

ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT FOR EELGRASS HABITAT EXPANSION SAN DIEGO BAY, CA *Public Scoping Fact Sheet*



Introduction

Since its celebrated establishment in 2008, the Navy has used credits in the Navy Region Southwest San Diego Bay Eelgrass Mitigation Bank (Bank) to offset unavoidable impacts from Navy infrastructure projects and testing and training activities in San Diego Bay.

While the Navy strives to avoid or minimize impacts to eelgrass and other resources, sometimes impacts to eelgrass from Navy actions are unavoidable. With the implementation of mission-critical projects and activities, the Navy anticipates unavoidable impacts to eelgrass habitat may occur. Adding acreage to the Bank would increase the Navy's ability to offset unavoidable impacts to eelgrass habitat within the Bay from future Navy projects and activities.

The purpose of the Proposed Action is to expand eelgrass habitat in San Diego Bay to support Navy mission requirements while ensuring the continued commitment to conservation of the San Diego Bay ecosystem. The need for the Proposed Action is to ensure the continued commitment to the conservation and management of San Diego Bay and its natural resources while facilitating the implementation of future Navy projects and activities in San Diego Bay that may have the potential to impact eelgrass.

About the Project

The Navy has identified five potential alternative sites for expanding eelgrass in San Diego Bay (shown on the right):

- Inside Ballast Point
- NTC Channel
- Delta Beach to Homeport Island
- Homeport Island Submerged Plateau
- South Silver Strand

Environmental Assessment

The Navy will evaluate the alternative sites and the No Action Alternative in the Environmental Assessment. The public can participate in the NEPA process by identifying issues and potential alternatives at this time.

The Environmental Assessment will consider all resource areas that may potentially be impacted. The Navy requests you to provide input on these resource areas: Land use and coastal zone management; transportation and circulation; visual resources; biological resources; utilities; noise; cultural resources; geological resources and sediments; air quality; water resources; hazardous materials and wastes; public health and safety; and environmental justice/socioeconomics.

The U.S. Navy is preparing an Environmental Assessment pursuant to the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) to analyze the potential impacts of expanding eelgrass habitat in San Diego Bay.

The Navy is requesting public input to ensure that community concerns are considered and appropriately addressed. This fact sheet describes the proposed project and how the public can be involved in the environmental review process.



Location of the potential eelgrass expansion site alternatives.
Note that the two Homeport Island sites are distinct sites.

The NEPA Process & Public Involvement

The National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) requires federal agencies to consider the potential environmental impacts of their actions before making a decision. The public has an opportunity to provide input at key phases of the NEPA process:

- **During the public scoping phase**

The public helps to identify environmental issues and potential alternatives to be analyzed in the Environmental Assessment.

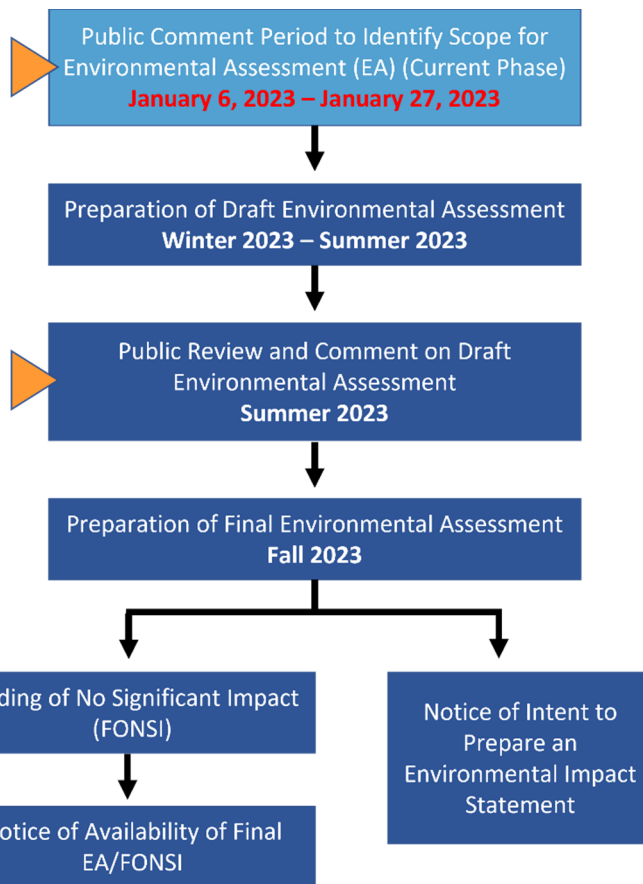
- **When the Draft Environmental Assessment is completed**

The public evaluates and comments on the analysis of the Proposed Action and Alternatives.

The Navy is committed to a transparent and thorough environmental review. The public's input helps to ensure all relevant issues are appropriately addressed.

The Navy will use the findings of the Environmental Assessment to determine the next steps in the NEPA process. If it is found that significant environmental impacts would result from the proposed action, which could not be mitigated to less than significant levels, then the preparation of an Environmental Impact Statement would be needed. If the findings indicate that environmental impacts would not be significant, the Navy would prepare a Finding of No Significant Impact, which would describe how the Navy determined the Proposed Action would have no significant impacts. The Navy could then proceed with the selected alternative.

National Environmental Policy Act Process and Estimated Timeline



Boxes with indicate opportunities for public involvement.

This schedule is tentative and may be updated.

A type of seagrass, eelgrass is an important and productive benthic habitat in San Diego Bay. Eelgrass habitats rank among the most productive habitats in the ocean and are an important component of the Bay's food web.



How to Submit Comments

Submit written comments to:

Naval Facilities Engineering Systems Command Southwest
Attention: Code EV26.SVR
750 Pacific Highway (12th Floor, Environmental)
San Diego, CA 92132-5190
e-mail: navfac_sw_eelgrass_ea_public_outreach@us.navy.mil

For more information

Contact the Navy Region Southwest Public Affairs Office
619-705-5242
helen.k.haase.civ@us.navy.mil

Comments are requested by the close of the public scoping period on January 27, 2023. All timely and substantive comments will be considered in preparation of the Draft Environmental Assessment.

There will be another public comment opportunity when the Draft Environmental Assessment is available for public review and comment, which is expected to be in Summer 2023.