

Environmental Policy Act, the Army prepared an EIS for the construction, operation, and maintenance of the DMPRC. The EIS identified the relevant environmental and socioeconomic impacts of the proposed action and alternatives on the biological, physical, and cultural environment.

As a result of this decision, the Army will proceed with the necessary actions to begin to construct and operate the facilities described in the Preferred Alternative (Alternative III). Although the Environmentally Preferred Alternative (Alternative I—No Action) generally had few environmental impacts than the two action alternatives, it had significant adverse impacts from noise and did not meet the overall training needs of the installation. Noise was a major concern raised in public comments. The Army Preferred Alternative substantially reduces adverse noise impacts on the communities near Ft. Benning by moving the training range to a more interior portion of the installation. Alternative II would also meet the basic purpose and need for the DMPRC, but would have more adverse environmental effects than Alternative III. All practicable measures will be used to mitigate the impacts. The mitigation measures are listed in the ROD. The proposed project site is an approximately 1,800 acre area in the D13 area that would utilize an existing duded impact area, K15. The DMPRC would contain 35 stationary infantry targets, 11 evasive moving armor targets, 55 stationary armor targets, two defense trenches with foxholes, 19 defilade positions (Abrams Tank and Bradley Fighting Vehicle hiding places), four tank trails, eight low-water crossings (four on Bonham Creek and four on Sally Beach). A helipad will also be constructed for use in emergency evacuations. The following support facilities would be constructed in an approximately 20-acre area to the southwest of the range and target firing area and just off of Hourglass Road: latrines; bivouac pads; a covered mess (dining area); vehicle holding and maintenance areas; a well house; water distribution and wastewater collection/treatment systems; a secondary power and data distribution system; a Control Building; and buildings for After Action Review; general instruction; operations and storage; central maintenance and for

ammunition breakdown (with ammunition dock).

Michael Q. Frnka,

Director Public Works Division, Installation Management Agency, Southeast Region.

[FR Doc. 04-18000 Filed 8-5-04; 8:45 am]

BILLING CODE 3710-08-M

DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE

Department of the Army; Corps of Engineers

Availability of Draft Supplemental Environmental Impact Statement for the Wyoming Valley Levee Raising Project, Wilkes-Barre, PA

AGENCY: Department of the Army, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, DOD.

ACTION: Notice of availability.

SUMMARY: In accordance with the requirements of the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA), the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE), Baltimore District has prepared a Draft Supplemental Environmental Impact Statement (SEIS) for the design modifications and recreational enhancements to the Wyoming Valley Levee Raising Project at the Wilkes-Barre, Pennsylvania River Commons. The Draft SEIS investigates the potential environmental effects of an array of alternative plans based on the conceptual riverfront plan for Wilkes-Barre. The preferred alternative includes the addition of two portals through the levee, a river landing, fishing platform/dock, and an amphitheater and stage. We are making the Draft SEIS available to the public for a 45-day review and comment period.

DATES: Comments need to be received on or before September 20, 2004, to ensure consideration in final plan development. A public meeting on the recreational improvements to the Wyoming Valley Levee Draft SEIS will be held at Kings College Sheehy-Farmer Campus Center in Building #22, near the corner of West Union and North Main Streets in Wilkes-Barre, Pennsylvania on Wednesday, August 25, 2004 beginning at 7 p.m.

A map showing the location on the Kings Campus can be found at <http://www.kings.edu/nvtour/campusmap.pdf>.

ADDRESSES: Send written comments concerning this proposed project to U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, Baltimore District, Attn: Mr. William D. Abadie, CENAB-PL-P, P.O. Box 1715, Baltimore, MD 21203-1715. Submit electronic comments to william.d.abadie@usace.army.mil. Your comment must be contained in the body

of your message; do not send attached files. Please include your name and address in your message.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Mr. William D. Abadie, Environmental Team Leader, (410) 962-4713 or (800) 295-1610.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION: Federal flood control projects along the Susquehanna River have protected communities in the Wyoming Valley of northeastern Pennsylvania since the late 1930's. However, in June 1972, Tropical Storm Agnes struck, and the Susquehanna River overtopped the levee system in the Valley, causing severe damage in many communities. In response, in 1986 the U.S. Congress authorized raising the Wyoming Valley levee system and implementing other flood damage reduction measures. Construction of the levee raising started in the Spring of 1997 and continues.

In the urbanized area of the Wyoming Valley, including the City of Wilkes-Barre, the levee and floodwall system have created a physical, psychological and aesthetic barrier between the communities along the Susquehanna River. Through public workshops in 1999, a conceptual plan was developed for the City of Wilkes-Barre riverfront that would restore the connection between the city and the river. The plan consists of a riverfront park to be located on the riverside of the levee at downtown Wilkes-Barre, which would be accessible through two portals (*i.e.* gates) in the levee/floodwall system. The Luzerne County Flood Protection Authority, which is the non-Federal project partner for the Wyoming Valley Levee Raising Project, requested that the conceptual riverfront plan be incorporated into the project. This request initiated a general reevaluation report (GRR) and this Draft SEIS to investigate the potential environmental effects to alternative plans based on the conceptual riverfront plan.

The preferred plan for the riverfront park include two portals, a river landing, a fishing platform/dock, and an amphitheater and stage. In addition to these features, miscellaneous recreational amenities (*e.g.*, lights, seating areas with benches, trees/vegetation, educational kiosks, and trash receptacles) would be included. Also, the existing access road at the riverside of the levee would be paved.

A public meeting on the Draft SEIS will be held at Kings College (*see DATES*). The meeting will provide an opportunity for the public to present oral and/or written comments. All persons and organizations that have an interest in the recreational

improvements to the Wyoming Valley Levee as they affect Luzerne County and the environment are urged to attend the meeting and provide comments.

USACE has distributed copies of the Draft SEIS to appropriate members of Congress, State and local government officials, Federal agencies, and other interested parties. Copies are available for public review at the following locations:

(1) Osterhout Free Library, 71 South Franklin Street, Wilkes-Barre, PA 18701.

(2) Osterhout Free Library, South Branch, 2 Airy Street, Wilkes Barre, PA 18702.

(3) D. Leonard Corgan Library, King's College, 14 West Jackson Street, Wilkes-Barre, PA 18711.

You may view the Draft SEIS and related information on our Web page at http://www.nab.usace.army.mil/publications/non-reg_pub.htm.

After the public comment period ends on September 20, 2004, USACE will consider all comments received. The Draft SEIS will be revised as appropriate and a Final SEIS will be issued.

The Draft SEIS has been prepared in accordance with (1) The National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) of 1969, as amended (42 U.S.C. 4321 *et seq.*), (2) regulations of the Council on Environmental Quality for implementing the procedural provisions of NEPA (40 CFR parts 1500–1508), and (3) USACE regulations implementing NEPA (ER–200–2–2).

William D. Abadie,

Environmental Team Leader.

[FR Doc. 04–17999 Filed 8–5–04; 8:45 am]

BILLING CODE 3710–41–M

DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE

Department of the Navy

Notice of Intent To Prepare an Environmental Impact Statement for the Restoration of Airfield Clear Zones and Storm Water Drainage Systems at Naval Air Station (NAS) Key West, FL

AGENCY: Department of the Navy, DOD.

ACTION: Notice.

SUMMARY: Pursuant to Section (102)(2)(c) of the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) of 1969, as implemented by the Council on Environmental Quality Regulations (40 CFR parts 1500–1508), the Department of Navy (Navy) announces its intent to prepare an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) to evaluate the potential environmental consequences of bringing the Boca Chica Field into compliance with Navy and Federal Aviation

Administration (FAA) Safety Regulations. Overgrowth of mangroves and other vegetation has negatively affected visibility and poses a strike hazard to aircraft landing and taking off at Boca Chica Field, thereby, adversely impacting airfield operations.

Additionally, inadequate surface water drainage on the airfield has been identified as a significant safety hazard. NAS Key West's primary mission is to provide pilot training facilities and services as well as access to superior airspace and training ranges for tactical aviation squadrons. As such, NAS Key West serves as the Navy's premier East Coast pilot training facility for tactical aviation squadrons.

The EIS will evaluate the environmental effects associated with vegetation removal on airspace, safety, earth resources, land use, socioeconomic resources, infrastructure, cultural resources and biological resources; including endangered and sensitive species, specifically the Lower Keys Marsh Rabbit (LKMR) and mangroves. Methods to reduce or minimize impacts to these species and essential fish habitat provided by mangroves in the clear zones will also be addressed. The analysis will include an evaluation of the direct, indirect, and cumulative impacts. No decision will be made to implement any action alternative until the NEPA process is completed.

DATES: A public scoping meeting will be held in Key West, FL, to receive oral and/or written comments on environmental concerns that should be addressed in the EIS. The public meeting will be held on Tuesday, August 24, 2004, from 7 p.m. to 9 p.m.

ADDRESSES: The public meeting will be held at Doubletree Grand Key Resort, 3990 S. Roosevelt Blvd., Key West, FL 33040.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Naval Facilities Engineering Command, Southern Division (NAVFAC EFD SOUTH), P.O. Box 190010, North Charleston, SC 29419–9010; Attn: Ms. Olivia Westbrook, telephone (843) 820–5841; facsimile (843) 820–7465; e-mail: Olivia.westbrook@navy.mil. The point of contact at NAS Key is Richard Ruzich. He may be reached by telephone at (305) 293–2785; facsimile (305) 293–2542; or e-mail: Ruzichri@naskw.navy.mil.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION:

Historically, the Boca Chica Field did not have dense vegetation surrounding the area, as is the desired condition for any airfield or airport. However, due to a lack of maintenance and rapid growth

rate, excess vegetation has encroached upon the clear zones and now creates serious unsafe conditions on the airfield. In order to bring the airfield back into compliance with Navy and FAA safety regulations, some trees and shrubs within these safety clearance zones will have to be removed. Some portions of this removal process may have potential impacts to federally listed species and their habitat and the filling of wetlands. The primary species of concern is the endangered LKMR. Additional concerns involve wetlands within the project area that include freshwater marsh, saltmarsh, freshwater hardwoods, and mangroves (the predominant species). The Navy has conducted extensive research and surveyed Boca Chica Field in order to identify the non-compliant areas and develop a restoration/construction methodology. During this process the best possible technique(s) for restoring and enhancing the airfield clearance safety areas while minimizing the impacts of the restoration methods to the LKMR and wetlands were delineated.

The EIS will consider three alternatives: (1) Complete compliance with aviation regulations. Under this alternative, maintenance would be completed to allow the airfield to operate under the conditions originally established for the Boca Chica Field. Maintenance activities would include clearing, grading, and grubbing vegetation within airfield safety clearance zones. All trees within the Primary Surface Area, Type I, Type II, portions of Type III, and Transitional areas would be removed, and the area completely cleared of stumps (grubbing) and re-graded. Typical mechanized equipment would be used since the entire area would be disturbed due to grubbing and re-grading activities and there would be no benefit to the use of specialized low-impact equipment. Restoration of the existing drainage system would be implemented by removal of the mangroves in the canals and on the banks and dredging to original invert elevations. (2) The second alternative would include a combination of vegetation management, filling of wetlands, and salt marsh conversion. Restoration of the existing drainage system would be implemented by removal of the mangroves in the canals and dredging to original invert elevations. The proposed action would improve airfield conditions to correct deficiencies temporarily waived by the Navy, and return conditions to an airfield that complies with FAA and Navy standards with an acceptable level