What Is The Navy Proposing?

The Navy is proposing to expand and modify Dry Dock 1 at Portsmouth Naval Shipyard in Kittery, Maine (Figure 1). The Proposed Action would be comprised of multiple projects that take place in and adjacent to Dry Dock 1 including:

- construction of a super flood basin in front of the entrance of Dry Dock 1;
- extension and improvements to portal crane rail and utilities;
- and construction of two new dry docking positions capable of servicing Virginia class submarines within the super flood basin. Each project would be constructed in phases to minimize impacts to Shipyard operations. The projects would take approximately 5-7 years to complete. Construction is anticipated to begin in 2019 and continue through 2026.

Why Is The Navy Preparing An EA?

The National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) requires Federal agencies to evaluate the potential environmental impacts of any proposed major Federal action. The Environmental Assessment (EA) will include:

- Purpose and Need for the Proposed Action;
- Proposed Action and Alternatives;
- Existing environmental conditions;
- Evaluation of impacts; and
- Minimization and mitigation measures to reduce or offset adverse impacts.

Why Is The Navy Proposing This Action?

The purpose of the Proposed Action is to eliminate the use of buoyancy assist tanks at Dry Dock 1 and expand the Shipyard’s capability to support the overhaul and maintenance of Los Angeles and Virginia class submarines. Los Angeles class submarines currently require buoyancy assist tanks during high tides to enter Dry Dock 1. The buoyancy assist system used at Dry Dock 1 cannot be used for the Virginia class due to their weight, external configuration, and the overall width of the dry dock. The tanks have also reached the end of their life and will no longer be certifiable beyond 2021. Furthermore, Dry Dock 1 is the shallowest of the three dry docks at the Shipyard and, under current conditions, cannot service Virginia class submarines; which are longer and wider than Los Angeles class submarines. The Proposed Action will allow Dry Dock 1 to support Virginia class maintenance beyond 2021.
Other Alternatives Evaluated:
The Navy identified several alternatives that will not be carried forward in the EA because they did not meet reasonable alternative screening factors identified to support the purpose of and need for the proposed action. Only one feasible action alternative (the Preferred Alternative) and the No Action Alternative will be analyzed in the EA.

Under the No Action Alternative there would be continued use of existing facilities. Dry Dock 1 would no longer be able to support submarine maintenance beyond 2021, which would have significant adverse operational impacts to the Navy and compromise the Shipyard’s ability to execute its mission.

What Is The Preferred Alternative?
The Preferred Alternative consists of a series of projects that would occur within the same area. Each project would be constructed in phases to minimize the operational impact to the Shipyard’s on-going operations.

The first project would construct a super flood basin by enclosing an approximately 150,000 square foot area in front of the entrance to Dry Dock 1. The basin would provide a closure wall and a caisson (a large floating gate) that would extend from beyond the west end of Berth 1 across to Berth 11B. The super flood basin would be similar to a navigational lock. Submarines would enter the basin and the water would be elevated to super flood level allowing the submarine to enter Dry Dock 1 without the need for buoyancy assist tanks. This project also extends the crane rail along Berths 1 and 2 to support submarine outfitting which currently occurs at Berth 11B.

The second project would provide additional crane and rail extensions, increase crane rail capacity, provide a maintenance access tunnel to Dry Dock 1, and provide various utilities.

What Is The Preferred Alternative? (Continued)
The third project would expand Dry Dock 1 to allow for the simultaneous docking of two Virginia class submarines. This would be done by modifying the floor of the super flood basin; providing a second caisson seat in the closure wall; and installing a common wall between Berth 11 and Berth 1.

This project would also include construction of a new pump well system and modifications to Berths 1 and 11 to provide a watertight enclosure.

Scope Of The EA:
The EA presents the existing conditions and evaluates the potential environmental consequences of the Proposed Action. The EA will identify impact minimization and mitigation measures for resources adversely affected by the Proposed Action. The EA evaluates potential impacts on the natural and human environment including: air quality, water resources, geological resources, cultural resources, biological resources, land use, visual resources, noise, infrastructure, transportation, public health and safety, and hazardous materials and wastes.

The Navy is consulting on the Proposed Action with key agencies including: the Maine State Historic Preservation Commission and local government agencies, federally recognized Native American Indian tribes, Maine Department of Environmental Protection, Maine Department of Marine Resources, the National Marine Fisheries Service, the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, New England District, the Advisory Council on Historic Preservation, and other interested parties.

For more information or to provide comments regarding this Proposed Action, please contact the Navy by June 28, 2018
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No return replies will be provided. All comments will be addressed within the EA. Identifying information (names, addresses, eMail addresses, etc.) will be withheld to the extent permitted by law.