

Finding of No Significant Impact

Ocean Beach Storm Damage Reduction Beach Nourishment Project

National Park Service, U.S. Department of the Interior
Golden Gate National Recreation Area

June 25, 2021

Introduction

This Finding of No Significant Impact (FONSI) documents the National Park Service (NPS) determination to select the preferred alternative for the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers' (USACE's) *Ocean Beach Storm Damage Reduction Beach Nourishment Project* (Project). The Project will pump dredged material from the San Francisco Main Ship Channel (MSC) directly onto south Ocean Beach, Golden Gate National Recreation Area (park). This alternative was evaluated against a no action alternative and the two were analyzed in a USACE Environmental Assessment (EA). See link for the EA at <https://parkplanning.nps.gov/projectHome.cfm?projectID=92023>. The combined USACE EA/FONSI (February 2021) is adopted by the park. This separate NPS FONSI documents the NPS determination that no significant impacts to the quality of the human environment will occur in the park from the Project.

Selected Action and Rationale for the Decision

All activities in the selected action are described in the EA. There are no modifications based on public comment or agency scoping other than park comments on the EA to include additional Best Management Practices (BMPs) and to extend the buffer distance to protect bank swallows and snowy plovers from 250 feet to 650 feet.

There were no other comments from the general public, organizations, or agencies. Under the selected action the USACE will place up to 285 thousand cubic yards of dredged material from annual USACE Operations and Maintenance (O&M) dredging from the MSC (see Figure 1) directly onto Ocean Beach against an existing bluff under the authority of Section 2037 of the Water Resources Development Act of 2007. The material will be shaped into a 30-foot-high (mean lower low water [MLLW]) berm with a 60-foot crest and slope of 4 feet horizontal for every 1 foot vertical (4:1 slope). The berm will stretch from Sloat Boulevard 3,000 feet southward to Fort Funston, which is also managed by the park.

Under the no action alternative, the MSC would continue to be dredged by the USACE annually, with placement of dredged material in previously approved nearshore areas off of Ocean Beach, designated as SF-8 or the Ocean Beach Disposal Site (encompassed by SF-17 in Figure 1). As a result, the no action alternative as stated in the EA would not reduce coastal storm damage at Ocean Beach and severe beach and bluff erosion would continue to threaten public infrastructure and public safety.

Purpose and Need

The purpose of the selected action to use dredged material from annual O&M MSC dredging is to reduce storm damage along the southern stretch of Ocean Beach between Sloat Boulevard and the Fort Funston Cliffs, where wave action threatens infrastructure and public safety.

The need for the selected action is to address shoreline erosion, severe coastal storm and wave hazards, and sea level rise, which have undermined and damaged coastal parking lots (see Figure 2), threaten City and County of San Francisco (CCSF) wastewater and stormwater infrastructure, coastal access and recreational facilities, and public safety. The shortage of sand in the nearshore has contributed to this severe erosion, and replenishment is needed to protect infrastructure and public safety.



SOURCE: ESA, 2020; ESRI, 2020

South Ocean Beach Nourishment Project

Figure 1
Project Location



Figure 2
Shoreline Erosion

Selected Action

Sand Nourishment Location and Construction Details

The selected action will beneficially use sediment from MSC O&M dredging for direct beach nourishment along the stretch of Ocean beach between Sloat Boulevard and Fort Funston, an approximately 10.3-acre area of up to 3,000 feet in length. Placement of material on the beach is contingent upon the availability of funds and of appropriate dredging equipment. The total project footprint is approximately 21 acres, including a staging area, mooring buoy, pipeline route, constructed berm, and haul routes.

Ocean Beach is located on the western edge of San Francisco next to the Pacific. The portion of Ocean Beach that will be affected by the selected action is between Sloat Boulevard to the north and Fort Funston to the south. The park manages the beach from $\frac{1}{4}$ mile seaward of mean high water (MHW) to approximately the seaward pavement edge of the Great Highway southbound traffic lanes.

The USACE will contract a hopper dredge with pump-off capabilities to conduct the sand nourishment operations. The hopper dredge will anchor approximately one-half mile offshore of the intersection of Sloat Boulevard and the Great Highway, in water that is approximately 35 feet MLLW deep. A 28 to 30-inch diameter pipeline will be placed perpendicular to the beach, beginning at a point that is approximately 30 feet seaward of the bluff (this varies based on the available width of the beach), cross the beach, and run along the ocean bottom to a mooring station located where the hopper dredge will anchor. The pipeline will need to extend approximately 2,700 feet offshore in order to reach the required 35 foot depth. The terminal end of the pipeline will be fixed to a floating segment of pipeline and buoyant collar or floating platform that will be secured to the seafloor by an anchor. Once the hopper is anchored, the pipeline connection will be made. The pipeline will be filled with compressed air and positioned by tugs. Once the air is evacuated the pipeline will sink and remain in place on the sea floor under its own weight. Weighted collars will be used if necessary. Buoy markers will be attached to the pipeline to warn small craft of its presence. Placement of dredged material will most likely begin at the center of the dune footprint and progress northward and southward as the dune structure is constructed. The contractor may choose a different fill sequence based on conditions at the time of construction.

Initially, a 100-foot long toe berm will be constructed during low tides using the available sand within the existing footprint of project on the beach or an initial placement of dredged sand. This will allow for work during high tides and contain the activities within the beach nourishment footprint. The purpose of the toe berm is to contain sand slurry as it comes out of the end of the pipeline and to minimize the loss of sand while it dewater. The toe berm will collect the decanted water and guide it south to the end of the toe berm structure where it will then return to the ocean. The toe berm will be located parallel to the bluff and approximately 100 feet (or less depending on the available beach width) west of the bluff and will be built to an elevation of approximately 3-4 feet above the existing beach. The berm will be constructed using bulldozers that push sand into a berm-shaped structure of uncompacted sand approximately 10 feet high at the crest and 20-to-30 feet wide at the base. The berm will be extended out in front of the dredged material placement as the berm progresses, and there will always be at least 75 feet of toe berm in place ahead of the dredged material placement. A diffuser will be attached to the end of the pipe to control the deposition of the dredged material and to prevent the slurry water from scouring the surrounding area. As the dredged material is pumped into the area behind the toe berm, it will be piled higher than the toe berm and then graded to its final 1V:4H slope. After each hopper bin load is pumped onto the beach behind the toe berm, bulldozers will shape the dredged material into the desired profile as it dewater. It is estimated that the dune structure will be constructed at a rate of approximately 200 feet per day to achieve the desired dune profile. It is estimated that two bulldozers will operate 18 hours per day each. As each 100-foot section of dune structure is completed, additional lengths of pipeline will be attached so the construction area can move up and down the beach. Portions of the public parking lot located between the southbound lane of the Great Highway and the coastal bluff will be used as a staging area for equipment and supplies. To prevent public access and/or theft, temporary fencing will be installed by the contractor around the immediate work areas on the beach and the staging area in the parking lot. No public access to or through the beach in the immediate construction area will be provided for the full construction period.

All heavy equipment for earthwork will be stored and secured in the staging area or above the toe berm when not in use. BMPs will be implemented to minimize the potential for releases of petroleum products from equipment in the staging and storage areas. Signage, security, and mobile lighting around the work areas will be the responsibility of the contractor. Construction equipment will be refueled in an area behind the toe berm along the beach. Any gasoline, diesel, or oil will be stored in a manner that affords the maximum protection against spills into the environment. The contractor will use secondary containments, dikes, berms and other barriers to prevent any petroleum products from spilling and entering the ground, storm or sewer drains, stormwater ditches or canals, or navigable waters of the United States. The contractor will monitor and remove any rainwater that accumulates in open containment dikes or berms. Before removal, water will be inspected to determine that there is no oil sheen.

Construction access for the beach work will likely be from the north end near the parking lot where there is a sand ramp down to the beach. The contractor will be required to control public vehicle access to the beach from the construction access points. Local emergency and park vehicles will be allowed access to the beach and across the construction site. Provisions to ensure emergency and park administrative access will be identified at a preconstruction meeting that will include the USACE's contractor and appropriate park and USACE staff. At completion of construction, the contractor will be required to restore the access roads and parking areas to pre-construction or better conditions. Pre-construction and post-construction surveys of these features will be completed to document existing and final conditions. Given the wave climate and the fine sand grain size, the slope will start equilibrating immediately upon placement of sand, with some sloughing occurring. In areas with sloughing, equipment (such as a bulldozer or excavator or skid steer) may be needed to smooth the areas to ensure no drop-off areas. This will be needed weekly for the first two months and will be conducted by the NPS or SFPUC contractor.

Public Involvement

The USACE conducted public review of a combined EA and FONSI and provided a Public Notice of Availability of the EA to interested agencies, groups, and individuals, including nearby residents and known Ocean Beach stakeholders. A list of these entities is provided in Appendix B of the EA. A copy

was provided to the San Francisco Public Library. The 30-day public review period began on December 8, 2020 and concluded on January 9, 2021. Except for the park, no comments were received from the general public, organizations, or other agencies. The USACE responses to park comments are in Appendix B of the USACE EA and the USACE FONSI.

Agency Consultation

Section 7 of the Endangered Species Act

The USACE prepared and submitted a finding of not likely to adversely affect any listed species to the National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) and U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) for their review and concurrence. Both the NMFS and USFWS concurred with this determination; Appendix A of the USACE Final EA and FONSI contains the record of this informal consultation.

Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act

The USACE prepared an Essential Fish Habitat Assessment stating that the selected action would have no significant impacts on any Essential Fish Habitat and submitted it to NMFS for concurrence. NMFS concurrence with this conclusion is documented in Appendix A of the USACE Final EA and FONSI.

Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act and Tribal Consultation

There were no National Register of Historic Places-eligible properties found in the project area. The USACE consulted the California State Historic Preservation Officer (SHPO) and federally recognized Tribes in accordance with Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act and its implementing regulations at 36 CFR 800, and the SHPO had no objection to the proposed Finding of No Historic Properties Affected for the undertaking as described by the USACE. Appendix A of the USACE Final EA and FONSI contains the record of this consultation.

Additionally, the USACE contacted the Amah Mutsun, Amah Mutsun San Juan, Costanoan Rumsen Carmel, Federated Tribes of Graton Rancheria, Indian Canyon Mutsun, Muwekma Ohlone, Lytton Rancheria, and the Ohlone Indian Tribe as Native American groups having cultural ties to the project area. The USACE received a response from Federated Tribes of the Graton Rancheria and they do not have an interest in that portion of San Francisco Bay. The Ohlone Indian Tribe requested a copy of the completed cultural report, requested to be contacted if cultural materials are discovered during the project, and requested that the USACE periodically monitor during construction. The USACE will comply with each of these requests. The USACE received no other responses.

Clean Water Act

Pursuant to the Clean Water Act of 1972, as amended, the discharge of dredged or fill material associated with the recommended plan has 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 Appendix A of the EA.

A water quality certification pursuant to section 401 of the Clean Water Act was obtained from the San Francisco Bay Regional Water Quality Control Board. All conditions of the water quality certification would be implemented in order to minimize adverse impacts to water quality. Appendix A of the USACE Final EA contains the record of this informal consultation.

Coastal Zone Management Act

The USACE submitted a Negative Determination to the California Coastal Commission in December 2020 stating that the selected action would not significantly affect coastal resources. Appendix A of the USACE Final EA and FONSI contains the record of this consultation. The USACE has identified BMPs to be implemented in order to minimize adverse impacts on the coastal zone. The Coastal Commission concurred with this determination without additional conditions.

Why the Selected Action will not have a Significant Effect on the Human Environment

Using the ten significance criteria as defined in the Council on Environmental Quality's NEPA regulations (Section 1508.27), the NPS has determined that the selected action can be implemented with

no significant adverse impacts. The following criteria were used to determine the significance of each impact.

1. Impacts that may be both beneficial and adverse. A significant effect may exist even if the federal agency believes that on balance the effect may be beneficial.

All potential impacts were identified in the EA and none rise to the level of significance. The selected action benefits the area by providing storm damage reduction and protection of important infrastructure and public safety against the effects of erosion. The negative effects to water quality, air quality, geology and soils, wildlife, vegetation, noise, recreation, transportation and traffic, aesthetics, public utilities and services, and hazards are minimal, and adverse effects will be far below the level of significance.

2. The degree to which the Selected Action affects public health and safety.

The selected action will improve public health and safety by providing protection against the effects of erosion for the Great Highway, used by motorists, bicyclists, and pedestrians, and for important wastewater infrastructure owned and managed by the City and County of San Francisco.

3. Unique characteristics of the area (proximity to historic or cultural resources, wild and scenic rivers, ecologically critical areas, wetlands or floodplains, and so forth).

As analyzed in the EA, there would be no significant effects on any unique characteristics of the geographic area.

4. Degree to which impacts are likely to be highly controversial.

Neither the selected action nor its effects are highly controversial. During the public review of the EA, no issues were raised by members of the public or stakeholder organizations.

5. Degree to which impacts are highly uncertain or involve unique or unknown risks.

There are no highly uncertain, unique, or unknown risks identified for park resources.

6. Whether the action may establish a precedent for future actions with significant effects or represents a decision in principle about a future consideration.

The selected action neither establishes a precedent for future actions with significant effects, nor represents a decision in principle about a future consideration.

7. Whether the action is related to other actions that may have individual insignificant impacts but cumulatively significant effects.

The impacts of the selected action on each impact topic are identified in the EA. Cumulative impacts to each resource are also identified and none will have cumulatively significant effects.

8. Degree to which the action may adversely affect historic properties in or eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places, or other significant scientific, archeological, or cultural resources.

The project will not affect any properties eligible for the National Register and will have no impact on limiting access to any ceremonial or sacred use sites or substantially adversely affect the physical integrity of sacred sites.

9. Degree to which an action may adversely affect an endangered or threatened species or its habitat.

There will be no adverse effects to endangered or threatened species from construction of the selected action. The USACE completed a thorough investigation of the potential for impact and the USFWS and NMFS concurred with the USACE finding that the selected action is not likely to adversely affect endangered or threatened species or their habitats, including Essential Fish Habitat.

10. Whether the action threatens a violation of federal, state, or local law or requirements imposed for the protection of the environment.

The selected action does not violate any federal, state, or local law, or requirements imposed for protection of the environment.

Conclusion

Implementation of the selected action as described in the EA will not have significant impacts on the human environment. This determination is substantiated by the analysis in the USACE EA, FONSI, and in agency consultations. No public comments were received. Adverse environmental impacts that could occur are negligible to minor in intensity, duration, and context. As described in the EA, there are no highly uncertain controversial or unacceptable impacts, unique or unknown risks, significant cumulative effects, or elements of precedence. There are no previous, planned, or implemented actions that, in combination with the selected action, will have significant effects on the human environment. Requirements of the National Environmental Policy Act are satisfied and preparation of an Environmental Impact Statement is not required. The USACE will implement the selected action as soon as practical. Work will be done in accordance with NEPA and regulations of the CEQ, and an Environmental Impact Statement will not be prepared.

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