

Finding of No Significant Impact

Environmental Assessment of the 1st Special Forces Group Master Plan

Introduction

The 1st Special Forces Group (SFG) is experiencing dramatic growth. Many of the current facilities do not meet safety requirements and the addition of a fourth Battalion will exceed the current carrying capacity of the 1st SFG Complex. The US Army Special Operations Command (USASOC) has identified 21 new military construction (MILCON) projects that the 1st SFG anticipates to receive between FY 2012 and FY 2019. An additional 10 projects are being developed through FY 2030. In preparation of these foreseeable projects, 1st SFG requested the development of a master plan that would provide recommendations for long-range land use planning, mission essential construction requirements, conceptual site development, and capital improvements. This Environmental Assessment evaluates the proposed master plan in accordance with the National Environmental Policy Act of 1969; regulations issued by the Council on Environmental Quality (CEQ), 40 CFR Part 1500-1508; and the Army's implementing procedures published in 32 CFR 651, *Environmental Analysis of Army Actions*.

Purpose and Need

The purpose of the proposed action is to implement a long-term plan that will guide future growth and development within the already constrained 1st SFG Complex. To be successful, the developed plan and associated projects would need to enhance the functional relationships between current and future buildings, while also incorporating sustainable, environmental design and reserving space for future growth.

The need of the proposed action is to meet current and future mission requirements. With the exception of recently completed projects, the 1st SFG facilities are outdated and many of them do not meet life and safety building requirements. In addition, a fourth battalion may be added in the near future which will increase their overall population. New facilities are needed to address this increasing demand.

Description of the Alternatives for the Proposed Action

The proposed action would implement a long-term planning document to guide and carry out the goals and objectives of the 1st SFG. The document would provide recommendations to ensure that projected growth and development consider the military needs of the 1st SFG, as well as promotes long-term sustainability of the community. Twenty one projects are proposed in relation to this action including facility buildings, barracks, road realignment, and the construction of a new bridge. Three alternatives were developed in consideration of this proposed action. Alternative 1 was selected as the Army's Preferred Alternative. Under this alternative the future Battalion Operations (BnOps) complex would be sited on the West Compound, and the SOF Logistics Facility and the SOF Deployment Warehouse are sited on the East Compound on the site of the existing Madigan Barracks. Under Alternative 2, the future BnOps complex is sited on the East Compound near the existing FY 2008 BnOps, and the SOF Logistics Facility and the SOF Deployment Warehouse are sited on the West Compound. The No Action Alternative represents the status quo and would result with projects being evaluated without a long range plan that could lead to unnecessary space constraints and a sprawled complex design.

Summary of Anticipated Environmental Effect Associated with the Proposed Project

During the projects scoping, several resource areas and environmental concerns were identified for analysis including: land use, topography and soils, air quality, water resources, wetlands, biological resources, cultural

resources, hazardous waste and waste management, and traffic and transportation which are discussed below. Environmental justice and socioeconomic resources were eliminated from consideration. Environmental justice was eliminated because all of the proposed project recommendations only impact JBLM property and would not result in any impacts to neighboring areas outside of the installation boundary. Socioeconomics was eliminated from discussion because the proposed construction is within the scope on-going construction activities at JBLM and will not require an added workforce to the area (increased population, housing/school strains, income, etc).

Moderate, long-term, beneficial effects would be expected for land use within the 1st SFG Campus due to sustainable planning design and the protection of the Murray Creek openspace.

Minor, short-term, adverse effects are expected to soils in association with construction activities within the SFG Campus. These short-term impacts are expected to be minimal because of previous disturbance and the reuse of development sites after building demolition. Minor to moderate, short-term, adverse effects to soils are expected from the bridge and PT trail construction due to required land clearing and impacts to previously undisturbed natural areas.

Minor, short-term, air quality impacts from construction/demolition activities associated with the proposed action. It is expected that the total direct and indirect emissions from the proposed projects will be below the thresholds established in 40 CFR 51.853(b) and therefore considered regionally insignificant under 40 CFR 93.153(i). Nevertheless, general conformity determinations will be reviewed on a project-by-project basis in compliance with Section 176(c) of the Clean Air Act. Long-term beneficial impacts could be expected from this project as construction of sustainable buildings (LEED silver) will be replacing out-dated buildings and lowering some emissions associated with operation of facilities.

Minor, short term, adverse effects; and minor, long-term, beneficial effects are expected for surface water, groundwater, and stormwater within the 1st SFG Compound. Short-term construction activities may cause temporary increases in sedimentation, but long-term beneficial effects are expected due to implemented stormwater controls including on-site infiltration and the use of bioswales. Minor to moderate, adverse effects are expected for surface water within Murray Creek and adjacent wetlands due to the proposed bridge project. Placement of bridge support materials reduce and/or partially eliminate the beneficial protection of the wetland buffer, increasing impacts to surface water.

Short-term, moderate, adverse effects to wetlands are expected from the proposed action. Placement of structures and impermeable surfaces within the wetland buffer limits the riparian's function, including its ability to protect water quality of the wetland areas.

Minimal, short-term impacts to the urban habitat and vegetation are expected due to previous disturbance in the area, and the mitigation of white oak species (if individual species cannot be avoided). Long-term, minor, adverse effects are expected to habitat and vegetation due to the removal of extensive vegetation that will be required for the bridge and roadway within the Murray Creek openspace. Loss of habitat and the anticipated introduction of non-native and/or invasive species are expected from required clearing.

Short and long-term, minor to moderate, adverse effects are expected to fish habitat. Short-term construction activities have the potential to increase runoff due to vegetation clearing for the proposed roadway and the potential need for in-water work to remove vegetation within the wetland for the bridge span. Long-term impacts due to the loss of canopy and the potential for invasive species have the potential to impact spawning at the upper reaches of Murray Creek.

Short and long-term, minor to moderate adverse impacts may occur to fish species due to habitat degradation associated with the bridge project and other construction activities within Murray Creek. The proposed project is expected to have no impact on terrestrial species.

Surveys for federally listed water howellia will have to occur to determine if this species is located within the project area. Although it is not expected to occur, suitable habitat exists within the project area. If identified, short and long term adverse effects could be expected from the proposed bridge construction. If not found, the project will have no impacts for special status species.

Activities within the Murray Creek openspace will likely have no impact on archaeological or traditional tribal resources within the proposed project area. Traditional tribal resources will be subject to coordination and government to government consultation with treaty tribes, specifically concerning projects within Murray Creek and before construction begins.

Short-term, adverse impacts to waste management are expected from construction activities. Waste reduction through recycling and deconstruction for re-useable materials will significantly reduce this impact. Demolition of buildings that have the potential for asbestos or lead-based paint will have to follow requirements for their removal.

Short-term, minor, adverse effects are expected to traffic and transportation due to temporary construction activities. Long-term, minor, beneficial effects are also expected from the proposed project due to the implementation of new roadways, which would increase the connection between the two campuses; increasing efficiency and safety for vehicular traffic. The proposed action also promotes a walkable campus, which may decrease vehicle use within the 1st SFG.

Short-term, minor noise associated with construction and demolition activities associated with the proposed project is expected within the 1st SFG boundaries, but are not expected to attenuate beyond the compound to neighboring (potentially incompatible) land uses.

The proposed action is not expected to have any significant cumulative impacts.

Public Comment

The Army published a Notice of Availability (NOA) for the EA and draft Finding of No Significant Impact (FNSI) on 31 May 12, in the Tacoma News Tribune (TNT). NOA post cards were mailed to all entities within the EA's distribution list 30 May 12.

Public Review for this project was open until 30 Jun 12. During this time, the Army received two comments from the Washington Department of Ecology (WDOE). In their first comment, WDOE recommended that the Army consider impacts to wetlands and develop advance mitigation to offset any unavoidable impacts. Although the Army falls under Federal jurisdiction for wetland management, the Army has, and will continue to work closely with the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (Seattle District) to ensure that impacts to wetlands are avoided and/or mitigated, if necessary, in association with the proposed project.

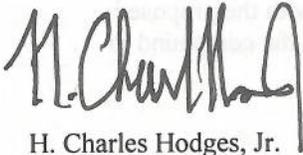
WDOE also recommended that the Army encourage recycling of all possible leftover construction, demolition, and land clearing (CDL) materials and reduce waste generated. The Army appreciates WDOE's comment. Since 2011, JBLM has been part of a Zero Net Waste Installation pilot program with goals of zero waste by 2020. The installation tracks and reports progress including diversion reporting for construction and demolition debris. As of March 2012 the base has achieved over 68% waste diversion and continues to be aggressive in meeting goals. The installation works closely with WDOE's Waste 2 Resources and Pierce County's Solid Waste Management Staff to mirror and implement programs to continually improve diversion opportunities on and off base.

Mitigation

No mitigation is required or was used to support a FNSI determination. In accordance with JBLM's MILCON funding documents (Form 1391), impacts to Oregon white oaks will be avoided. Projects that cannot avoid Oregon white oak removal must mitigate impacts through the planting of six (6) 2-inch caliper balled Oregon white oak trees for every one (1) mature tree removed within the construction footprint.

Conclusion

I have considered the results of the analysis referenced above, comments received, and Army mission requirements. In review of the resource areas potentially impacted by the proposed action of implementing the 1st Special Forces Master Plan, including the preliminary assessment of the 21 associated projects, it was found that the Preferred Alternative (Alternative 1) would have no significant environmental impacts on the natural or human environment. Based on this documentation, which has incorporated or referenced the best information available, I have taken a hard look at known impacts and determined that the implementation of the proposed action will not significantly affect the environment and therefore, an Environmental Impact Statement is not warranted.



H. Charles Hodges, Jr.
Colonel, IN
Commanding



Date