AUGUST 2018

SUPPLEMENTAL ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT

REMOVAL OF CONCRETE SILL

U.S. MARINE CORPS SUPPORT FACILITY - BLOUNT ISLAND, DUVAL COUNTY, JACKSONVILLE, FLORIDA

US Army Corps
of Engineers
Jacksonville District

US Army Corps of Engineers
JACKSONVILLE DISTRICT

FINDING OF NO SIGNIFICANT IMPACT

DUVAL COUNTY, FLORIDA
U.S. MARINE CORPS SUPPORT FACILITY – BLOUNT ISLAND
REMOVAL OF CONCRETE SILL
SUPPLEMENTAL ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT

The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, Jacksonville District (Corps), has conducted an environmental assessment in accordance with the National Environmental Policy Act of 1969, as amended. The Corps assessed the effects of the preferred alternative in the Supplemental Environmental Assessment (SEA), dated August 2018 for the Duval County, Florida, U.S. Marine Corps Support Facility – Blount Island (MCSF-BI), Removal of Concrete Sill. A detailed description of the proposed construction/modification of harbor features at MCSF-BI can be found in the *Final EA, Removal of Concrete Sill and Advance Maintenance Dredging of Marine Corps Facility – Blount Island, Jacksonville, Duval County, Florida* (2010). This SEA specifically addresses the effects of removing the concrete sill using a diamond wire saw. All other alternatives to remove the sill, as well as effects associated with each alternative, have been previously considered within the aforementioned Final EA.

The Final EA (2010) identified confined underwater blasting using conventional (high) explosives to remove the concrete sill as the preferred alternative. However, the proposed use of a diamond wire saw would result in fewer impacts and would effectively and efficiently remove the sill. All practicable means to avoid and minimize adverse environmental effects have been incorporated into the proposed work. Environmental commitments as detailed in the Final EA (2010) and this SEA will be implemented to minimize impacts.

Pursuant to the Clean Water Act of 1972, as amended, any discharge of dredged or fill material associated with the recommended plan have 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 Attachment A of the Final EA (2010).

The Florida Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) concluded that the proposed removal of the concrete sill using a diamond wire saw is consistent with the Florida Coastal Management Program (FCMP). The state's final concurrence of the project's consistency with the FCMP will be determined during environmental permitting processes, in accordance with Section 373.428, Florida Statutes. DEP's issuance of an environmental resource permit will also constitute certification of compliance with state water quality standards pursuant to Section 401 of the Clean Water Act. All conditions of the permit will be implemented in order to minimize adverse impacts to water quality.

Pursuant to Section 7 of the Endangered Species Act of 1973, as amended, coordination with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) and the National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) regarding the proposed construction/modification of harbor features at MCSF-BI were previously completed. The Corps received letters of concurrence from both agencies, NMFS dated July 22, 2009 and USFWS dated December 8, 2009. The Corps, in coordination with USFWS (via email dated June 25, 2018) and NMFS (via teleconference dated June 6, 2018), has determined that the existing concurrence letters do not need to be updated since the use of a diamond wire saw would have fewer impacts than the previously proposed use of confined underwater blasting using high explosives.

Pursuant to section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966, as amended, the Florida State Historic Preservation Officer concurred with the Corps determination of no effect to historic properties listed, or eligible for listing, in the National Register of Historic Places.

Technical, environmental, economic, and cost-effectiveness criteria used in the formulation of alternative plans were those specified in the Water Resource Council's 1983 Economic and Environmental Principles for Water and Related Land Resources Implementation Studies. All applicable laws, executive orders, regulations, and local government plans were considered in the evaluation of the alternatives. Based on these reports, 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: 4 Sep 18

Andrew D. Kelly, Jr.
Colonel, U.S. Army
District Commander

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SUPPLEMENTAL ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT
ON
REMOVAL OF CONCRETE SILL
U.S. MARINE CORPS SUPPORT FACILITY – BLOUNT ISLAND
JACKONSVILLE, DUVAL COUNTY, FLORIDA

TABLE OF CONTENTS

1 PROJECT PURPOSE AND NEED 1

1.1 PROJECT DESCRIPTION 1

1.2 PROJECT LOCATION 1

1.3 PROJECT PURPOSE AND NEED 3

1.4 RELATED ENVIRONMENTAL DOCUMENTS 3

1.5 DECISION TO BE MADE 4

1.6 SCOPING AND ISSUES 4

1.6.1 SCOPING 4

1.6.2 RELEVANT ISSUES 4

1.6.3 ISSUES ELIMINATED FROM FURTHER ANALYSIS 5

1.7 PERMITS, LICENSES, AND ENTITLEMENTS 5

1.8 METHODOLOGY 5

2 ALTERNATIVES 6

2.1 DESCRIPTION OF ALTERNATIVES 6

2.1.1 REMOVE SILL WITH DIAMOND WIRE SAW 6

2.2 ISSUES AND BASIS FOR CHOICE 7

2.3 COMPARISON OF ALTERNATIVES 7

2.4 PREFERRED ALTERNATIVE 10

3 AFFECTED ENVIRONMENT 11

3.1 THREATENED AND ENDANGERED SPECIES 11

3.1.1 ATLANTIC STURGEON 11

3.2 FISH AND WILDLIFE RESOURCES 11

3.2.1 COMMON BOTTLENOSE DOLPHINS 11

4 ENVIRONMENTAL EFFECTS 14

4.1 THREATENED AND ENDANGERED SPECIES 14
4.1.1 ATLANTIC STURGEON 14

4.2 FISH AND WILDLIFE RESOURCES 18
4.2.1 COMMON BOTTLENOSE DOLPHIN 18

5 ENVIRONMENTAL COMMITMENTS 21

6 COMPLIANCE WITH ENVIRONMENTAL REQUIREMENTS 22

6.1 NATIONAL ENVIRONMENTAL POLICY ACT OF 1969 22

6.2 ENDANGERED SPECIES ACT (ESA) OF 1973 22

6.3 MAGNUSON-STEVENS FISHERY CONSERVATION AND MANAGEMENT ACT 22

6.4 NATIONAL HISTORIC PRESERVATION ACT OF 1966 (INTER ALIA) 22

7 PUBLIC/AGENCY COORDINATION 24

7.1 SCOPING AND DRAFT SEA 24

7.2 AGENCY COORDINATION 24

7.3 COMMENTS RECEIVED AND RESPONSE 24

8 LIST OF PREPARERS 26

9 REFERENCES 27

LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 1 Project Vicinity 2
Figure 2 Approximate Sill Location 2
Figure 3 Concrete Sill under Construction 2
Figure 4 View from Top of Concrete Sill 3
Figure 5 Rebar Reinforcement of Sill 3
Figure 6 An Example of a Diamond Wire Saw 6
Figure 7 Diamond Wire Saw Diagram 7
Figure 8 Seasonal Abundance Estimates 13
Figure 9 Wachs Subsea Diamond Wire Saw SPL 15
Figure 10 Tyrolit Hydrostress Diamond Wire Saw SPL 16
Figure 11 Naval Base Point Loma Diamond Wire Saw SPL 17

LIST OF TABLES

Table 1 Summary of Direct and Indirect Impacts 8/9
Table 2 Sound Levels Generated by Dredges, Commercial Shipping, Diamond Wire Saw, and Blasting 20

APPENDICES

Appendix A 30

SUPPLEMENTAL ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT
ON
REMOVAL OF CONCRETE SILL
U.S. MARINE CORPS SUPPORT FACILITY – BLOUNT ISLAND
JACKSONVILLE, DUVAL COUNTY, FLORIDA

1 PROJECT PURPOSE AND NEED

The Federal action being evaluated in this document is the construction/modification of harbor features within the Congressionally authorized project at U.S. Marine Corps Support Facility – Blount Island (MCSF-BI), Duval County, Florida. The evaluation shall be consistent with the Council on Environmental Quality regulations that define Federal actions to include those actions "subject to federal control and responsibility" (40 CFR 1508.18). A detailed description of the proposed construction/modification of harbor features at MCSF-BI can be found in the *Final Environmental Assessment (EA), Removal of Concrete Sill and Advance Maintenance Dredging of Marine Corps Facility – Blount Island, Jacksonville, Duval County, Florida* (2010) and is incorporated herein by reference. This Supplemental Environmental Assessment (SEA) only considers the removal of the concrete sill located within the Marine Corps Terminal slip using a diamond wire saw**.** All other alternatives to remove the sill, as well as effects associated with each alternative, have been previously considered within the aforementioned 2010 EA.

1.1 PROJECT DESCRIPTION

The concrete sill located at MCSF-BI would be cut into sections using a diamond wire saw, and the sections removed using an excavator type and/or large clamshell dredge**.** The reinforced concrete sill is 32.6 feet wide by 426.5 feet long and 14.5 feet deep. Currently the crest elevation is at -37.6 feet Mean Lower Low Water (MLLW). The diamond wire saw would be used to cut into the sill facilitating the removal of the concrete and rebar contents, resulting in an upper sill elevation of approximately -47 feet MLLW. Equipment such as a hydraulic power unit and the diamond wire saw are expected to be staged on a barge located over the particular area being cut. Operations may occur 24 hours a day using multiple saws, staff, and safety equipment for night operation. Dredging of approximately 3,000 cubic yards of material around the sill will be necessary in order to access the structure. It is assumed the dredging will be to approximately -47 feet MLLW and dredged material will be offloaded to the upland placement area at Dayson Island Dredged Material Management Area. Any sedimentary rock and sill material will be either placed at the upland disposal area or another pre-approved alternative location and the rebar will be disposed of at a local recycling facility.

1.2 PROJECT LOCATION

The Marine Corps Terminal (MCT) slip is located at Blount Island, approximately St. Johns River Mile 8, Duval County, Florida (**Figure 1- Project Vicinity)**. The sill sits perpendicular across the slipway **(Figures 2 through 5)**.

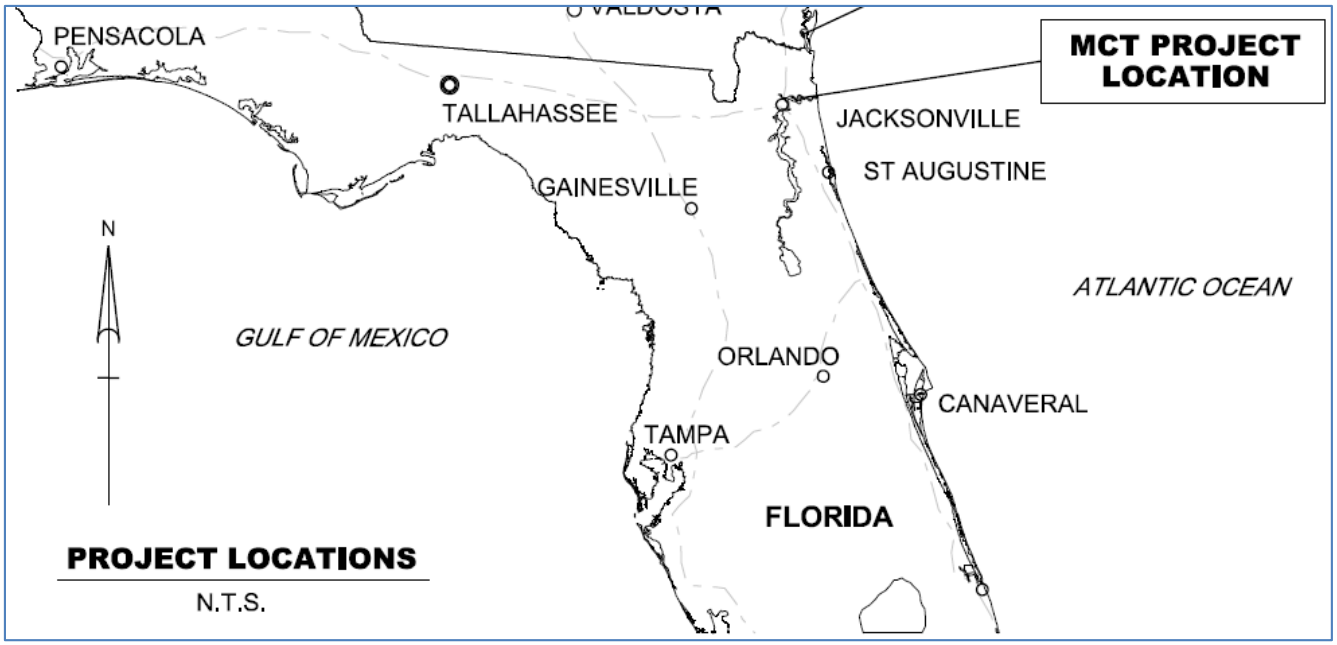

Figure 1: Project Vicinity

Figure 2: Approximate Sill Location.

Figure 3: Concrete Sill under construction – note extensive rebar.

Figure 4: View from top of concrete sill; note extensive rebar.

Figure 5: Rebar reinforcement of concrete sill.

1.3 PROJECT PURPOSE AND NEED

The United States Army Corps of Engineers (Corps), Jacksonville District, has been contracted by MCSF-BI to prepare a SEA and obtain the necessary permits to remove the concrete sill at Blount Island. Corps-Regulatory Division may utilize and adopt this SEA under their regulations implementing National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) for the issuance of permits to MCSF-BI for the proposed work.

1.4 RELATED ENVIRONMENTAL DOCUMENTS

Pursuant to NEPA, this SEA was prepared by the Corps for MCSF-BI to address the effects of removing the concrete sill using a diamond wire saw. As previously mentioned, a detailed description of the proposed construction/modification of harbor features at MCSF-BI can be found in the *Final EA, Removal of Concrete Sill and Advance Maintenance Dredging of Marine Corps Facility – Blount Island, Jacksonville, Duval County, Florida* (2010) and is incorporated herein by reference. Please use the following link to access the Final EA (2010) (click on Duval County, scroll down to U.S. Marine Corps Support Facility Blount Island, and click on Environmental Assessment).

http://www.saj.usace.army.mil/About/Divisions-Offices/Planning/Environmental-Branch/Environmental-Documents/

Other related environmental documents include the following:

- Corps, 2014. Jacksonville Harbor Navigation Study, Final General Re-evaluation

Report II and Supplemental Environmental Impact Statement and Record of Decision (ROD), Jacksonville, Duval County, Florida. Rod signed April 8, 2015.

- U.S. Marine Corps, 2008. Final Environmental Assessment and Finding of No Significant Impact (FONSI) for Master Plan. U.S. Marine Corps Support Facility Blount Island, Jacksonville, Florida. FONSI signed September 3, 2008.

- Corps, 1998. Final Environmental Impact Statement. Navigation Channel Improvements. Jacksonville Harbor. Jacksonville, Duval County, Florida. ROD signed January 18, 2001.

- Corps, 1996. Final Environmental Assessment and FONSI. Maintenance Dredging. Jacksonville Harbor. Duval County, Florida. FONSI signed December 20, 1996.

- Florida Department of Environmental Protection Permit # 0129277-017-BI issued to Corps, July 29, 2016 for Jacksonville Harbor Federal Channel Expansion, Jacksonville, Duval County, Florida.

- Department of the Army Permit #199102068(IP-BAL); issued December 17, 2003 to Gate Maritime Properties, Inc. (transferred to MCSF-BI).

- Florida Department of Environmental Protection Permit # 16-183995-003-EI; issued to Gate Maritime Properties, Inc. on Aug 18. 2003. Transfer of this permit to the MCSF-BI Facility took place via 183955-004-EM dated Oct 20, 2004.

1.5 DECISION TO BE MADE

The decision to be made is whether the proposed sill removal using a diamond wire saw would result in a significant effect on the quality of the human environment. The Corps has determined that the use of a diamond wire saw to remove the concrete sill would have fewer impacts than the previously proposed use of confined underwater blasting using high explosives. Therefore, the Corps has made the decision to sign the Finding of No Significant Impact for this action.

1.6 SCOPING AND ISSUES

1.6.1 Scoping

A scoping letter dated October 11, 2017 was issued for the project and circulated to applicable Federal, state, and local agencies and interested non-governmental organizations for 30 days. No comments were received from any of the above-listed entities. A Notice of Availability dated June 6, 2018 of the draft SEA was coordinated with interested stakeholders for review and comment. Comments received are summarized in Section 7 of this SEA.

1.6.2 Relevant Issues

The following issues were previously identified in the Final EA (2010) to be relevant to the

proposed action: general environmental setting, threatened and endangered species, fish and wildlife resources, essential fish habitat, water quality, hazardous, toxic and radioactive waste, air quality, noise, recreation, military navigation, and historic properties. Since they were previously considered in the Final EA (2010), they are incorporated herein by reference. Updates regarding these issues and effects associated with a diamond wire saw are provided within this SEA.

1.6.3 Issues Eliminated From Further Analysis

No issues were specifically identified for elimination.

1.7 PERMITS, LICENSES, AND ENTITLEMENTS

On behalf of MCSF-BI, the Corps will obtain an Environmental Resource Permit from the Florida Department of Environmental Protection and a Department of Army Permit in accordance with Section 10 of the Rivers and Harbors Act and Section 404 of the Clean Water Act. In 2010, the Corps conducted consultations with the National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) and U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) for effects on species protected under the Endangered Species Act of 1973 (ESA), acting as the lead agency under the ESA. Additionally, the Corps conducted a consultation with NMFS for potential adverse effects on Essential Fish Habitat (EFH), acting as the lead agency under the Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act. Both USFWS and NMFS stated that further coordination under the ESA is not required since the proposed use of a diamond wire saw to remove the sill would have fewer impacts than the previously proposed use of confined underwater blasting using conventional (high) explosives. NMFS also agreed that additional coordination under Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation Management Act is not required for the same reason.

1.8 METHODOLOGY

Previous NEPA documents prepared and permits issued for maintenance dredging of JAXPORT and the MCSF-BI facility were reviewed and are included in section 1.5 of this document. All of these NEPA documents and permits relied on an interdisciplinary team using a systematic approach to: analyze the affected area; estimate the probable environmental effects; and to prepare the required documents. The teams conducted literature searches, on-site field investigations, and coordination with Federal, State, and local resource agencies having expertise in certain areas.

2 ALTERNATIVES

The alternatives section is perhaps the most important component of this SEA. It describes the Preferred Alternative, which is the removal of the concrete sill using a diamond wire saw. All other reasonable alternatives including the No-action Alternative were evaluated within the aforementioned Final EA (2010) and are incorporated herein by reference. The Preferred Alternative was selected based on the information and analysis presented in the sections on the Affected Environment and Environmental Effects of this SEA, as well as the Final EA (2010).

2.1 DESCRIPTION OF ALTERNATIVES

2.1.1 REMOVE SILL WITH DIAMOND WIRE SAW

This alternative includes utilizing a diamond wire saw (**Figures 6 and 7**) to cut into the concrete sill to facilitate the removal of the concrete and rebar contents, resulting in an upper sill elevation of -47 feet MLLW. Under this scenario, deep draft vessels would be able to safely navigate to and from Blount Island Berths 1 and 2 at any time. Deep draft vessels currently wait for the appropriate tide cycle to obtain deeper water.

Figure 6: An example of a diamond wire saw (note diamond beaded cables on wheels).

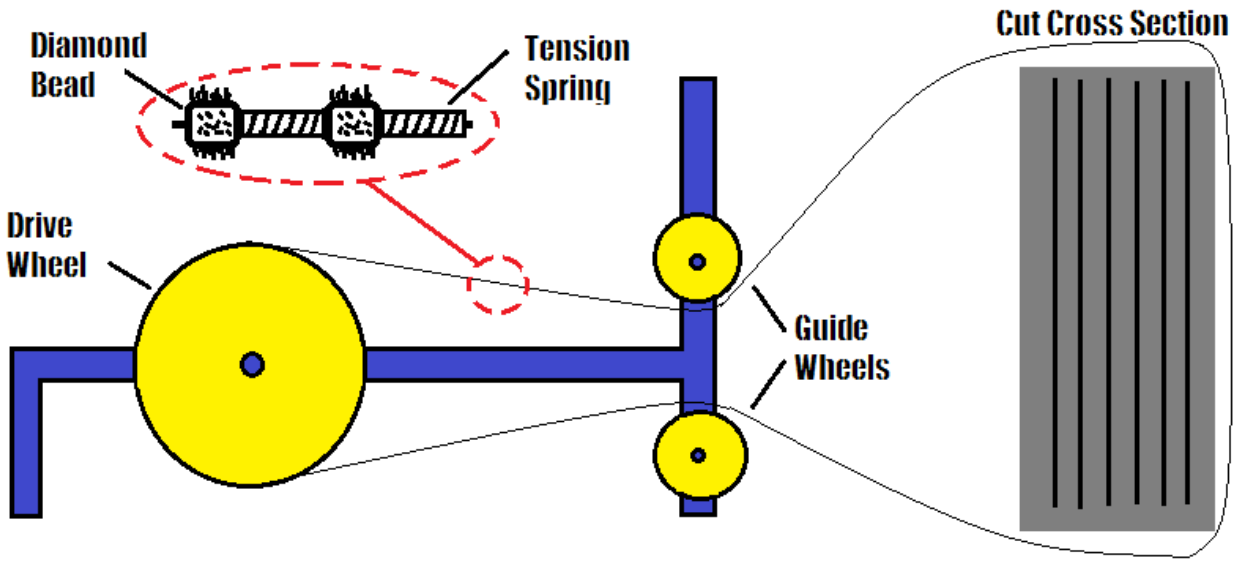

Figure 7: Diamond wire saw diagram.

2.2 ISSUES AND BASIS FOR CHOICE

In the Final EA (2010), confined underwater blasting using high explosives was selected as the Preferred Alternative (Proposed Action) to remove the concrete sill. There are concerns on how effective and efficient blasting would be in breaking up the reinforced concrete sill. The diamond wire saw has been evaluated on how effective and efficient it would be in cutting through the sill, as well as whether it would be environmentally acceptable.

2.3 COMPARISON OF ALTERNATIVES

To better enable comparison of alternatives, Table 1 lists alternatives previously considered in the Final EA (2010), as well as the Preferred Alternative: Remove Sill with Diamond Wire Saw. Table 1 summarizes the major features and consequences of the various alternatives. See Section 4.0, Environmental Effects, for a more detailed discussion of impacts of the preferred alternative.

Table 1: Summary of Direct and Indirect Impacts

ENVIRONMENTAL FACTOR	No Action Alternative Status Quo	Remove sill w/blasting	Remove sill w/punching	Remove sill w/mechanical equipment	Remove Sill with a diamond wire saw Preferred Alternative
GENERAL ENVIRONMENTAL SETTING	No impact.	Moderate impacts to resources may occur and would be mitigated with implementation of protective measures. Moderate disruption of MCSF-BI operations due to blasting.	Minor impacts to resources may occur and would be mitigated with implementation of protective measures. Minor disruption of MCSF-BI operations due to punching.	Minor impacts to resources may occur and would be mitigated with implementation of protective measures. Minor disruption of MCSF-BI operations due to deployment of equipment.	Minor impacts to resources may occur and would be mitigated with implementation of protective measures. Minor disruption of MCSF-BI operations due to deployment of equipment.
THREATENED AND ENDANGERED SPECIES	No impact.	Not likely to adversely affect due to protective measures and marine species monitoring program.	Not likely to adversely affect due to protective measures and marine species monitoring program.	Not likely to adversely affect due to protective measures and marine species monitoring program.	Not likely to adversely affect due to protective measures and marine species monitoring program.
FISH AND WILDLIFE RESOURCES	No impact.	Significant Level B take (behavior and temporary threshold shift) of bottlenose dolphins resulting from blasting operations may occur. Small numbers of fish would be taken.	Not likely to adversely affect due to protective measures and marine species monitoring program.	Not likely to adversely affect due to protective measures and marine species monitoring program.	Not likely to adversely affect due to protective measures and marine species monitoring program.
ESSENTIAL FISH HABITAT	No impact.	Not likely to adversely affect due to protective measures and marine species monitoring program.	Not likely to adversely affect due to protective measures and marine species monitoring program.	Not likely to adversely affect due to protective measures and marine species monitoring program.	Not likely to adversely affect due to protective measures and marine species monitoring program.
WATER QUALITY	No impact.	Temporary and minor increase in turbidity within the slipway and basin.	Temporary and minor increase in turbidity within the slipway and basin.	Temporary and minor increase in turbidity within the slipway and basin.	Temporary and minor increase in turbidity within the slipway and basin.
HAZARDOUS, TOXIC AND RADIOACTIVE WASTE	No impact.	No effect anticipated.	No effect anticipated.	No effect anticipated.	No effect anticipated.
AIR QUALITY	No impact.	Temporary and minor increase in local emissions.	Temporary and minor increase in local emissions.	Temporary and minor increase in local emissions.	Temporary and minor increase in local emissions.
NOISE	No impact.	Underwater noise levels would be temporary but would reach high levels and may result in Level B take of bottlenose dolphins. Above water noise levels would be temporary and minor.	Underwater noise levels would be temporary and reach moderate levels. Above water noise levels would be temporary and minor.	Underwater noise levels would be temporary and reach moderate levels. Above water noise levels would be temporary and minor.	Underwater noise levels would be temporary and reach moderate levels. Above water noise levels would be temporary and minor.
RECREATION	No impact.	No impact.	No impact.	No impact.	No impact.

ENVIRONMENTAL FACTOR	No Action Alternative Status Quo	Remove sill w/blasting	Remove sill w/punching	Remove sill w/mechanical equipment	Remove Sill with a diamond wire saw Preferred Alternative
MILITARY NAVIGATION	Military navigation would be severely hindered. As transport vessels increase in size they would be prohibited from utilizing MCSF-BI.	Military navigation can continue to achieve the mission of the MCSF-BI. Moderate disruption of MCSF-BI operations due to blasting.	Military navigation can continue to achieve the mission of the MCSF-BI. Minor disruption of MCSF-BI operations due to punching.	Military navigation can continue to achieve the mission of the MCSF-BI. Minor disruption of MCSF-BI operations due to deployment of equipment.	Military navigation can continue to achieve the mission of the MCSF-BI. Minor disruption of MCSF-BI operations due to deployment of equipment.
HISTORIC PROPERTIES	No Impact.	No Impact.	No Impact.	No Impact.	No Impact.

2.4 PREFERRED ALTERNATIVE

Removal of the concrete sill using a diamond wire saw is selected as the Preferred Alternative (Proposed Action) because it is cost-effective, would be most effective and efficient in this unique situation, and would result in less environmental impacts than confined blasting.

3 AFFECTED ENVIRONMENT

The Affected Environment was previously considered in the Final EA (2010) and is incorporated herein by reference. However, updates regarding the Affected Environment are provided within this section.

3.1 THREATENED AND ENDANGERED SPECIES

3.1.1 ATLANTIC STURGEON

In 2012, NMFS issued a final determination to list the South Atlantic distinct population segment (DPS) of Atlantic sturgeon (*Acipenser oxyrinchus oxyrinchus*) as endangered under the Endangered Species Act of 1973, as amended. This listing occurred after the Final EA (2010) was completed; therefore, this species is being included in this SEA. The South Atlantic DPS includes all Atlantic sturgeon that spawn or are spawned in the watersheds (including all rivers and tributaries) of the ACE (Ashepoo, Combahee, and Edisto) Basin southward along the South Carolina, Georgia, and Florida coastal areas to the St. Johns River, Florida. The marine range of Atlantic sturgeon from the South Atlantic DPS extends from the Hamilton Inlet, Labrador, Canada, to Cape Canaveral, Florida. The South Atlantic DPS also includes Atlantic sturgeon held in captivity (*e.g.,* aquaria, hatcheries, and scientific institutions) and which are identified as fish belonging to the South Atlantic DPS based on genetics analyses, previously applied tags, previously applied marks, or documentation to verify that the fish originated from (hatched in) a river within the range of the South Atlantic DPS, or is the progeny of any fish that originated from a river within the range of the South Atlantic DPS (Atlantic Sturgeon Status Review Team 2007; NMFS 2012).

There have been reports of Atlantic sturgeon tagged in the Edisto River (South Carolina) being recaptured in the St. Johns River, indicating this river may serve as a nursery ground; however, there are no data to support the existence of a spawning population (i.e. young-of-the-year or running ripe adults) in the St. Johns (Rogers and Weber 1995; Kahnle *et al.* 1998). In response to the proposed listing rule, the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission reported that two juveniles (approximately 50 centimeters, age 1 or 2) were captured in the St. Johns River in February 2011, though these captures do not provide new evidence of spawning based on the size/age classes of sturgeon caught (NMFS 2012). It is highly unlikely that Atlantic sturgeon would occur within the project footprint due to their continued scarcity.

3.2 FISH AND WILDLIFE RESOURCES

3.2.1 COMMON BOTTLENOSE DOLPHINS

The common bottlenose dolphin (*Tursiops truncatus*) is protected under the Marine Mammal Protection Act (MMPA) of 1972. Significant new information on this species was acquired by the Corps after completion of the Final EA (2010); therefore, this information is being included in this SEA. Common bottlenose dolphins occurring within the footprint of the proposed work belong to the Jacksonville Estuarine System (JES) Stock (Nekolny 2014). According to University

of North Florida (UNF) researchers, Northern Florida Coastal Stock (CS) common bottlenose dolphins rarely venture further upriver than Naval Station Mayport, which is located at the river's mouth. UNF researchers have occasionally seen CS animals (who they consider transients) as far upriver as the confluence with the Intracoastal Waterway, but this is fairly rare. The JES Stock is defined as a separate estuarine stock primarily by the results of photo-ID and genetic studies. It is bounded in the north by the Florida/Georgia border at Cumberland Sound, abutting the southern border of the Southern Georgia Estuarine System Stock, and extends south to Jacksonville Beach, Florida (NOAA 2014).

The range of the JES Stock includes the lower St. Johns River. JES stock dolphins have been observed by Corps' biologists and Nekolny (2014) from the mouth of the river to at least River Kilometer 40 (River Mile 25). UNF researchers have recorded a strong seasonal shift during winter in which almost all dolphin sightings within the river occurred between the Dames Point Bridge (River Kilometer 18 [River Mile 11]) and the mouth of the river. The entrance to Mill Cove across from the JAXPORT terminal is heavily used for socializing and resting. Also, the section of the river between the Hecksher dry dock facility and Chicopit Bay is heavily used for foraging (dry dock) and socializing/resting (Chicopit). These are very clearly important areas for the dolphins year-round and are used by all age/sex classes of individuals (Dr. Quincy Gibson, UNF, personal communication 2015).

UNF conducted mark-recapture abundance estimates of common bottlenose dolphins in the St. Johns River and determined seasonal abundance estimates (**Figure 8**). Estimates ranged from 174-203 dolphins in summer and 74-109 in winter. These abundance estimates are based on "marked" or distinctive individuals only. UNF is in the process of revising the estimates to better account for unmarked individuals (Dr. Quincy Gibson, UNF, personal communication 2017). Because the abundance of the JES Stock is small, NMFS considers this to be a strategic stock under the Marine Mammal Protection Act.

UNF calculated dolphin density within the lower St. Johns River as 6.76 dolphins km^2 in summer, which is exceptionally high compared to other populations (Ermak et al. in press). UNF stated that the Corps estimate of 12.36 dolphins km^2 in winter is not unreasonable (Dr. Quincy Gibson, UNF, personal communication 2017). As stated earlier, dolphins within the JES Stock shift downstream to that portion of the river between the Dames Point Bridge (River Kilometer 18 [River Mile 11]) and the mouth of the river. In other words, the JES Stock concentrate between Dames Point Bridge and the mouth of the river during the winter, which explains the even higher density level. It is highly likely that common bottlenose dolphins would regularly transit through or near the project footprint.

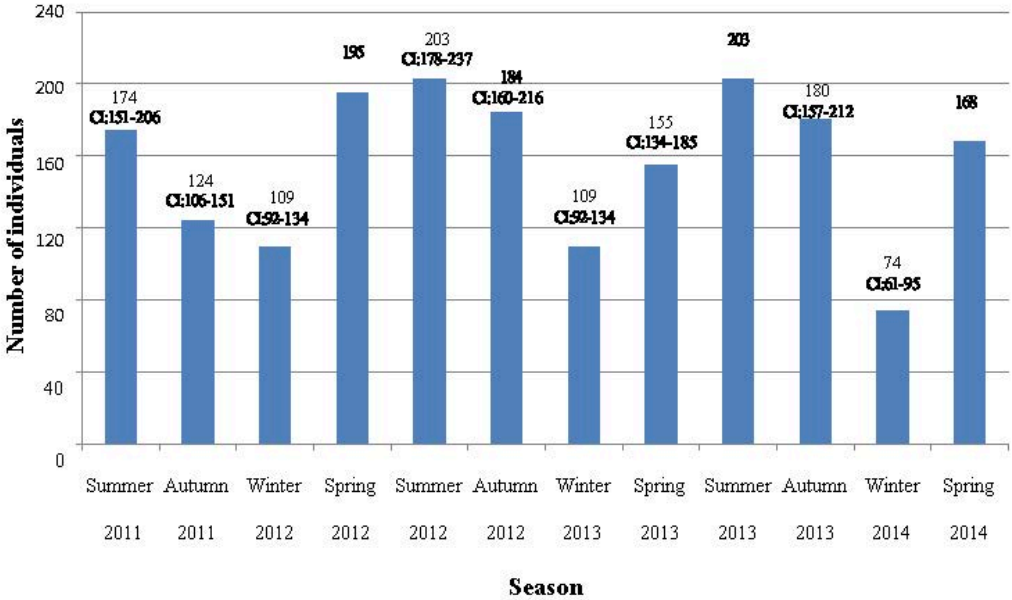

Figure 8. Seasonal abundance estimates (N-hat) of individuals, not including calves, for three years (August 2011 to April 2014). The abundance estimates (N-hat) and 95% confidence intervals are presented above each bar (Nekolny and Gibson, unpublished data).

4 ENVIRONMENTAL EFFECTS

The Environmental Effects for all other reasonable alternatives were previously considered in the Final EA (2010) and are incorporated herein by reference. Effects resulting from the Preferred Alternative (remove sill with a diamond wire saw) are either less than or are similar to the effects from the other action alternatives, as described within the Final EA (2010); therefore, these effects are not included here. This section only discusses species that were listed as endangered or threatened after completion of the Final EA (2010) or effects on other resources where significant new information was obtained.

4.1 THREATENED AND ENDANGERED SPECIES

4.1.1 ATLANTIC STURGEON

4.1.1.1 PREFERRED ALTERNATIVE, REMOVE SILL WITH A DIAMOND WIRE SAW

A diamond wire saw generally comprises a diamond beaded wire loop, mounted onto a frame and veered at high speeds by a hydraulically or electrically powered pulley system (Kaiser et al. 2004; Twachtman et al. 2014). The power generation unit can be situated either underwater or be placed above the water on a support vessel (Pangerc et al. 2016). A clamping frame is used to attach the system onto the structure, generally assisted by an underwater remotely operated vehicle (ROV) or scuba divers (Pangerc et al. 2016). The saw would only be started when immediately adjacent to the concrete. It would not be possible for sturgeon (or other protected species) to contact the moving wire once the wire begins cutting into the concrete.

Manufacturer and technical specifications commonly describe diamond wire cutting as having 'low-noise' emissions (Knecht 2010; Robore Cuts 2016), and being a technique that is generally considered safe for the environment (Twachtman et al. 2004). This is an advantage over alternative methods, given that efforts are increasingly being made to better understand and reduce the effects of underwater sound on sensitive marine organisms (e.g. MSFD 2008; NMFS 2016). Pangerc et al. (2016) found that the sound radiated from the diamond wire cutting of a 0.76 m diameter conductor was not easily discernible above the background noise, which was present during the cutting operation (it should be noted that the cutting process involved the presence of several operational vessels). Increases of between around 4 dB and up to 15 dB were detectable for one-third octave band spectral levels at some frequencies, during the period which broadly corresponded to the cutting operation, with the higher frequencies showing greater increases.

Some companies (Wachs Subsea and Tyrolit Hydrostress) have published underwater sound levels for diamond wire saw equipment. For Wachs Subsea, sound pressure level (SPL) was measured at 154 dB at 1 meter (**Figure 9**). For Tyrolit Hydrostress, SPL was measured at 147 dB at 1 meter (**Figure 10**). The use of a diamond wire saw at Naval Station Point Loma recorded SPL to be 174 dB at 1.2 meters (**Figure 11**).

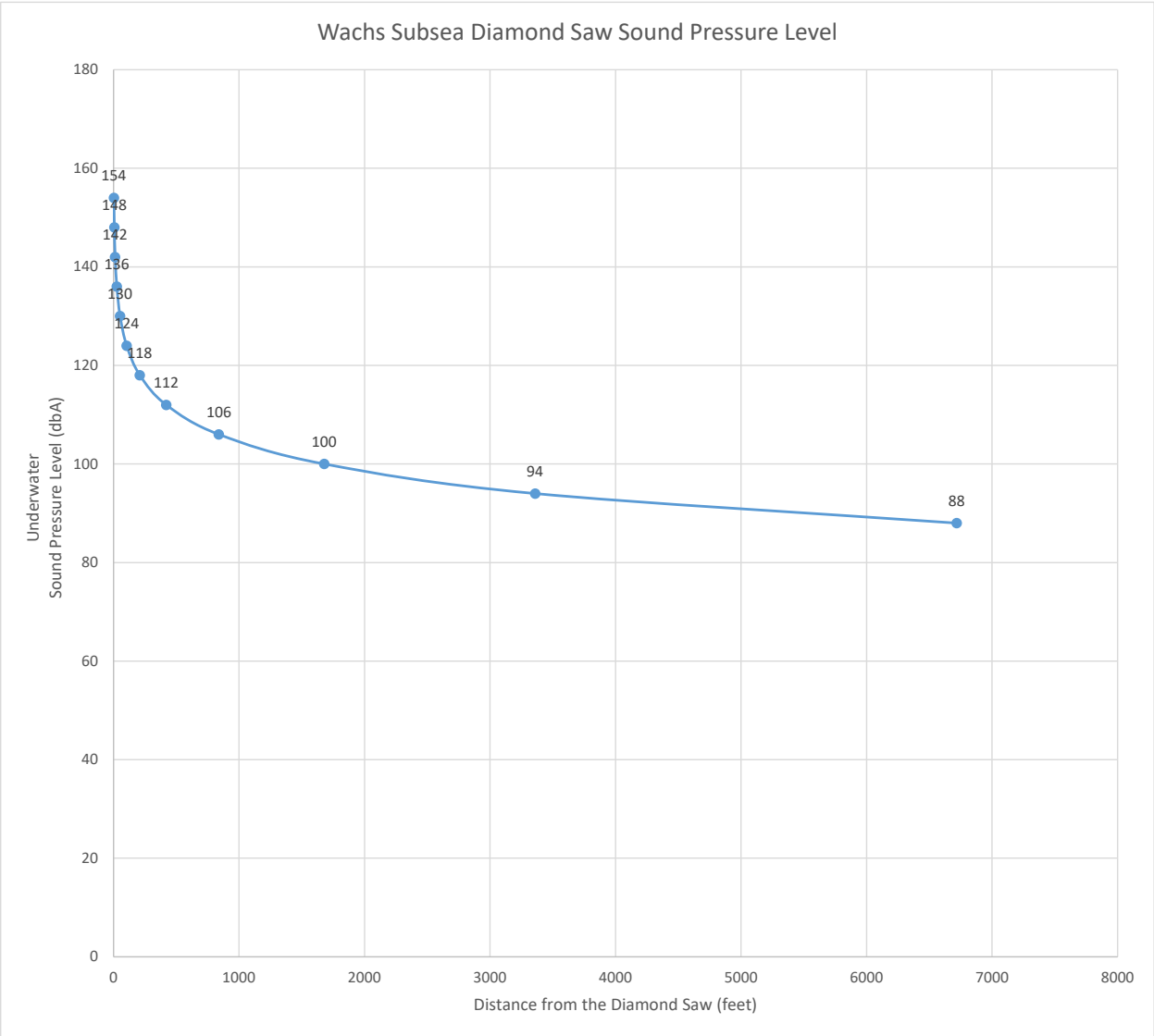

Figure 9: Wachs Subsea Diamond Wire Saw SPL.

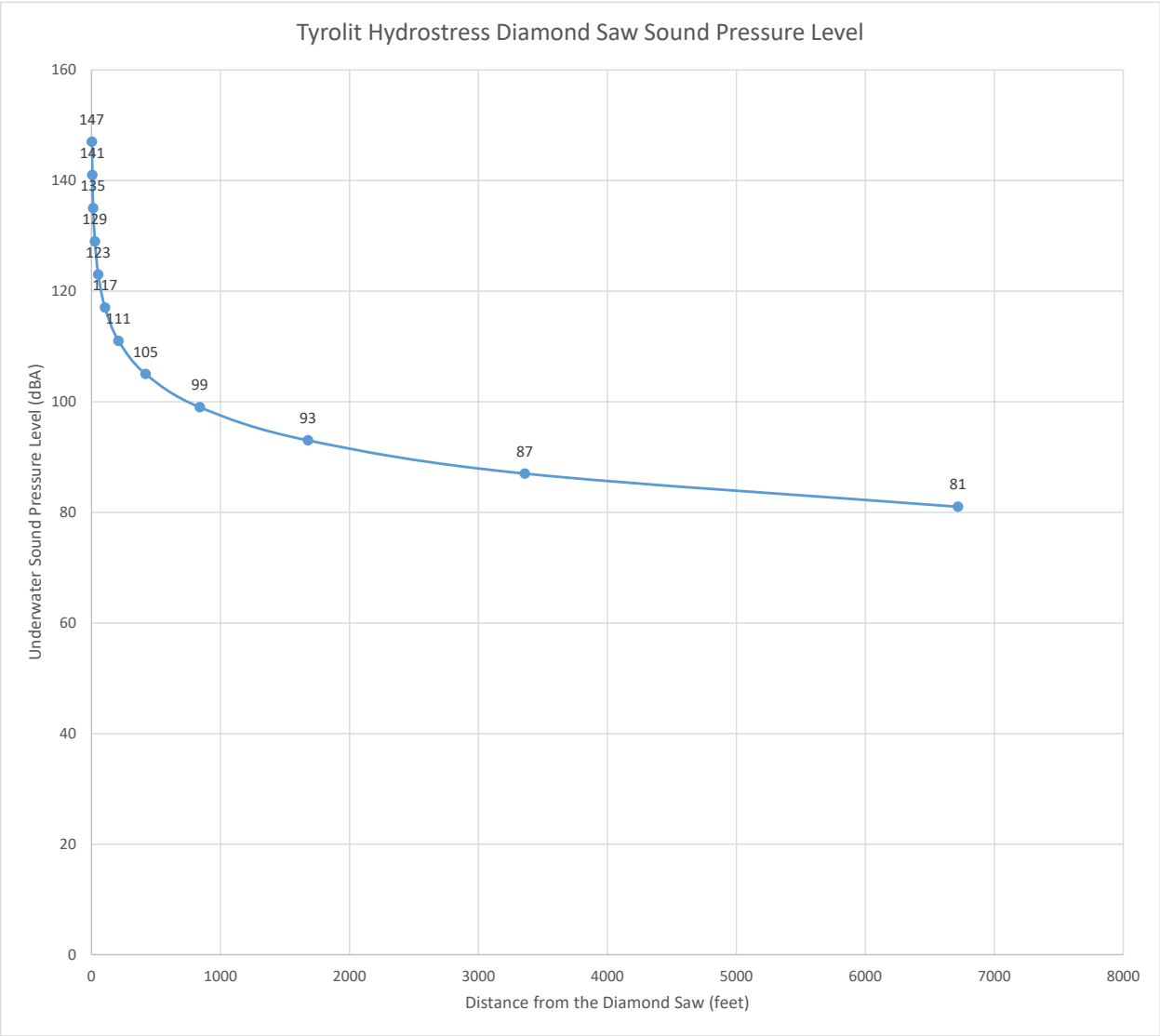

Figure 10: Tyrolit Hydrostress Diamond Wire Saw SPL.

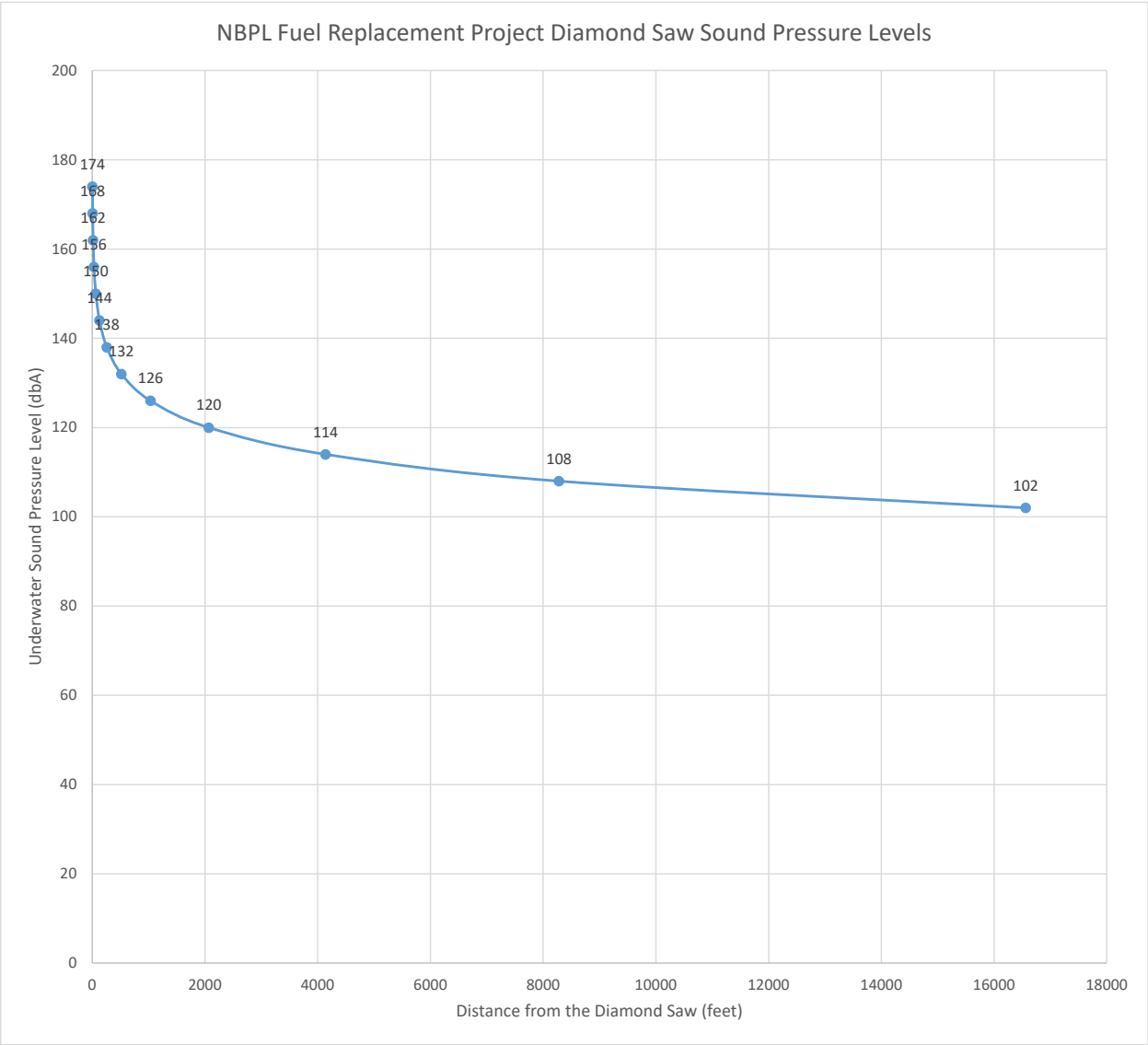

Figure 11: Naval Base Point Loma Diamond Wire Saw SPL.

The Corps has determined that the Preferred Alternative may affect, but is not likely to adversely affect Atlantic sturgeon. It is highly unlikely that this species would be present within the Marine Corps slipway given its current scarcity. Also, it would not be possible for sturgeon (or other protected species) to contact the moving wire once the wire begins cutting into the concrete. Underwater sound levels for diamond wire saws can typically range from 147-174 dB at the source. NMFS interim criterion for physical injury to fish is 206 dB peak, regardless of fish size. However, operations may cause the temporary displacement of fish species, including sturgeon, as a behavioral response to the noise. This will not likely have an adverse effect on

sturgeon as they will be able to use the St. Johns River to traverse to and from staging and feeding grounds.

4.2 FISH AND WILDLIFE RESOURCES

4.2.1 COMMON BOTTLENOSE DOLPHIN

4.2.1.1 PREFERRED ALTERNATIVE, REMOVE SILL WITH A DIAMOND WIRE SAW

Operational information on the diamond wire saw can be found in Section 4.1.1.1. As previously stated, the saw would only be started when immediately adjacent to the concrete. It would not be possible for dolphins (or other protected species) to contact the moving wire once the wire begins cutting into the concrete. Designated observers would be present during all waterborne work including lowering, lifting, or operation of the equipment. All in-water work would cease if dolphins (or other protected species) are within 50 feet of moving equipment.

Common bottlenose dolphins inhabiting the lower St. Johns River, which includes the Marine Corps slipway, are routinely exposed to sounds from both natural (wind waves, fish, tidal currents, marine mammals) and artificial (commercial and recreational ships, dredging, pile driving, etc.) sources. For example, sound emissions of various dredging activities have been monitored by the Corps and ranged from 151 to 187 dB re 1µPa @ 1 m (Reine et al. 2014). Commercial shipping source levels have been estimated at 171 to 190 dB re 1µPa @ 1 m (Richardson et al. 1996). Underwater sound levels produced by diamond wire saws can typically range from 147-174 dB at the source and, therefore, would not exceed sound levels produced by other routine activities (i.e. commercial shipping) occurring within the project area. For further comparison, conventional high explosives used in confined underwater blasting can reach 250 dB re1µPa @ 1 m. It is important to note that the dB scale is a logarithmic scale. There is a significant difference between the sound generated by a diamond wire saw and confined underwater blasting using conventional high explosives. Please refer to **Table 2** for additional information and comparisons of underwater sound levels from artificial sources.

Sound produced by a diamond wire saw is considered non-impulsive sound, which is defined as broadband, narrowband or tonal, brief or prolonged, continuous or intermittent, and typically do not have a high peak sound pressure with rapid rise/decay time that impulsive sounds do (ANSI 1995; NIOSH 1998). NMFS (2016) provided the following non-impulsive sound onset thresholds for mid-frequency cetaceans (i.e. common bottlenose dolphins). Permanent threshold shift (PTS) or permanent hearing loss begins at 198 dB and temporary threshold shift (TTS) or temporary loss of hearing begins at 178 dB. Since diamond wire saws typically produce sound levels ranging between 147-174 dB, the use of this equipment would not result in PTS (or any other type of injury) or TTS for common bottlenose dolphins. Marine mammal behavioral disruption for impulsive noise begins at 120 dB (NMFS 2005); however, as previously stated, common bottlenose dolphins that occur in the project area are routinely exposed to this sound level. Sounds levels would attenuate to less than 120 dB before reaching the St. Johns River.

Dolphins would be able to continue to use the St. Johns River with no effect attributable to the proposed project.

Table 2: Sound levels generated by dredges, commercial shipping, diamond wire saw, and blasting.

SHIP OR DREDGE TYPE	UPPER LIMIT SOUND PRESSURE LEVEL (SPL) dB re: 1 uPa-1m rms	COMMENTS (cited sources consider frequencies less than 1000 Hz)	SOURCE
COMMERCIAL SHIPPING			
Container Vessels and Supertankers	172 to 190	Ships running in length from 135 to 337 meters. Dominant frequencies of sound source less than 500 Hz; most below 100 Hz.	Data from Buck and Chalfant (1972), Ross (1976), and Thiele and Odegarrd (1983) as reported in Richardson et al 1995.
Commercial Shipping-Container(Maersk Idaho)	188.9	Sound Exposure Levels (SEL) were not used in this study, as the author cited unrealistic assumption of a static environment associated with the SEL parameter. Propeller cavitation is generally considered the foremost sound source of commercial ships, which generally occur and increase with higher speeds, generally in excess of 10 knots and more.	Reine, J. Kevin, Clarke, Douglas, Characterization of underwater sounds produced by hydraulic and mechanical dredging operations, pg. 4/15
Commercial Shipping - Container (MMSI Number 211207740)	188.1	Propeller cavitation and acoustical interference (constructive) cited as factors	McKenna, F. Megan, Ross Donald, Underwater radiated noise from modern commercial ships, pg. 5/12
Commercial Shipping - Container (MMSI Number 440223000)	187.4	Propeller cavitation and acoustical interference cited as factors	McKenna, F. Megan, Ross Donald, Underwater radiated noise from modern commercial ships, pg. 5/12
DREDGES BY CLASS			
Three different large sized hopper dredges	179 to 187	Levels are similar to commercial shipping and propeller cavitation also considered principal source. Cavitation is not considered problematic while dredging, which occurs at about 2 knots. Instead, cavitation occurs during the transport process, at higher speeds. Note that larger hopper are generally NOT used on the east coast	Reine, J. Kevin, Clarke, Douglas, Characterization of underwater sounds produced by hydraulic and mechanical dredging operations, pg. 12/15
Three different medium sized hopper dredges	161 to 178	Levels are less than commercial shipping and propeller cavitation considered principal source. These are the size ranges generally used on the east coast. **As mentioned above sound levels are highest after dredging, when dredge is underway due to cavitation.**	Reine, J. Kevin, Clarke, Douglas, Characterization of underwater sounds produced by hydraulic and mechanical dredging operations, pg. 12/15
DREDGES CAPABLE OF FRAGMENTING ROCK			
Mechanical Dredge Dredging Rock (Large Backhoe, The New York)	151	Sound levels are significantly lower than those produced from commercial shipping.	Reine, J. Kevin, Clarke, Douglas, Characterization of underwater sounds produced by hydraulic and mechanical dredging operations, pg. 7/15
Large Cutterhead Dredge (The Florida), Dredging Rock	175	Sound levels are lower than those produced by commercial shipping	Reine, J. Kevin, Clarke, Douglas, Dickerson, Charles, Characterization of Underwater Sounds Produced by a Hydraulic Cutterhead Dredge Fracturing Limestone Rock, pg. 17/19
DIAMOND WIRE SAW	147-174	Sound levels are lower than those produced by commercial shipping and some dredge types	Industry websites, other projects.
CONFINED BLASTING	ROUGHLY 250	Conventional high explosives produce a shockwave, which accounts for relatively large amplitude pressure waves. Reducing charge weights will reduce amplitudes only marginally because of shockwave still produced, regardless	URS, Ichthys Gas Field Development Project, Darwin Harbour (March 20111), and Hempen, Keevin and Jordan (2007), Underwater Blast Pressures from Confined

5 ENVIRONMENTAL COMMITMENTS

Environmental commitments were previously considered in the Final EA (2010) and are incorporated herein by reference.

6 COMPLIANCE WITH ENVIRONMENTAL REQUIREMENTS

Environmental commitments were previously considered in the Final EA (2010) and are incorporated herein by reference. However, the following updates are provided.

6.1 NATIONAL ENVIRONMENTAL POLICY ACT OF 1969

Environmental information on the project has been compiled and this SEA has been prepared. A scoping letter on the use of the diamond wire saw to facilitate the removal of the MCSF-BI concrete sill was mailed out to all Federal, State, local agencies, and other stakeholders on October 11, 2017. A Notice of Availability dated June 6, 2018 of the draft SEA and proposed FONSI was also coordinated with interested stakeholders for review and comment. The project is in full compliance with the National Environmental Policy Act.

6.2 ENDANGERED SPECIES ACT (ESA) OF 1973

In association with the Final EA (2010), consultation was initiated with the USFWS and NMFS via a scoping letter dated January 30, 2008. Additionally, Biological Assessments (BAs) for species under both agencies jurisdictions were prepared and submitted to each agency to initiate consultation under the Act. The Corps received letters of concurrence from both agencies, NMFS dated July 22, 2009 and USFWS on December 8, 2009. The Corps, in coordination with USFWS (via email dated June 25, 2018) and NMFS (via teleconference dated June 6, 2018), has determined that the existing concurrence letters do not need to be updated since the use of a diamond wire saw would have fewer impacts than the previously proposed use of confined underwater blasting using high explosives. This project has been fully coordinated under the ESA and is in full compliance with the Act.

6.3 MAGNUSON-STEVENS FISHERY CONSERVATION AND MANAGEMENT ACT

This Act requires preparation of an Essential Fish Habitat (EFH) Assessment and coordination with NMFS. Pursuant to the Magnuson-Stevens Act, EFH consultation with NMFS for the removal of the sill and advance maintenance dredging of the slipway was completed as part of the Final EA (2010) under the requirements of the May 3, 1999 EFH Finding between NMFS and the Corps. Under that finding, the 2010 EA served as the EFH assessment. NMFS reviewed the 2010 EA and concurred with the Corps determination that the proposed dredging and sill removal will have minimal effect to fishery resources in a letter dated June 17, 2009. NMFS stated via email dated June 25, 2018 that their previous letter is not altered by the information in this EA, namely NMFS has no additional EFH conservation recommendations for removal of the concrete sill. The project is in full compliance with this Act.

6.4 NATIONAL HISTORIC PRESERVATION ACT OF 1966 (INTER ALIA)

Archival research, channel surveys, and updated consultation with the Florida State Historic Preservation Officer (SHPO) have been conducted for the sill removal project. All of these activities have been completed in accordance with the National Historic Preservation Act (NHPA), as amended; the Archeological and Historic Preservation Act (AHPA), as amended; and

Executive Order (EO) 11593. The project is in full compliance with the NHPA as well as the AHPA and EO 11593. The Corps received a letter from the Florida SHPO dated April 20, 2018 stating that SHPO concurs with the Corps determination of no effect to historic properties.

7 PUBLIC/AGENCY COORDINATION

7.1 SCOPING AND DRAFT SEA

Pursuant to the National Environmental Policy Act and U.S. Army Corps of Engineers Regulation, a scoping letter dated October 11, 2017 was issued for this action. A Notice of Availability dated June 6, 2018 of the draft SEA (DSEA) and proposed Finding of No Significant Impact (FONSI) was sent to interested stakeholders for review and comment (see scoping letter and Notice of Availability in Appendix A).

7.2 AGENCY COORDINATION

The Corps initiated coordination with appropriate agencies via the scoping of the 2010 EA. Coordination of the DSEA and proposed FONSI was also conducted with Federal, State and local agencies. Agency correspondence can be found in Appendix A.

7.3 COMMENTS RECEIVED AND RESPONSE

Comments received in response to the Notice of Availability are summarized below. All comment letters or emails received can be found in Appendix A.

Florida Department of Environmental Protection

- The Florida Department of Environmental Protection's Northeast District has determined that an Environmental Resource Permit will be required from the Department. Please contact the Northeast District office regarding details and requirements for this project. Please note that the Dayson Island DMMA may need to be verified as part of the environmental resource permitting process. Please coordinate with the Blount Island Utility office and/or Environmental office concerning this project. All of the appropriate facility permits must be attained, and all contractors and other work personnel are notified of all Land Use Controls (LUCs) that are located in this and the surrounding areas before work commences. For example, a dig permit and permit to remove soil/sediment (concrete?), dewatering permit may be needed for the work area(s), etc. Any abandoned monitoring wells, and other wells, located within the work area that will/may be destroyed during the site activities. These wells may need to be reinstalled following work completion.

RESPONSE: An Environmental Resource Permit shall be obtained prior to commencement of work. Coordination with the Northeast District has been initiated.

- The Division of Historical Resources of the Florida Department of State appreciated the opportunity to comment on this proposed project. The proposed activities described in the DSEA remain consistent with those activities previously reviewed by our office. Therefore, we concur with the Corps' determination of no effect to historic properties listed, or eligible for listing, in the National Register of Historic Places.

RESPONSE: Receipt of comment acknowledged.

- Based on the information submitted and minimal project impacts, the state has no objections to the subject project and, therefore, it is consistent with the Florida Coastal Management Program (FCMP). The state's final concurrence of the project's consistency with the FCMP will be determined during any environmental permitting processes, in accordance with Section 373.428, Florida Statutes.

RESPONSE: Receipt of comment acknowledged.

8 LIST OF PREPARERS

Name	Organization	Expertise	Role in Preparation
Paul Stodola, Lead Biologist	Corps	NEPA/Biologist	Primary Author
Jason Spinning, Coastal Section Chief	Corps	Supervisory Biologist	Document Reviewer
Dr. Gina Paduano-Ralph, Environmental Branch Chief	Corps	Supervisory Biologist	Document Reviewer
Rebecca Onchaga	Corps	Technical Writer/Editor	Document Reviewer and Format

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INDEX

AFFECTED ENVIRONMENT, 11
AGENCY COORDINATION, 24
Alternatives, 7
ALTERNATIVES, 6
COMPLIANCE WITH ENVIRONMENTAL REQUIREMENTS, 22
DECISIONS TO BE MADE, 4
Endangered, 22
Environmental Assessment, 22
ENVIRONMENTAL COMMITMENTS, 21
ENVIRONMENTAL EFFECTS, 14
FISH AND WILDLIFE RESOURCES, 11, 18
LIST OF PREPARERS, 26
National Environmental Policy Act, 22
PERMITS, LICENSES, AND ENTITLEMENTS, 5
PROJECT LOCATION, 1
PROJECT PURPOSE AND NEED, 1
SCOPING AND ISSUES, 4
THREATENED AND ENDANGERED SPECIES, 13, 14

APPENDIX A – PERTINENT CORRESPONDENCE

DEPARTMENT OF THE ARMY
JACKSONVILLE DISTRICT CORPS OF ENGINEERS
701 San Marco Boulevard
JACKSONVILLE, FLORIDA 32207-8175

REPLY TO
ATTENTION OF

Planning and Policy Division
Environmental Branch

OCT 11 2017

TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN

This scoping letter is being promulgated by the Jacksonville District, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (Corps) in compliance with public coordination requirements of the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA). The purpose of this correspondence is to formally initiate the scoping process as defined by 40 CFR 1501.7 for the U. S. Marine Corps Terminal Blount Island Sill Removal Project, Duval County, Florida and to provide additional opportunity for comment.

The project will consist of the removal of a concrete sill in the Marine Corps Terminal slip located at Blount Island, (**Figure 1 and Figure 2**). The reinforced concrete sill is located at station 7+00 and is 32.6 feet wide by 426.5 feet long and 14.5 feet deep, currently the crest elevation is at -37.6 feet Mean Lower Low Water (MLLW). The project is to cut 9.4 feet deep into the concrete sill and remove the concrete and rebar contents, resulting in an upper sill elevation of -47 feet MLLW. The material cleared around the sill to allow access to the structure is assumed to be to -47 feet MLLW (however it may require an additional 1 foot of dredging in the buffer depending on the sill removal methodology and equipment use) and will be offloaded to the upland disposal area at Dayson Island Disposal Area. Any sedimentary rock and sill material will be either placed at the upland disposal area or another pre-approved alternative location and the rebar will be disposed of at a local recycling facility.

The Corps previously analyzed the effects of sill removal in an Environmental Assessment (EA) and a Finding of No Significant Impact in July 2010. This new NEPA analysis will review additional removal alternatives not previously analyzed in that document.

The Corps welcomes your views and comments on the proposed Marine Corps Blount Island Sill Removal Project. Your concerns will be appropriately considered and discussed in a supplemental NEPA assessment to update the 2010 Environmental Assessment prepared for this project. Please send your comments or inquiries to Ms. Wendy Dauberman at the letterhead address or via email at wendy.s.dauberman-zerby@usace.army.mil within thirty (30) days of the date of this letter. Please let us also know if you do not want to receive future notifications on this project. If you do not notify us that you would like to be removed from future notices, you will remain on our mailing list.

Sincerely,

Gina Paduano Ralph, Ph.D.
Chief, Environmental Branch

DEPARTMENT OF THE ARMY
JACKSONVILLE DISTRICT CORPS OF ENGINEERS
701 SAN MARCO BOULEVARD
JACKSONVILLE, FLORIDA 32207-0019

REPLY TO
ATTENTION OF

Planning and Policy Division
Environmental Branch

JUN 06 2018

TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN:

Pursuant to the National Environmental Policy Act and U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (Corps) Regulation (33 CFR 230.11), this letter constitutes the Notice of Availability of the Draft Supplemental Environmental Assessment (DSEA) to Consider Removal of Concrete Sill, U.S. Marine Corps Support Facility – Blount Island, Jacksonville, Duval County, Florida. The DSEA relates to the Final EA, Removal of Concrete Sill and Advance Maintenance Dredging of Marine Corps Facility – Blount Island, Jacksonville, Duval County, Florida dated April 2010 and evaluates the use of a diamond wire saw to remove the sill. The Final EA (2010) identified confined underwater blasting using conventional (high) explosives as the preferred alternative. The DSEA preliminarily concludes that the use of the diamond wire saw would result in less environmental impacts than blasting and would effectively and efficiently remove the sill.

A copy of the DSEA and Proposed Finding of No Significant Impact (FONSI) are available for your review online at the following website. Click on Duval County, then scroll down to U.S. Marine Corps Support Facility, Blount Island and then click on Supplemental Environmental Assessment and FONSI.

http://www.saj.usace.army.mil/About/DivisionsOffices/Planning/EnvironmentalBranch/EnvironmentalDocuments.aspx

Please submit questions or comments on the DSEA and Proposed FONSI in writing to the letterhead address above or by email (Paul.E.Stodola@usace.army.mil) within 30 days of receipt of this letter.

Sincerely,

Gina Paduano Ralph, Ph.D.
Chief, Environmental Branch

From:	Stahl, Chris
To:	Stodola, Paul E CIV USARMY CESAJ (US)
Cc:	State_Clearinghouse
Subject:	[Non-DoD Source] State_Clearance_Letter_For_FL201806128332C_Draft Supplemental EA for the Removal of Concrete Sill and Advance Maintenance Dredging Slipway, U.S. Marine Corps Support Facility, Blount Island
Date:	Wednesday, August 1, 2018 3:43:55 PM

August 1, 2018

Paul E. Stodola
U.S. Army Corps of Engineers
Jacksonville District, Planning Division
P. O. Box 4970
Jacksonville, Florida 32232-0019

RE: Department of the Army, Jacksonville District Corps of Engineers - Draft Supplemental Environmental Assessment for the Removal of Concrete Sill and Advance Maintenance Dredging Slipway, U.S. Marine Corps Support Facility, Blount Island, Jacksonville, Duval County, Florida
SAI # FL201806128332C

Dear Paul:

Florida State Clearinghouse staff has reviewed the proposal under the following authorities: Presidential Executive Order 12372; § 403.061(42), Florida Statutes; the Coastal Zone Management Act, 16 U.S.C. §§ 1451-1464, as amended; and the National Environmental Policy Act, 42 U.S.C. §§ 4321-4347, as amended.

The Florida Department of Environmental Protection's Northeast District has determined that an Environmental Resource Permit will be required from the Department. Please contact the Northeast District office regarding details and requirements for this project. Please note that the Dayson Island DMMA may need to be verified as part of the environmental resource permitting process. Please coordinate with the Blount Island Utility office and/or Environmental office concerning this project. All of the appropriate facility permits must be attained, and all contractors and other work personnel are notified of all Land Use Controls (LUCs) that are located in this and the surrounding areas before work commences. For example, a dig permit and permit to remove soil/sediment (concrete?), dewatering permit may be needed for the work area(s), etc. Any abandoned monitoring wells, and other wells, located within the work area that will/may be destroyed during the site activities. These wells may need to be reinstalled following work completion. Please keep all stakeholders aware of work activities before, during, and after completion of the project.

The Division of Historical Resources of the Florida Department of State appreciated the opportunity to comment on this proposed project. The proposed activities described in the DSEA remain consistent with those activities previously reviewed by our office. Therefore, we concur with the Corps' determination of no effect to historic properties listed, or eligible for listing, in the National Register of Historic Places. If you have any questions, please contact me by email at

Jason.Aldridge@dos.myflorida.com, or by telephone at 850-245-6344.

Based on the information submitted and minimal project impacts, the state has no objections to the subject project and, therefore, it is consistent with the Florida Coastal Management Program (FCMP). The state's final concurrence of the project's consistency with the FCMP will be determined during any environmental permitting processes, in accordance with Section 373.428, Florida Statutes.

Thank you for the opportunity to review the proposed plan. If you have any questions or need further assistance, please don't hesitate to contact me at (850) 717-9076.

Sincerely,

Chris Stahl

Chris Stahl, Coordinator
Florida State Clearinghouse
Florida Department of Environmental Protection
2600 Blair Stone Road, M.S. 47
Tallahassee, FL 32399-2400
ph. (850) 717-9076
State.Clearinghouse@dep.state.fl.us

FLORIDA DEPARTMENT *of* STATE

RICK SCOTT
Governor

KEN DETZNER
Secretary of State

Mr. Jason D. Moser
Jacksonville District
701 San Marco Boulevard
Jacksonville, Florida 32207-8175

April 20, 2018

RE: DHR Project File No.: 2017-4889-B, Received by DHR: March 30, 2018
Project: *USMC Support Facility Blount Island (Sill Removal) Study*
County: Duval

Mr. Moser:

The Florida State Historic Preservation Officer reviewed the referenced project for possible effects on historic properties listed, or eligible for listing, on the *National Register of Historic Places.* The review was conducted in accordance with Section 106 of the *National Historic Preservation Act of 1966*, as amended, and its implementing regulations in *36 CFR Part 800: Protection of Historic Properties.*

Based on the information provided, our office concurs with the Corps' determination of no effect to historic properties. However, the permit, if issued, should include the following special condition regarding unexpected discoveries:

- If prehistoric or historic artifacts, such as pottery or ceramics, projectile points, dugout canoes, metal implements, historic building materials, or any other physical remains that could be associated with Native American, early European, or American settlement are encountered at any time within the project site area, the permitted project shall cease all activities involving subsurface disturbance in the vicinity of the discovery. The applicant shall contact the Florida Department of State, Division of Historical Resources, Compliance Review Section at (850)-245-6333. Project activities shall not resume without verbal and/or written authorization. In the event that unmarked human remains are encountered during permitted activities, all work shall stop immediately and the proper authorities notified in accordance with Section 872.05, *Florida Statutes*.

If you have any questions, please contact Mercedes Harrold, Historic Preservationist, by email at *Mercedes.Harrold@dos.myflorida.com*, or by telephone at 850.245.6342 or 800.847.7278.

Sincerely,

Jason Aldridge
For

Timothy A Parsons, Ph.D.
Director, Division of Historical Resources
& State Historic Preservation Officer

Division of Historical Resources
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