

## FINDING OF NO SIGNIFICANT IMPACT

### Tacoma Harbor, WA Navigation Improvement Project

#### Tacoma, Pierce County, Washington

The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, Seattle District (Corps) has conducted an environmental analysis in accordance with the National Environmental Policy Act of 1969, as amended. The Final Integrated Feasibility Report and Environmental Assessment (IFR/EA) dated [April 2022, as updated June 2022](#), for the Tacoma Harbor Navigation Improvement Project, addresses navigation safety and cost efficiency improvement opportunities and feasibility in the Sitcum and Blair Waterway of Tacoma Harbor in Pierce County, Washington.

The Final IFR/EA, incorporated herein by reference, evaluated various alternatives that would improve safety and economic efficiency of commercial navigation in the study area. The recommended plan is the National Economic Development (NED) Plan and includes:

- Deepen the existing Blair Waterway channel from an authorized depth of -51 mean lower low water (MLLW) to -57 MLLW
- Selective channel widening of the Blair Waterway from the existing channel width of approximately 450 feet to 865 feet
- Ongoing evaluation of beneficial use of dredged material at the Saltchuk site
- Under the least cost disposal option, approximately 2.4 million cubic yards of dredged material would be placed in the Commencement Bay open water disposal site and approximately 392,000 cubic yards would be placed at a suitable upland facility.

Alternatives addressing navigation improvements in the Sitcum Waterway were screened out early in the study process. Only alternatives for the Blair Waterway were carried forward for full feasibility evaluation. In addition to a “no action” plan, three alternatives were evaluated. The alternatives included deepening the entire waterway to -57 feet MLLW and to -58 MLLW, and a smaller scope alternative included deepening the waterway to -58 MLLW through Husky Terminal. Chapter 3 of the IFR/EA outlines the formulation, evaluation, and screening of alternatives from the economic perspective. Chapter 4 of the IFR/EA provides the analysis and comparison of environmental effects of the final array of alternatives. Four non-structural measures were considered for inclusion in the alternatives; these included tug assists, high-tide transiting, light-loading, and lightering. The non-structural measures were screened from further analysis because either they are already in use or would not meet the project objectives of transportation cost savings and reducing navigation challenges for pilots.

For all alternatives, the potential effects were evaluated, as appropriate. A summary assessment of the potential effects of the recommended plan are listed in Table 1:

	Less than significant effects	Less than significant effects as a result of mitigation	Resource unaffected by action
Aesthetics	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Air quality	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Aquatic resources/wetlands	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Invasive species	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Fish and wildlife habitat	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Threatened/Endangered species	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Historic properties	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Other cultural resources	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Floodplains	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Hazardous, toxic & radioactive waste	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Hydrology	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Land use	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Navigation and Economic Conditions	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Noise levels (underwater)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Public infrastructure	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Socioeconomics	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Environmental justice	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Soils	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Tribal trust resources	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Water quality	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Climate change	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Public Health and Safety	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Sea Level Change	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

All practical and appropriate means to avoid or minimize adverse environmental effects were analyzed and incorporated into the recommended plan. Best management practices (BMPs) as detailed in the IFR/EA will be implemented to minimize impacts. These BMPs include observance of the designated in-water work window of 16 August through 15 February for dredging and material placement at the open-water disposal site as well as the Saltchuk disposal site, monitoring turbidity during dredging, and use of an environmental dredging bucket while working in sediment determined unsuitable for aquatic disposal. Placement of dredged material at a suitable upland facility may occur outside of this timeframe, since it would not involve in-water work. Section 4.6 of the IFR/EA provides information on the impact minimization measures.

No compensatory mitigation is required as part of the recommended plan; however, there is a Monitoring and Adaptive Management Plan (Appendix C of the IFR/EA) for beneficial use of dredged material at the Saltchuk site. This plan includes further evaluation based on the establishment of the targeted habitat within the Saltchuk site and on the ecological functioning of those habitats. All post-construction monitoring will be cost shared between the USACE and the non-Federal sponsor for the first 10 years of monitoring. The non-Federal sponsor may choose to monitor beyond this ten-year period,

although the cost would be a 100% non-Federal sponsor's responsibility. This and other commitments to avoid or minimize impacts to the environment as a result of the recommended plan are identified in Section 5.9.5 of the IFR/EA.

Public review of the draft IFR/EA and FONSI was completed on 21 February 2020. All comments submitted during the public review period were responded to in the Final IFR/EA and FONSI. A 30-day state and agency review of the Final IFR/EA was completed on **12 August 2021**. Comments from state and federal agency review did not result in any changes to the final IFR/EA.

Pursuant to Section 7 of the Endangered Species Act of 1973, as amended, the **National Marine Fisheries Service** issued a biological opinion, dated **16 February 2022**, that determined that the recommended plan will not jeopardize the continued existence of the following federally listed species or adversely modify designated critical habitat: Puget Sound Chinook salmon, Puget Sound steelhead, bocaccio, yelloweye rockfish, green sturgeon, Southern Resident killer whale, Eulachon, and humpback whale. All terms and conditions, conservation measures, and reasonable and prudent measures resulting from this consultation shall be implemented to minimize take of endangered species and avoid jeopardizing the species.

Pursuant to Section 7 of the ESA, as amended, the Corps determined that the recommended plan may affect but is not likely to adversely affect the following federally listed species or their designated critical habitat: bull trout and marbled murrelet. The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service concurred with the Corps' determination on **2 February 2022**.

Pursuant to Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966, as amended, the Corps determined that historic properties would not be adversely affected by the recommended plan. The Washington State Historic Preservation Officer concurred with the determination on 27 April 2021.

Pursuant to the Section 404 of the Clean Water Act of 1972, as amended, the discharge of dredged or fill material associated with the recommended plan has been found to be compliant with section 404(b)(1) Guidelines (40 CFR 230). The Clean Water Act Section 404(b)(1) Guidelines evaluation is found in Appendix D of the IFR/EA.

Pursuant to Section 401 of the Clean Water Act of 1972, as amended, a water quality certification will be obtained, or determined to have been waived, from the Washington State Department of Ecology (Ecology) and/or the Puyallup Tribe prior to construction. In a letter dated 27 January 2021, Ecology stated that the recommended plan appears to meet the requirements of the water quality certification, pending confirmation based on information to be developed during the pre-construction engineering and design (PED) phase. All conditions of the water quality certification will be implemented to minimize adverse impacts to water quality.

Pursuant to the Coastal Zone Management Act of 1972, a determination of consistency has been made and a concurrence from Ecology, or determined by the Corps to have been waived by Ecology, will be obtained prior to construction. In a letter dated 27 January 2021, Ecology stated that the recommended plan appears to

be consistent with state Coastal Zone Management plans, pending confirmation based on information to be developed during the PED phase. All conditions of the consistency determination shall be implemented to minimize adverse impacts to the coastal zone.

Pursuant to the Magnuson-Stevens Fisheries Conservation and Management Act of 1976, as amended, Essential Fish Habitat (EFH) Conservation recommendations from NMFS will be implemented as indicated in Section 6.9 of the IFR/EA.

All applicable environmental laws have been considered, and coordination with appropriate agencies and officials has been completed, or will be in the PED phase, as identified above. Implementation of commitments listed in the IFR/EA Sections 5.9.3 (PED Activities) and 5.9.5 (Environmental Commitments and BMPs) will avoid and minimize effects to environmental justice communities and actions by specific groups such as fishing by the Puyallup Tribe of Indians. During the PED phase of the project, USACE will engage the Puyallup Tribe and offer the opportunity to review and comment on the sampling design for the dredged material suitability characterization. USACE will also engage the Tribe regarding criteria for placement of sediments at the Saltchuk beneficial reuse site. No other issues were raised relative to environmental laws or Executive Orders.

Technical, environmental, economic, and cost effectiveness criteria used in the formulation of alternative plans were those specified in the Water Resources Council's 1983 Economic and Environmental Principles and Guidelines for Water and Related Land Resources Implementation Studies. All applicable laws, executive orders, regulations, and local government plans were considered in evaluation of alternatives. Based on this report, the reviews by other Federal, State, and local agencies, Tribes, input of the public, and the review by my staff, it is my determination that the recommended plan would not significantly affect the human environment; therefore, preparation of an Environmental Impact Statement is not required.

---

Date

---

Alexander "Xander" L. Bullock  
Colonel, Corps of Engineers  
District Commander