

**DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE
DEPARTMENT OF THE ARMY
JOINT BASE LEWIS-McCHORD**

**DRAFT FINDING OF NO SIGNIFICANT IMPACT FOR ENVIRONMENTAL
ASSESSMENT FOR THE SOLO POINT BOAT RAMP REPLACEMENT**

Introduction

The U.S. Department of the Army (Army) at Joint Base Lewis-McChord (JBLM) proposes to replace a concrete boat ramp at Solo Point between Dupont and Steilacoom in Pierce County, Washington. Solo Point is the only portion of JBLM with marine access and is designated as an A-1 Military Facility delegated for the purpose of various amphibious training operations.

An Environmental Assessment (EA) was prepared in accordance with the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) of 1969 (42 USC 4321-4370e), Sec. 102(C); regulations issued by the Council on Environmental Quality (CEQ), 40 CFR Part 1500-1508; and the Army's implementing procedures published in 32 CFR 651, *Environmental Analysis of Army Actions*. The EA is intended to inform decision-makers and the public of likely environmental consequences of the proposed Army action.

Purpose and Need

There are three boat ramps at Solo Point, although only one is considered serviceable. Recent inspections found that the boat ramps at JBLM Solo Point are in disrepair. The purpose of the proposed action is to correct structural deficiencies of the boat launch facility at the Solo Point Amphibious Site A-1 while balancing the needs of sensitive environmental resources and the surrounding human environment. The current state of the boat launch facility presents hazardous conditions to users of Solo Point, which could injure users and/or damage military and civilian equipment. A reliable boat ramp is needed for authorized users of Solo Point and is essential to military readiness and disaster support services.

Description of the Proposed Action and Alternatives

The preferred alternative JBLM proposes is to demolish and remove the three existing boats ramps and all concrete rubbish and tires. Ramp 1 would be replaced with a new, 20 ft. wide and 234 ft. long concrete plank boat ramp bordered with four foot wide Armorflex mats on each side. In addition, approximately 193 boulders will be placed along the beach above Mean Higher High Water (MHHW) with three pedestrian access points to prevent vehicle access to the adjacent beach. No curbs are proposed on either side of the boat ramp to prevent undercutting. The boat ramp will match the natural beach grade and will be level with (not elevated from) the surrounding beach grade so as to not disrupt sediment drift cell processes. The removal of all three existing ramps and concrete tires and rubble, with the addition of a new ramp, would

result in a total reduction of 172 ft² of concrete with a reduction of 2,260 ft² of concrete below MHHW¹.

Three other alternatives were considered including: repair all boat ramps, replace with a large, single boat ramp, and cast-in place boat ramp. These alternatives were eliminated due to substantial permanent and temporary environmental impacts and were not evaluated for environmental consequences.

No Action Alternative

The No Action Alternative serves as the baseline from which to compare all other reasonable alternatives. No action means no maintenance or replacement to the boat ramps. If there are no repairs or replacement of the boat ramps at Solo Point, the structures would continue to deteriorate. The No Action Alternative does not meet the purpose and need for the proposed action.

Summary of Anticipated Environmental Effects Associated with the Proposed Project

The EA, which is attached and incorporated by reference into this draft Finding of No Significant Impact (FNSI), examined the potential effects of the no action and the proposed action on areas of environmental concern, consisting of hydrology, anthropomorphic uses, beach and aquatic habitat, water quality, wetlands and vegetation, macro-invertebrates, fish and wildlife, threatened and endangered species, air quality and greenhouse gas emissions, Tribal treaty rights, and cultural resources.

Resource Area	Proposed Action: Single-Span Ramp Alternative	No Action Alternative
Hydraulics and Hydrology	In general, there would be no impacts to hydrology. There may be slight changes in water flow at the microhabitat scale due to the presence of heavy equipment and a floating silt curtain during construction. No long-term impacts to hydrology are anticipated, as the new ramp will be flush with the substrate surface and not interfere with tidal inundation or littoral drift. Impacts are expected to be insignificant.	The No Action Alternative serves as the baseline for this project and would have no impact on hydraulics or hydrology.

¹ Most of the new ramp will be above MHHW, whereas the old ramps were mostly below MHHW.

Resource Area	Proposed Action: Single-Span Ramp Alternative	No Action Alternative
Anthropomorphic Uses	The current degraded boat ramps would be replaced with a new, fully serviceable boat ramp. This would allow military activities and Tribal and recreational uses of the site that require boats. The boulders along the beach would limit vehicle access to the adjacent beach, thereby protecting recreational resources on the beach that are used for activities such as beach combing and clamming. Any impacts to anthropogenic use of the site would be temporary (limited to construction) and insignificant.	Under the no action alternative the existing ramps and concrete debris will not be removed, much of which is below MHHW. This concrete would limit the extent of colonization of marine algae and benthic invertebrate, and limits suitable spawning substrate for forage fish (sand, gravel, and marine vegetation). Vehicles would continue to be able to access the beach and further degrade the surrounding habitat.
Beach and Aquatic Habitat	The removal of existing ramps and concrete and replacement with a single ramp would reduce concrete along the beach and intertidal zone resulting in more natural beach substrate (gravel, sand, and cobble) that would colonize with marine algae, which provides habitat for a variety of fish and invertebrates. Restricting vehicle access to the adjacent beach would prevent damage to these intertidal areas.	Under the no action alternative the existing ramps and concrete debris will not be removed, much of which is below MHHW. This concrete would limit the extent of colonization of marine algae and benthic invertebrate, and limits suitable spawning substrate for forage fish (sand, gravel, and marine vegetation). Vehicles would continue to be able to access the beach and further degrade the surrounding habitat.
Water Quality	Temporary impacts to water quality are expected during the removal of the existing ramps and excavation of materials for the installation of the new ramp, primarily in the form of increased turbidity. Best management practices (BMPs) should minimize the impacts to water	Under the No Action Alternative no change to water quality would occur.

Resource Area	Proposed Action: Single-Span Ramp Alternative	No Action Alternative
	<p>quality. The Army will also obtain a water quality certification (WQC) from the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), and adhere to all the criteria and conditions.</p>	
<p>Wetlands and Vegetation</p>	<p>No impacts to riparian vegetation or wetlands would occur. During construction there may be temporary impacts to marine vegetation that immediately surrounds the existing boats ramp from elevated due to decreases in water quality. Best management practices should minimize these impacts. Vegetation in areas that overlap with the larger footprint of the new ramp would be covered in concrete. However, the reduction of concrete below MHHW will expose the natural intertidal beach substrate and allow for the recruitment of species that already occur in the surrounding areas.</p>	<p>Under the no action alternative the three existing ramps would remain and continue to deteriorate. This concrete in the intertidal zone would continue to limit the recruitment of marine algae species within the ramp footprints. Vehicles would continue to have access to the intertidal beach, with the potential to cause damage to marine algae.</p>
<p>Macro-invertebrates, Fish, and Wildlife</p>	<p>Temporary impacts to the invertebrate, fish and wildlife communities are likely during construction. Impacts include stress and physiological damage related to water quality impacts, noise and vibrations, entrainment during excavation, smothering during ramp placement, and temporary impacts to habitat and prey base. BMPs should minimize these impacts. The reduction of concrete below MHHW will expose the natural intertidal beach substrate and allow for the recruitment of marine algae species that already occur in the surrounding areas, providing habitat for a variety of marine biota.</p>	<p>Under the no action alternative the three existing ramps would remain and continue to deteriorate. This concrete in the intertidal zone will continue to limit suitable habitat for marine biota. Vehicles would continue to have access to the intertidal beach, with the potential to cause damage to the fragile intertidal ecosystem.</p>

Resource Area	Proposed Action: Single-Span Ramp Alternative	No Action Alternative
Threatened and Endangered Species	<p>Impacts would be the same as those described for fish and wildlife including exposure to elevated turbidity and noise, potential entrainment, and impacts to prey. The Army prepared a Biological Assessment to submit to U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and National Marine Fisheries Service determining that the proposed action may affect, and is likely to adversely affect Puget Sound Chinook based on construction-related impacts, and for all other species the action may affect, but is not likely to adversely affect or would have no effect. The Army is currently awaiting the Services' response.</p>	<p>Under the No Action Alternative impacts would be the same as those described for fish and wildlife.</p>
Tribal Treaty Rights	<p>There may temporary impacts to Tribal access during construction. The Army will coordinate the construction period with the local Tribes. The current degraded boat ramps would be replaced with a new, fully serviceable boat ramp. This new ramp will allow Tribal uses of the site that require boats. The boulders along the beach would limit vehicle access to the adjacent beach, thereby protecting shoreline from potential degradation. The reduction of concrete below MHHW will expose the natural intertidal beach substrate and allow for the recruitment of marine algae habitat and forage base for fish and shellfish that have cultural value and provide subsistence to local Tribes.</p>	<p>Under the No Action Alternative the three existing ramps would remain and continue to deteriorate. Over time this could affect Tribes' ability to access the waters off of Solo Point for Tribal fishing.</p>
Cultural Resources	<p>Research did not yield an association with the lives of any significant events or persons in our past (Criterion A and B), nor is it exceptional from an engineering or</p>	<p>Under this alternative the three existing ramps would remain and continue to deteriorate. Over time the</p>

Resource Area	Proposed Action: Single-Span Ramp Alternative	No Action Alternative
	stylistic perspective (Criterion C). This site has been previously assessed and it is not likely to yield information about history or prehistory (Criterion D). The Army initiated Section 106 consultation with Washington State SHPO on July 24 th , 2019 on a determination of “No Historic Properties Affected”, and received concurrence on that determination from the SHPO on February 20 th , 2020.	deterioration may become a hazard to users of the area.

Cumulative Effects

The cumulative effects address the impacts from projects that may be individually minor, but result in collectively significant impacts when taking into account actions occurring over a period of time (40 CFR §1508.7). As such, they include the impacts of this boat ramp replacement project considered in conjunction with current and future projects constructed or planned at JBLM and the surrounding area.

Solo Point has a long history of anthropomorphic uses and changes including shoreline armoring and a railroad that backs the beach, the three existing ramps and concrete tires and rubble, various military training exercises, and recreational uses by Department of Defense employees, veterans, and Tribes. Given the site is on Federal land, future development and use of the site is not expected to change substantially from existing conditions, other than increased boat activity associated with the new ramp which is addressed in throughout this EA. The negative environmental effects of the Solo Point boat ramp replacement are temporary and minor, and are associated primarily with the actual construction of the project. The combination of best management practices (BMPs) and mitigation measures reduce these impacts to an insignificant level. More importantly, the beneficial effects generated by the project compensate for these short-term negative effects. It is unlikely that any other project will occur within the project vicinity at the same time that also construction-related impacts. Thus, the proposed ramp replacement project would not contribute cumulatively to significant effects when combined with past, present, and future projects within the watershed and along the shoreline.

Public Comment

The Army will publish a Notice of Availability for the EA and draft Finding of No Significant Impact (FNSI) in the Tacoma News Tribune on XXX. The EA and draft FNSI will be available for review both online and at the Directorate of Public Works Environmental Division. To be considered for the project, all comments should be received by XXX. All comments will be considered, and many will be incorporated into

the final EA. Individual responses to comments will be located in Appendix C of the final EA.

Mitigation

The mitigation proposal would include the removal of excess impervious surface from the existing boat ramps and the difference in area of concrete between existing and post-construction conditions. The remaining boat ramps and concrete and tire debris would be removed from the intertidal area of Solo Point. An overall reduction of 172 ft² of concrete along the beach with a reduction of 2,260 ft² below MHHW would result from the removal of the existing ramps and concrete debris when combined with the placement of the new ramp. This reduction in concrete would increase the amount of intertidal nearshore habitat that has ecological, economic, recreational, and cultural value. Furthermore, the installation of boulders with pedestrian access paths would prevent vehicles from driving on the adjacent beach.

The following conservation measures and BMPs would be implemented to reduce the impacts associated with construction:

- Any disturbance of the beach area by construction activities or equipment, would be restored to the original pre-project conditions upon the immediate completion of construction.
- All ground disturbing activities would be monitored by a Secretary of the Interior qualified professional archaeologist.
- Existing habitat features such as native vegetation and large wood will be retained on-site to the extent possible.
- Approximately 193 boulders would be placed along the beach above MHHW with three pedestrian access points to prevent vehicle access to the adjacent beach.
- Work would be done during low tides, to the extent possible.
- In-water work would be limited to the in-water work window (July 16 to February 15).
- A floating silt curtain would be installed prior to in-water work to avoid impacts to water quality and disturbance of aquatic biota.
- A pre-construction meeting should be conducted to look at existing conditions and any possible fine-tuning that should be done for BMPs or environmental requirements. The pre-construction meetings will include outside resources agencies like USFWS or NMFS.
- A qualified biologist shall perform a survey and confirm in writing that no forage fish are spawning in the project area during the proposed construction.
- If fish or other wildlife are observed in distress or if a fish kill occurs, work would be stopped immediately and necessary agencies would be contacted and work would not resume until the issue is resolved.

- No pouring of fresh concrete is proposed in or near Puget Sound.
- Equipment used near and in the water would be cleaned prior to construction.
- Drive trains would not work in the water. Only the excavator bucket with thumb attachment would extend into the water.
- Care would be taken to prevent any petroleum products, chemicals, or other toxic or deleterious materials from construction equipment and vehicles from entering the water.
- A spill containment kit, including oil-absorbent materials would be kept on-site during construction in the event of a spill or if any oil product is observed in the water. If a spill were to occur, work would be stopped immediately, steps would be taken to contain the material, and appropriate agency notifications would be made.
- Fueling would occur off of the beach, and biodegradable hydraulic fluids would be used as appropriate in any portion of the equipment that would work in the water.
- Turbidity and other water quality parameters would be monitored to ensure construction activities are in conformance with the protocols and criteria in the EPA-issued Water Quality Certification (WQC).
- A sediment fence would be installed around where construction vehicles would be parked and their path to the work zone in order to prevent surface flow and potential erosion occurring during construction.
- Staging would occur in the existing gravel parking lot adjacent to the boat ramps.

Conclusion

In review of the resource areas potentially impacted by the proposed action of the linear transportation infrastructure repairs, it was found that the preferred alternative would have no significant environmental impacts on the natural or human environment. Based on this documentation, which has incorporated or referenced the best information available, I have taken a hard look at known impacts and determined that the implementation of the proposed action, with the mitigation referenced above, will not significantly affect the environment and therefore, an Environmental Impact Statement is not needed.

Date

Skye D. Duncan
Colonel, US Army
Commanding