

**DEPARTMENT OF THE NAVY
UNITED STATES FLEET FORCES COMMAND**

**FINDING OF NO SIGNIFICANT IMPACT
FOR THE HOMEPORTING OF THE LITTORAL COMBAT SHIP
ON THE EAST COAST OF THE UNITED STATES**

Introduction

Pursuant to Section 102(2) of the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) of 1969, as amended; Council on Environmental Quality Regulations (40 Code of Federal Regulations (CFR) §§ 1500–1508) implementing NEPA; U.S. Department of the Navy (Navy) Regulations (32 CFR § 775); and Office of the Chief of Naval Operations Instruction (OPNAVINST) 5090.1C, CH-1; the Navy gives notice that an Environmental Assessment (EA) has been prepared and a Finding of No Significant Impact (FONSI) has been signed for the homeporting of up to 14 littoral combat ships (LCSs) on the East Coast of the United States. The Proposed Action would not significantly affect the quality of the natural and man-made environment. Therefore, preparation of an Environmental Impact Statement is not necessary.

Purpose and Need

The purpose of the Proposed Action is to provide facilities and functions to support the homeporting of up to 14 LCSs. The Proposed Action is needed to achieve the required levels of operational readiness required by 10 United States Code (U.S.C.) § 5062, *United States Navy: composition; functions*.

Description of the Proposed Action and Alternatives

The Navy proposes to homeport up to 14 LCSs on the East Coast of the United States by 2020. This includes homeporting up to either 14 Austal variants, 14 Lockheed Martin variants, or a combination of Austal and Lockheed Martin variants. In accordance with strategic laydown plans, it is estimated that no more than 8 LCSs would be in port at any one time. Therefore, either 8 Austal variants, 8 Lockheed Martin variants, or a combination of the variants would be berthed at any one time.

The Proposed Action includes the use of existing facilities and any improvements required to support the LCSs, new land-based training requirements, and stationing LCS crews (i.e., ship company crew, mission package crew, and support personnel) and their dependents at NAVSTA Mayport or NAVSTA Norfolk. Approximately 1,700 personnel and their family members would be stationed at NAVSTA Mayport or NAVSTA Norfolk associated with this action.

MH-60 aircraft systems and crews associated with the LCS are already established and based at Navy installations on the East Coast; therefore, they were not analyzed in this EA. Firescout maintenance actions and associated test flights would be conducted at MCAS Cherry Point and are analyzed as part of this proposed action. Approximately 30 personnel and their family members would be stationed at MCAS Cherry Point.

Navy vessel transit activities, which include in-port operations, were analyzed in the Navy's Virginia Capes, Cherry Point, and Jacksonville EIS, dated June 2009. LCS training and transits in and out of port (i.e., 0 to 3 nautical miles [0 to 5.6 km] from the shoreline), including training and transits in and out of each bay; training and testing involving the use of sonar; pierside sonar maintenance and testing; and the use of active sonar by the LCSs are currently being addressed in the *Atlantic Fleet Training and Testing*

Environmental Impact Statement that is being developed by the Navy to provide continuing coverage for vessel transits and training beginning in 2014. Therefore, in-water training operations are not analyzed in this EA.

The following alternatives were considered and carried forward for detailed analysis in this EA, along with the MCAS Cherry Point Component that is part of both Alternatives:

Naval Station (NAVSTA) Mayport Alternative (Alternative 1)

Under this alternative, the LCSs would be homeported at NAVSTA Mayport and the associated crews would be stationed at NAVSTA Mayport. A combination of new facilities and existing military assets in the Southeast Region would be utilized to provide berthing space, ship hotel services, maintenance support, drydocking facilities, fueling services, ordnance handling and storage, cargo and mission module handling and storage, support facilities, and aviation asset support. No in-water construction projects would be required. Under the NAVSTA Mayport Alternative, the following two scenarios were considered and carried forward for further detailed analysis:

- *Scenario 1 – NAVSTA Mayport.* Scenario 1 includes homeporting up to 14 LCSs, establishing the required support facilities, and stationing LCS crews at NAVSTA Mayport.
- *Scenario 2 – NAVSTA Mayport-Naval Submarine Base (NSB) Kings Bay.* Scenario 2 is the same as Scenario 1 except that one of the support facilities would be established at NSB Kings Bay.

NAVSTA Norfolk Alternative (Alternative 2)

Under this alternative, the LCSs would be homeported at NAVSTA Norfolk and the associated crews would be stationed at NAVSTA Norfolk. A combination of new facilities and existing military assets at NAVSTA Norfolk would be utilized to provide berthing space, ship hotel services, maintenance support, drydocking facilities, fueling services, ordnance handling and storage, cargo and mission module handling and storage, support facilities, and aviation asset support. No in-water construction projects would be required.

MCAS Cherry Point Component (Aviation Asset Support Component)

Under the Proposed Action, 112 Firescouts are required to support Fleet operations and 56 Firescouts are required as back-up supply and to help support requirements such as research and development. Firescout test flights, or maintenance flights, would be required at MCAS Cherry Point to verify that maintenance has been performed properly. Facilities to support the storage, maintenance, and test flights of Firescouts have already been established at MCAS Cherry Point. Minor land-based facility improvements would occur; no in-water construction projects would be required.

Alternatives Considered but Eliminated from Detailed Analysis

Based on the homeporting criteria (including operational and facility criteria), the Navy considered but eliminated several alternatives and site locations from further detailed analysis in the EA.

The alternative for homeporting up to 14 LCSs at both NAVSTA Mayport and NAVSTA Norfolk is not considered a reasonable alternative because it does not meet all of the homeporting criteria. Homeporting up to 14 LCSs at both installations would not allow collocation of LCS and crew, and thus require redundant support facilities, although the impacts of such an action are evaluated with the examination of

homeporting up to 14 ships at each location. Therefore, this alternative was not carried forward for detailed analysis.

Additional location alternatives (Naval Weapons Station [NWS] Earle, Naval District Washington, NWS Yorktown, NWS Charleston, and NAS Jacksonville, Naval Ordnance Test Unit Cape Canaveral) were considered but eliminated from detailed analysis due to lack of facilities to support the homeporting of the LCSs; currently there are no Navy surface combatant ships homeported at these locations.

No Action Alternative

CEQ regulations require consideration of the No Action Alternative. The No Action Alternative does not meet the purpose of and need for the Proposed Action. It does, however, serve as a baseline against which the impacts of the Proposed Action can be evaluated. Under the No Action Alternative, there would be no construction, demolition, modification, or renovations to existing facilities. Up to 14 LCSs would not be homeported at the proposed installations on the East Coast. Additionally, the storage, maintenance, and test flights of Firescouts in support of LCS operations would not occur on the East Coast.

Preferred Alternative

The Navy has identified NAVSTA Mayport Alternative (Alternative 1, Scenario 1) as the preferred alternative for homeporting up to 14 LCSs and MCAS Cherry Point for Firescout aviation support.

Environmental Impacts of the Preferred Alternative

Noise. No significant impacts on the environment from noise would be expected at NAVSTA Mayport, and MCAS Cherry Point. The noise from construction and renovation equipment would be localized, short-term, and intermittent during machinery operations. Temporary and periodic increases in ambient noise levels in the immediate vicinity of the piers at NAVSTA Mayport during normal LCS port operations (i.e., non-engine/ship movements) would not be expected to exceed or significantly contribute to the existing noise levels, as there are similar noise-producing activities associated with Navy piers/wharves, support operations, and other ship-related services already in existence in the vicinity of the piers.

No significant impacts on off-installation or on-installation noise-sensitive receptors would be expected from Firescout operations on the ground at MCAS Cherry Point. Firescout test flights would follow existing flight tracks within local airspace at MCAS Cherry Point, and would consist of preprogrammed profiles similar to those of other existing manned and unmanned helicopters at MCAS Cherry Point. Since the existing noise contours at MCAS Cherry Point are dominated by fixed-wing aircraft (which are louder than the Firescout), the Firescout test flights would not be expected to produce a noticeable change in average noise levels within the areas currently exposed to noise from aircraft operations.

Air Quality. No significant impacts on air quality would be expected at NAVSTA Mayport or MCAS Cherry Point. Temporary emissions from construction and renovation activities would not result in significant impacts on air quality. Port operations, including potential emissions from cranes and other pierside mission-support equipment and stationary sources, would be essentially the same to those under the No Action Alternative, and emissions from pierside activities would not result in impacts on local or regional air quality. Although the 250 tons per year (tpy) value only applies to stationary sources under the regulations, it is being applied here as a conservative measure of potential impacts from stationary plus mobile sources in attainment areas in order to give the reader a sense of the extent of the impacts. The combined emissions from construction, operations, and commuting are from mobile sources that do

not have applicable regulatory criteria. However, for comparison purposes, these combined emissions are below the USEPA's stationary source criteria of 250 tpy under the Prevention of Significant Deterioration program and they are not expected to cause or contribute to a violation of any National Ambient Air Quality Standards or State Ambient Air Quality Standards. Based on the nature of these impacts, no significant impact on air quality would be expected under NAVSTA Mayport scenario.

Approximately 360 Firescout test flights would be conducted each year at MCAS Cherry Point; however, due to the nature and volume of these flights, impacts would not be considered significant. Emissions from the Preferred Alternative are not expected to cause or contribute to a violation of any national or state ambient air quality standards, or expose sensitive receptors to substantially increased pollutant concentrations in the Jacksonville-Brunswick Intrastate Air Quality Control Region (AQCR) and Southern Coastal Plain Intrastate AQCR.

Human Health and Safety. No significant impacts on human health and safety would be expected at NAVSTA Mayport or MCAS Cherry Point. Any lead-based paint, asbestos, or PCB-containing materials present in the buildings slated for demolition or renovation would be handled in accordance with applicable policies and procedures, including inspection by a state certified inspector prior to commencement of demolition activities. No significant impacts would be expected from explosive safety quantity distance arcs. The Proposed Action would result in a minor increase in the presence of electromagnetic radiation from radar, fathometers (i.e., echo-sounding equipment used to determine the depth of water or a submerged object from the ship's keel to the ocean floor for safe operational navigation), and electronic warfare systems at NAVSTA Mayport. However, these new sources would be minimal and similar to civilian navigational aids and radars at local airports and television weather stations throughout the United States. No significant impacts on airspace management or human health and safety from aircraft mishaps would be expected. The Proposed Action would not be expected to overwhelm the current capacity of the existing emergency services available at NAVSTA Mayport or MCAS Cherry Point.

Firescout test flights would be conducted in existing Class D Airspace at MCAS Cherry Point or the Restricted Airspace that is immediately adjacent. One test flight would be less than 1 hour (approximately 30 minutes); therefore, about 30 test flights could be conducted each month for a total of 360 expected flights per year. There are more than 100,000 flight operations (i.e., takeoffs or landings) conducted annually at MCAS Cherry Point; therefore, this increase in flights would represent a negligible increase in operations. The slight increase in operations at MCAS Cherry Point would not be expected to significantly increase the risk of mishaps. Therefore, no significant impacts on human health and safety from aircraft mishaps would be expected. In addition, Firescout operations would conform to MCAS Cherry Point Bird Aircraft Strike Hazard (BASH) guidelines and procedures to minimize bird aircraft strike hazards.

Coastal Zone Management. No significant impacts on the coastal zone would be expected at NAVSTA Mayport. The Navy developed and submitted a Coastal Consistency Determination (CCD) to the Florida Clearinghouse under the Coastal Zone Management Act to determine if the Preferred Alternative would be consistent to the maximum extent practicable with the enforceable policies of the Florida Coastal Management Program. The Florida Clearinghouse has reviewed the U.S. Navy's Negative Determination and the state concurs with the Navy's determination that the activities proposed are consistent with the enforceable policies of the Florida Coastal Management Program. The state's continued concurrence will be based on the Navy's continued compliance with Florida Coastal Management Program authorities, including federal and state monitoring to ensure said sustained compliance, and the adequate resolution of issues identified during this and subsequent reviews. The state's final concurrence of the project's consistency with the Florida Coastal Management Program will be determined during the environmental

permitting process, in accordance with Section 373.428, Florida Statutes, and applicable regulations at 15 CFR 930.

Due to the nature of the actions proposed at MCAS Cherry Point, the Navy determined that there would be no effects on any land or water use or natural resource of North Carolina's coastal zone.

Geological Resources. No significant impacts on geology and soils would be expected at NAVSTA Mayport or MCAS Cherry Point. Construction and renovation activities would not be expected to alter the native geology or topography, increase risk associated with geologic hazards, alter the native soils, or increase soil erosion at NAVSTA Mayport or MCAS Cherry Point.

Biological Resources. No significant impacts on vegetation, wildlife, or protected species would be expected and there would be no loss of habitat at NAVSTA Mayport or MCAS Cherry Point. No significant impacts on nearby wildlife and birds would be expected from increased noise generated during construction and renovation activities at NAVSTA Mayport or MCAS Cherry Point. Potential biological species within the port would be expected to be habituated to frequent disturbances from operations on the piers. As such, the forecasted noise levels would not be expected to affect individual animals proximate to the noise sources. The contribution of noise disturbances from construction, demolition, and operational activities to the noise environment would be negligible and would not preclude the use of habitat by threatened or endangered species. Pursuant to the ESA, no effects on federally listed threatened or endangered terrestrial species would be expected from the Proposed Action. No significant impacts on migratory birds would be expected, and no violation of the Migratory Bird Treaty Act or Executive Order 13186, *Responsibilities of Federal Agencies to Protect Migratory Birds*, would be expected.

The additional Firescout test flights would not be expected to produce a noticeable change in average noise levels within areas currently experiencing noise from aircraft operations. No significant effects on a population of a migratory bird species would be expected from the Firescout test flights since they would represent a tiny fraction of the total aircraft operations on the installation and would only occur for short durations. The Navy would adhere to the MCAS Cherry Point BASH program, as described, to further prevent impacts on migratory birds.

Water Resources. No significant impacts on groundwater or surface water would be expected at NAVSTA Mayport or MCAS Cherry Point. Construction and demolition activities would not be expected to result in major vegetation removal, soil compaction, or alteration of the natural drainage flow. No impacts on water resources from ballast water discharge would be expected, as the Navy has established standard operating procedures to prevent the transfer and introduction of pathogens that could impact the local ecosystem. No floodplains or wetlands at NAVSTA Mayport or MCAS Cherry Point would be affected by implementing the Proposed Action due to the distance of these features from the project areas. No significant impacts on jurisdictional waters regulated under Section 404 of the Clean Water Act (CWA) or potentially jurisdictional waters would be expected. In the event of a spill, procedures outlined in the *Oil Spill Prevention Control and Countermeasure Plan* for NAVSTA Mayport would be followed to contain and clean up the spill.

Socioeconomics and Environmental Justice. No significant impacts on socioeconomics or environmental justice would be expected at NAVSTA Mayport or MCAS Cherry Point. It is assumed that the approximately 1,700 personnel at NAVSTA Mayport would obtain non-Navy housing off-installation in the Jacksonville Metropolitan Statistical Areas, and that the approximately 30 personnel at MCAS Cherry Point would obtain non-Navy housing off-installation in the New Bern Micropolitan Statistical area. Therefore, no additional Navy housing would be constructed. The demand for 1,700

housing units in the Jacksonville Metropolitan Statistical Area would represent 2.3 percent of all available vacant housing units. The demand for 30 housing units in the New Bern Micropolitan Statistical area would represent 0.4 percent of all available vacant housing units. Increases in housing demand would result in the reduction of current vacant housing stock and, subsequently, increases in property tax receipts and potential increases in the value of houses.

Improvements to existing buildings at NAVSTA Mayport and MCAS Cherry Point would stimulate the local economy through increases in payroll taxes, sales receipts, and the indirect purchases of goods and services. Long-term impacts on schools in Duval County would be expected from the increase of approximately 1,900 school-aged children associated with the increased personnel at NAVSTA Mayport; and long-term impacts on schools in Craven County would be expected from the increase of approximately 34 school-aged children at MCAS Cherry Point. Construction and renovation activities at NAVSTA Mayport and MCAS Cherry Point would be minimal and concentrated on the installations; therefore, no minority or low-income populations would be disproportionately impacted by the Proposed Action. Similarly, there are no environmental health and safety risks identified that would disproportionately affect populations of children, as the Proposed Action would occur entirely on NAVSTA Mayport and MCAS Cherry Point, within pre-existing buildings and other infrastructure. No minority or low-income populations would be disproportionately impacted by Firescout test flights, and no significant impacts on populations of children would be expected. No significant impacts on public services would be expected.

Utilities, Infrastructure and Transportation. No significant impacts on water supply, electrical supply, natural gas supply, the sanitary sewer and wastewater system, and solid waste management would be expected from the additional personnel stationed at NAVSTA Mayport and MCAS Cherry Point and their family members residing in the area. Impacts from the Proposed Action would not be considered significant since increased demand on utilities would not be expected to exceed existing capacities.

Long-term impacts on the electrical supply would be expected from the LCSs in port at NAVSTA Mayport. However, these impacts would not be considered significant, since increases in electricity demand would not be expected to exceed existing capacities. The Proposed Action would not alter existing storm water drainage methods or significantly increase the amount of impervious surfaces at NAVSTA Mayport or MCAS Cherry Point. Long-term impacts on liquid fuel supply from the additional demand would be expected; however, these impacts would not be considered significant, since the demand would not exceed existing capacities. The phased increase of approximately 1,700 additional vehicles associated with the Proposed Action would represent a small percentage of the existing traffic at NAVSTA Mayport. In addition, with varying work schedules, deployments, mass transit options, ride-share programs, carpooling, and other traffic calming initiatives at NAVSTA Mayport, the additional vehicle trips would be intermittent, and a significant increase in traffic congestion would not be expected. No impacts on parking availability would be expected since there is currently no indication of a parking shortage.

No additional facilities at MCAS Cherry Point are proposed and no modifications to existing utilities and services are proposed. Impacts on utilities, infrastructure, and transportation would not be significant. Therefore an analysis of utilities, infrastructure, and transportation impacts at MCAS Cherry Point has not been included.

Hazardous Materials and Wastes. No significant impacts from hazardous materials or hazardous waste generation would be expected at NAVSTA Mayport and MCAS Cherry Point. The removal of asbestos-containing materials, lead-based paint, and polychlorinated biphenyls during construction, renovation, and demolition activities would occur in accordance with established measures and programs at the

installation. In the event of a spill, procedures outlined in the *Oil Spill Prevention Control and Countermeasure Plan* for NAVSTA Mayport would be followed to contain and clean up the spill. There are existing Installation Restoration Program sites at NAVSTA Mayport; however, the Proposed Action would not be expected to disturb or contribute to existing contamination issues. Land use controls are in effect at Installation Restoration Program (IRP) Sites 01, 23, 24, and 25 at NAVSTA Mayport and would apply to renovation activities. No impacts would be expected on the IRP program at MCAS Cherry Point.

Cultural Resources. No significant impacts on cultural resources would be expected at NAVSTA Mayport or MCAS Cherry Point. All five historic properties at NAVSTA Mayport are located more than 0.5 miles from the proposed construction/demolition areas. In addition, it is unlikely that ground disturbance related to construction and demolition would have an effect on unknown historic properties due to the heavy disturbance already noted at the entire naval station. An overview survey by the USACE in 1989 concluded that most of the NAVSTA Mayport installation has been too disturbed or is too recent of a land surface to warrant further archaeological consideration (Navy 2008). The Navy initiated consultation with the Florida SHPO and received concurrence on 23 May 2013. The Florida SHPO concurs with the Navy's determination that the proposed undertakings will have no effect on historic properties and the buildings do not appear to meet the criteria for listing on the National Register of Historic Places.

Construction or demolition activities are not planned to support the Firescout program. The Firescout program could require minor modifications to existing facilities at MCAS Cherry Point. If the building renovations associated with the Proposed Action occurred in the buildings within the Officer Housing Historic District (i.e., Buildings 300–349, 486, 492–497), or are over 50 years old, coordination with the North Carolina SHPO would be necessary. Currently no potential impacts to cultural resources are expected or forecasted at MCAS Cherry Point.

Cumulative Effects. In addition to the Proposed Action, NAVSTA Mayport will undergo changes in homeported vessels and personnel between 2010 and 2020. Additional construction and capital improvement projects are also planned. Cumulatively, it is anticipated that by 2020 there would be slightly more vessels and personnel based at NAVSTA Mayport than 2010 levels under the NAVSTA Mayport scenario.

At MCAS Cherry Point, it is anticipated that over the next 5 years the types of training activities would remain essentially the same, but helicopter operations would increase to provide more training. Between 2006 and 2011, there was a 10.8 percent increase in personnel (1,485 active-duty military and civilians) at MCAS Cherry Point. The U.S. Marine Corps partnered with local communities to plan for and address growth challenges associated with traffic congestion, shortages of health care professionals, and the strain on emergency responders and courts.

The Navy has evaluated the alternatives in conjunction with other past, present, and reasonably foreseeable future actions to determine whether cumulative effects on the human environment would occur. No significant cumulative effects were identified at NAVSTA Mayport or MCAS Cherry Point in the cumulative effects analysis for any resource.

Public Outreach

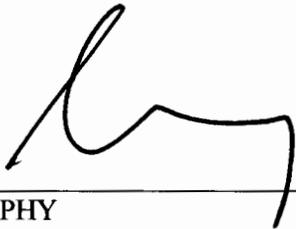
The Navy released the Draft EA for a 30-day public review on 28 February 2013 and provided the public until 29 March 2013 to submit comments. The public comment period was announced in local and regional newspapers (*Florida Times Union*, *Brunswick News*, *Virginian-Pilot*, and the *New Bern Sun*

Journal). The Draft EA was made available at the following libraries: Jacksonville Main Library, 303 N. Laura St, Jacksonville, FL 32202; Beaches Branch Library, 600 3rd St, Neptune Beach, FL 32266; Mary D. Pretlow Anchor Library, 111 W. Ocean View Avenue, Norfolk, VA 23503; Meyera Oberndorf Central Library, 4100 Virginia Beach Blvd., Virginia Beach, VA 23452; St. Marys Public Library, 100 Herb Bauer Drive, St. Marys, GA 31558; and Havelock-Craven County Public Library, 301 Cunningham Blvd., Havelock, NC 28532. The Draft EA was available for viewing and download on the following Website: https://portal.navfac.navy.mil/portal/page/portal/navfac/navfac_ww_pp/navfac_navfacmidlant_pp/midlant_ps/environmental_norfolk/tab3987837.

Two letters were received from the public during the 30-day review period. The first requested a public presentation and hearing in the Norfolk area, but as there is no substantial environmental controversy concerning the Proposed Action and no request by another agency with jurisdiction over the action, additional public outreach was not warranted. The second commenter expressed concern with the selection of alternatives, the definition of significance, the analysis of socioeconomics and threatened and endangered species, and the electronic format of the EA. Upon review, the selection of alternatives and the determination of significance are consistent with the requirements of NEPA. The analysis of socioeconomics is appropriate and effects on aquatic endangered species are addressed in Navy training NEPA documents referenced in the EA. The suggestions regarding the electronic formatting of the document have been incorporated into the Final EA. None of the comments warranted a change to the conclusion of the EA. The specific comments and responses are available as an appendix to the EA.

Finding

After review of the EA prepared in accordance with the requirements of NEPA and Navy regulations for implementing NEPA (32 CFR § 775), the Navy finds that implementing the Preferred Alternative will not significantly affect the quality of the natural or man-made environment. Therefore, a FONSI is approved and an Environmental Impact Statement will not be prepared. To obtain a copy of this FONSI, submit written requests to LCS Homeporting EA Project Manager, Naval Facilities Engineering Command, Atlantic Division, Attn: Code EV21 SS, 6506 Hampton Blvd., LRA Building A, Norfolk, VA 23508.



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Fleet Installations and Environmental Readiness



Date