION): In response to public scoping comments, the Navy assessed San Diego Bay erosion processes, and the effects of CVN and other marine vessel movements and past Navy dredging projects on erosion of the shoreline occurring along First Street. The analysis included reviewing past dredging efforts, performing literature and historical records review, measuring water currents and modeling hydrodynamic processes. Special attention was paid to U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE) reports from 1955, 2000, and 2005. The Navy concluded that the existing erosion condition along First Street is a result of natural conditions and historical alterations to the bay. The First Street area is not appreciably affected by past Navy dredging projects because bay currents are governed by the physical constraints of the entire bay (shape, size, and bathymetry), as well as oceanic inputs and outputs. Water currents are insufficient to support sediment transport. In addition, aircraft carrier and associated tugboat movements represent a negligible percentage of marine vessel traffic within the bay; such movements do not occur south of the turning basin and do not create substantial wakes. Therefore, the presence of homeported CVNs at NAS North Island does not appreciably affect erosion rates along First Street.

CUMULATIVE IMPACTS: In light of new circumstances and information, the Navy has concluded there are likely to be significant cumulative impacts associated with traffic. NAS North Island-related traffic exists within the context of failed traffic operating conditions within the local road network, conditions that are collectively also the result of continuing growth in the population, development and tourism within the City of Coronado. It is important to note that the homeporting of three CVNs adds only a few trips to the local road network that were not already evaluated in 1999 FEIS. The 2008 Final SEIS evaluated the cumulative effects of traffic and recommends potential traffic improvement measures, both internal (on-base) and external (off-base) to NAS North Island to reduce traffic congestion and improve pedestrian safety. There are no cumulative impacts to air quality and noise as a result of traffic and construction related activities. The construction activities associated with the in-water construction for Berth LIMA would cause temporary impacts to biological resources and to marine water quality in the geographic study area. Because the impacts would be temporary, localized and impact minimization measures would be undertaken for this project, these cumulative effects would not be significant.

MITIGATION:

TRAFFIC AND TRANSPORTATION: While direct traffic impacts have not changed significantly since they were studied in the 1999 FEIS, there are likely to be significant cumulative impacts associated with traffic. Therefore, the Navy identified potential traffic improvements both internal (on-base) and external (off-base) to NAS North Island. As discussed below, potential funding sources for these improvement measures vary.

Recommended Internal Improvements for NAS North Island: Several internal (on-base) traffic improvements were analyzed. At First Street and Alameda Boulevard, the potential traffic improvement requires reconfiguring the First Street Gate to support four inbound only traffic lanes during the Navy a.m. peak hour, with normal 2-way traffic flow (inbound and outbound) at all other times. Naval Base Coronado Commanding Officer will implement this traffic improvement when three CVNs are in port and voluntarily at other times deemed necessary to manage traffic entering NAS North Island when it does not impair accomplishment of the defense mission. At Fourth Street and Alameda Boulevard, the traffic improvement assumes the City will install a planned traffic signal and requires adding an internal (on-base) exclusive eastbound right-turn lane along McCain Boulevard for vehicles turning right onto Alameda Boulevard. These two traffic measures improve the overall traffic flow entering and exiting NAS North Island. The Navy will coordinate with the City of Coronado and/or the California Department of Transportation District 11 (CALTRANS) regarding internal (on-base) improvements that could affect external (off-base) roadways.

Potential External Intersection Improvements: Potential improvement measures were identified and evaluated for those intersections external to NAS North Island to improve traffic congestion and address pedestrian safety. Five intersections were identified as appropriate candidates for potential traffic improvements. Four of the five intersections can achieve acceptable level of service conditions through combination of internal (on-base) and external (off-base) traffic improvement measures. One intersection cannot achieve an acceptable level of service through intersection widening and the City of Coronado is investigating other options within their jurisdiction to implement at the intersection of Fourth Street and Orange Avenue.

All external (off-base) traffic improvements are under the jurisdiction of either the City of Coronado or CALTRANS and

require funding and implementation through the appropriate State of California Transportation Organizations. State and/or local governments would determine whether improvements identified off-base in the 2008 Final SEIS should be implemented. The Navy remains committed to cooperate to the maximum extent allowable by law with these agencies if any of these proposed improvement measures are implemented. The DoD and its component branches have no authority to manage or fund road improvements outside its property, except as may be authorized by law under the Defense Access Roads (DAR) Program. DAR is the only authority the Navy has to address these recommended improvements and the Navy will submit requests for consideration under this program. For each project that is certified by the DAR program, the Navy commits to seek funding from DoD. Execution will be subject to availability of funding through the DoD budget process.

Additional Traffic Management Measures: The following measures are within the Navy's purview to accomplish and will be implemented when these measures do not impair accomplishment of the defense mission. The Navy will manage NAS North Island-related traffic during peak hours of the workday commute by optimizing the timing of existing on-base Navy bus routes, by staggering work hours when two CVNs and three CVNs are in port, and by implementing the internal (on-base) traffic improvements as previously discussed. The Navy will monitor traffic conditions during peak hours. Based on the assessment of need by Naval Base Coronado Commanding Officer, the Navy may voluntarily stagger work hours when 1 CVN is in port as a temporary measure to improve traffic flow. The Navy will work cooperatively with San Diego Association of Governments (SANDAG) on regional transportation initiatives to leverage the Navy's Transportation Incentive Program (TIP) and will promote incentives to the Navy's military members and civilian workforce with a goal of increasing mass transit ridership and carpooling. The Navy will also continue to work with City of Coronado and CALTRANS to find mutually acceptable solutions to traffic concerns.

MINOR INFRASTRUCTURE IMPROVEMENTS: The 2008 Final SEIS concluded that the minor infrastructure improvements to Berth LIMA would not result in significant direct or indirect environmental consequences; however, the Navy will implement mitigation measures to avoid or minimize adverse environmental impacts, as follows:

Biological Resources: Although implementation and operation of the proposed infrastructure improvements at Berth LIMA are not expected to result in significant impacts to marine mammals and

green sea turtles, the Navy will employ avoidance and minimization measures. These measures include performing a visual sweep of the project area, or of a 100-foot radius (whichever is greater) prior to commencing pile driving activities, and after a break in pile driving for more than 30 minutes. If any marine mammals or green sea turtles are seen within this visual range, the Navy will not commence pile driving activities until 15 minutes has passed since the last such sighting, or the animal has moved out of the established range. If a marine mammal or a green sea turtle moves within this established range while pile driving activities are occurring, such activities can continue without interruption. Prior to the start of pile driving each day, after each break of more than 30 minutes, and if any increase in the intensity is required, the Navy will use a ramp-up procedure. This procedure involves a slow increase in the pile driving to allow any undetected animals in the area to voluntarily depart. The Navy, in consultation with NOAA, has determined that this will prevent adverse effects.

Marine Water Resources: With respect to construction related activities at Berth LIMA, the Navy will obtain all federal and state permits and adhere to permit conditions that may be required to reduce potential impacts to water quality.

AGENCY CONSULTATION AND COORDINATION: Agencies reviewing biological resources were contacted early in the environmental planning process and received official notification letters in August 2008. Informal Section 7 consultations, in compliance with the Endangered Species Act, were initiated with the United States Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) and NMFS. The USFWS concluded informal consultation with the Navy via email correspondence on August 14, 2008, with determinations of may affect, but not likely to adversely affect the California brown pelican and California least tern.

The NMFS informal consultation with the Navy concluded on August 18, 2008, by official letter with a determination that the proposed construction of minor infrastructure improvements to Berth LIMA "may affect, but is not likely to adversely affect, green sea turtles." NMFS also concurred on August 4, 2008, via email correspondence that the construction activities associated with the Berth LIMA "will adversely affect EFH but these effects are expected to be short-term/temporary, localized and adequately offset pursuant to the Magnuson-Stevens Act". Finally, by official letter dated October 30, 2008, the California Coastal Commission agreed that the proposed

infrastructure upgrades to Berth LIMA would not adversely affect coastal resources.

RESPONSES TO COMMENTS ON THE 2008 FINAL SEIS: The Navy reviewed and considered all comments that were received during the 30-day no action period following the issuance of the NOA of the Final SEIS. One comment letter was received on the 2008 Final SEIS. This letter included 10 comments, of which 8 were similar or identical to comments received on the Draft SEIS, and therefore were previously considered and addressed in the 2008 Final SEIS. All of the comments in the comment letter related to erosion of the shoreline occurring along First Street. Comments warranting specific responses are provided below:

Comment 1: "The new Section 5.3 includes a very conceptual sediment budget for San Diego Bay and then uses this budget to explain that the erosion along First Street is due to lack of sediment input. What is offered is by no means an actual sediment budget. What is purely conjecture in terms of quantities and impacts are presented as facts." "A rigorous sediment budget would include quantification and identification of sediment sources, sediment transport pathways, and sediment sinks. In particular, a proper sediment budget would have calculated the sediment budget along First Street."

Response to Comment 1: The sediment budget model, referred to in Section 5.3, for loss of sediment to shorelines as a result of reduced river sediment delivery is a widely accepted scientific principle that provides a basis for examining causes of shoreline erosion. It was not intended to be a detailed sediment budget for a focused area such as the First Street shoreline. However, it was one of several sources of information used to understand sediment sources, sediment transport and sediment deposition, as well as to explain shoreline processes affecting the area along First Street. Coastal processes were fully studied and discussed in Chapter 5, and historical changes to First Street shoreline were further illustrated in Appendix B of the 2008 Final SEIS.

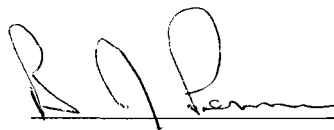
Comment 2: "The final discussion in the new Section 5.3 is an attempt to discredit the previous USACE 2000 and 2005 reports. It labels them "superficial appraisals" and states they are not comprehensive because the reports are not as lengthy as the USACE Shore Protection Manual. This comparison does not properly evaluate the USACE 2000 and 2005 reports, nor does it undercut the reasoned conclusions reached twice by the USACE, in 2000 and 2005 about the nature and cause of First Street erosion."

Response to Comment 2: The 2008 Final SEIS does not discredit the USACE reports. Commensurate with the level of analysis used to derive its conclusions, these reports were entitled "initial appraisals" to determine Federal interest in shoreline protection along First Street. These reports were intended to provide a preliminary appraisal, and these reports were not intended to provide comprehensive analyses with supporting data on what may be causing erosion. The 2005 USACE report determined that there was no Federal interest in shoreline protection along First Street. The Shoreline Protection Manual, referred to as a comparison with an initial appraisal report, is more typical of an in-depth analysis performed by the USACE. The consideration given to the USACE reports as part of research for the 2008 Final SEIS, and the discussion of conclusions made in the USACE reports, is well-documented in the 2008 Final SEIS (Sections 5.2, 5.3, and 5.4) and in responses to previous comments on the Draft SEIS (e.g., Appendix K: 01-C, 09-PP, 16 A-Y, 35-A, 36 A-K).

CONCLUSION: After careful consideration of the purpose and need for the proposed action, the analysis contained in the 2008 Final SEIS, and the comments received on the 2008 Final SEIS from federal, state, and local agencies and individual members of the public, I have decided to proceed with the minor infrastructure improvements to Berth LIMA. In addition, I have decided to implement the recommended internal (on-base) traffic improvement measures, and to perform the additional traffic management measures addressed above in order to minimize the cumulative effects of vehicular traffic when three homeported aircraft carriers are simultaneously in port at NAS North Island.

30 Jan 2009

Date



BJ Penn
Assistant Secretary of the Navy
(Installations and Environment)