

Request for Early Input

Environmental Assessment Proposed Action and Alternatives for the Steam Sterilization Plant Replacement at Fort Detrick, Maryland 04 MAR 2022

All Interested Parties: The U.S. Army Garrison, Fort Detrick, Maryland (FDMD) is preparing an Environmental Assessment (EA) for the replacement of the Steam Sterilization Plant (SSP), pursuant to the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) of 1969 (42 United States Code Section 4321 *et seq.*). The Council on Environmental Quality (CEQ) is responsible for issuing regulations (40 Code of Federal Regulations [CFR] 1500-1508) and implementing the provisions of NEPA. CEQ regulations, in turn, are supplemented by procedures adopted on an agency-specific basis. For the Department of the Army, the pertinent regulations are contained in 32 CFR Part 651. An EA is used as a planning document to assess environmental impacts, evaluate their significance, develop alternatives and mitigation measures, and allow for agency and public participation (32 CFR 651.20).

The EA is being prepared to evaluate the environmental impacts associated with the Proposed Action to replace the SSP needed to treat the medical wastewater (effluent) generated by U.S. Army Medical Research Institute of Infectious Diseases (USAMRIID) biosafety level (BSL) -3 and -4 laboratories. The BSL -3 and -4 laboratory suites will be housed within the new USAMRIID facility. Currently, the BSL-3 and -4 labs rely on temporary Thermal Effluent Decontamination System (TEDS) units. The project is needed to replace the previous SSP, which is no longer in use, and provide a long-term solution with adequate capacity for the required treatment of wastewater effluent to support operation of the BSL -3 and -4 laboratories. Enclosure 1 shows the project location map.

On May 2021, a Request for Early Input Notice was published for the preparation of the SSP EA with a Proposed Action involving the construction of a new Military Construction (MILCON) building on the site of an existing building located adjacent to the new USAMRIID facility. The Proposed Action would have involved the demolition of the existing building and the construction of the new SSP at its location. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic and resulting increases in construction costs, the demolition of the existing building and the construction of a MILCON was determined to be very costly. Therefore, a new Proposed Action is currently being considered and coordination is being re-initiated.

The new **Proposed Action** involves the construction of the SSP on the ground floor of the new USAMRIID facility. The SSP would be operational 365 days per year and 24 hours a day. The SSP would be able to process a minimum of 70,000 gallons per day of effluent. The SSP provides decontamination redundancy to provide the highest level of safety to workers and the public.

The EA will also consider a **No Action Alternative**, which would involve no new construction.

The No Action Alternative would restrict USAMRIID from using the BSL-3 and -4 laboratories to their full capacity, thereby limiting research on known biological select agents and toxins and emerging diseases, such as COVID-19. Under this alternative, the BSL-3 and -4 laboratories would continue use of the TEDS, which are not viable as a long-term solution and limit research using the entire high containment laboratories and vivarium. Although the No Action Alternative would not meet the purpose and need for the action, CEQ requires the analysis of the No Action Alternative, as it also provides a benchmark for enabling decision-makers to compare the magnitude of environmental effects of the Proposed Action.

In accordance with 40 CFR 1500-1508, the Army invites you to provide early input on the Proposed Action to be considered in our analysis of each alternative in the forthcoming EA. Due to continuing restrictions in response to COVID-19, this early agency and public correspondence notice is being provided via email instead of a mailed letter. This notice is also being distributed to other organizations that may have an interest in natural resource conditions at FDMD. Information on the Proposed Action can be found on the project website at <https://www.nab.usace.army.mil/SSP/>. Comments on the Proposed Action can be submitted via the project website or through email at Detrick_SSP_EA@usace.army.mil.

Additionally, once the draft EA is completed, agencies and the public will have an opportunity to review and provide comments during a 30-day public review period, which will be announced in a notice published in local newspapers and on the FDMD website. Printed copies of the draft EA are typically provided to local libraries and every attempt will be made to satisfy this procedure while complying with the most up-to-date local COVID-19 safety guidelines. All materials will also be provided online on the project website and on the FDMD website at the following link: <https://home.army.mil/detrick/index.php/about/Garrison/directorate-public-works/environmental-management-division>.

We appreciate your attention to this matter. Early input will be accepted for a period of 15 days, beginning on the date of this notice. Should you require any additional information or have any questions, please contact the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, Baltimore District Project Manager, Heather Cisar, at heather.r.cisar@usace.army.mil.

Enclosure 1: Project Location Map

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