DEPARTMENT OF THE ARMY
HEADQUARTERS, 70TH REGIONAL READINESS COMMAND
4570 TEXAS WAY WEST
FORT LAWTON, WA 98199-1015

Pier 23 Repair
Tacoma, Pierce County, Washington

Finding of No Significant Impact

The 70th Regional Readiness Command (70th) RRC leases 7.4 acres of submerged lands and 3 acres of uplands from the Port of Tacoma. The 70th RRC owns, controls, and has command of the pier structure and its associated facilities, as well as upland structures and improvements on this property. The inner timber portion of Pier 23 was constructed prior to World War II. The outer half of the pier is a concrete surface and piling extension that was added in 1946. The purpose of the proposed action is to allow the 70th RRC to continue mooring and maintaining Army Reserve vessels at Pier 23. The current facilities are deteriorated to the point where they do not meet current operational and safety requirements.

Proposed Action (Preferred Alternative).
The Army Reserve plans to repair the existing pier structure. Up to 530 creosote-treated structural, fender, and bollard piles would be removed and replaced with ammoniacal copper zinc arsenate (ACZA) treated timber piles. Damaged pier decking, stringers, pile caps, and utilities running beneath the pier would also be replaced.

No Action Alternative.
Under the no action alternative, the Army Reserve would not undertake any pier repairs. The deterioration of the pier structure would continue to affect the 70th RRC's usage of the facilities at this site. Limits on vehicle weights and mooring loads would remain, reducing the 70th RRC's ability to carry out vessel maintenance and training activities. The damaged structure and outdated utilities are becoming increasingly unsafe for 70th RRC personnel.

Other Alternatives.
Other alternatives were analyzed to determine which best fit the project need and purpose. The proposed project was limited to the Pier 23 property because other comparable moorage facilities are not available in Puget Sound. Another alternative consisted of demolishing the timber portion of the pier and replacing it with a new concrete-surfaced pier on concrete piling. Under this alternative, approximately 1,100 creosote-treated timber piles would be removed from the wooden section of the pier and replaced with 308 pre-cast concrete piles. This alternative was eliminated from further consideration because it cost more than twice as much as the preferred alternative.

Summary of Impacts.
Pursuant to the National Environmental Policy Act, an Environmental Assessment (EA) has been prepared. This document describes the environmental consequences of the proposed work, which are briefly summarized below. Unavoidable adverse impacts will generally be localized in nature, short in duration, and minor scope. None of these adverse impacts would be significant either individually or cumulatively.

Short-term degradation of water quality will occur due to construction-related sediment disturbance. Turbidity impacts associated with implementation of the proposed project are not expected to be significant because due to the type of equipment which will be used, and the temporary and localized nature of the work. Contaminants are present in sediments at the site, so a dredging elutriate test was performed to estimate the potential for exceedences of State water quality criteria. The test results indicated that there will be no exceedences of acute or chronic criteria at the mixing zone boundary. Since these criteria were develop for the protection of marine organisms, any impacts resulting from exposure to contaminants caused by the repair work would be insignificant.

By removing over 500 creosote-treated piling from the marine environment, the proposed action would remove a chronic source of polycyclic aromatic hydrocarbons (PAH) contamination. However, the replacement of these pilings with ACZA-treated timber would result in some leaching of metals to adjacent sediments. The leaching will occur over a very short period of time (days to weeks) because the reservoir of leachable metals (copper, zinc, chromium, and arsenic) in the wood is depleted quickly. This is because the metals that comprise the treatment process literally become fixed to the wood. Any toxicity associated with the release of metals into the water column is minimized by dilution of receiving waters, and diminishes with the age of the structure. Areas with low flow or turnover and low pH have the greatest potential for adverse impacts; the marine waters of the project site do not exhibit these characteristics. Released metal contaminants will likely be incorporated into adjacent sediments. Metals will not degrade in the long term, but they may become physically sequestered, mineralized, or chemically sequestered, thereby reducing their bioavailability. Impacts associated with the proposed action should not be significant because relative risk associated with ACZA-treated wood (being placed) is less than that of creosote-treated wood (being removed), both temporally and spatially. Implementation of design and construction best management practices, such as placement of rub railings on fender piles and the use of untreated wood wherever possible, will further reduce these risks.

Noise associated with pile driving may affect fish and wildlife present in the project area. Although an increase in ambient noise levels is likely to be the most geographically widespread impact of the proposed action, the size of this increase will be minimized through the use of a vibratory extractor and the likely use of a vibratory hammer. The soft substrates present at the site should also lead to relatively low noise levels. Noise impacts would be temporary. Construction vehicles will increase air emissions in the vicinity of the site; these impacts will be minor in scope, temporary, and localized. The project is not expected to adversely affect threatened or endangered species, and no impacts to cultural resources are anticipated as a result of the construction activities. The National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration - Fisheries, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, and the Washington State Office of Archaeology and Historic Preservation concurred with these effect determinations (Refer to Appendix C of the EA).

Comment Period.
The official comment period for the Environmental Assessment occurred between September 20, 2004 and October 19, 2004.

Point of Contact.
Please send comments, questions, and requests for additional information to:

70th Regional Readiness Command
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Finding.
Based on the analysis detailed in the Environmental Assessment (attached), this project is not considered a major Federal action significantly affecting the quality of the human or natural environment and does not require preparation of an environmental impact statement.

JAN 07 2005
Date

LAWRENCE J. JOHNSON
Major General, USAR
Commanding