

FINDING OF NO SIGNIFICANT IMPACT

BRAC 05 REALIGNMENT AT MIDDLETOWN, CT

On September 8, 2005, the Defense Base Realignment and Closure (BRAC Commission) recommended that certain realignment actions occur at Middletown, CT. These recommendations were approved by the President on September 23, 2005, and forwarded to Congress. The Congress did not alter any of the BRAC Commission's recommendations, and on November 9, 2005, the recommendations became law. The BRAC Commission's recommendations must now be implemented as provided for in the Defense Closure and Realignment Act of 1990 (Public Law 101-510), as amended.

The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, Mobile District, has prepared an Environmental Assessment (EA) which identifies, documents, and evaluates environmental effects of the BRAC Commission's recommended realignment at Middletown, CT. The EA has been developed in accordance with the National Environmental Policy Act of 1969 (42 U.S.C. 4321 et seq.) and implementing regulations issued by the President's Council on Environmental Quality (CEQ). The 2006 Base Realignment Closure Manual for Compliance with the National Environmental Policy Act was used for guidance in preparing the EA.

1.0 PROPOSED ACTION

The proposed action would implement the BRAC Commission's recommendation, as mandated by BRAC law, Public Law 101-510, by constructing new facilities to accommodate the personnel and functions of organizations realigning and relocating to Middletown, CT. The following highlights the BRAC Commission recommendation for Middletown, CT which is included as part of BRAC law, as quoted:

Close the US Army Reserve Center, Middletown, CT, the Organizational Maintenance Shop, Middletown, CT; the SGT Libby US Army Reserve Center, New Haven, CT; the Organizational Maintenance Shop, New Haven, CT; the Army Reserve Area Maintenance Support Activity #69, Milford, CT, and relocate units to a new Armed Forces Reserve Center, Organizational Maintenance Shop and Army Maintenance Support Activity in Middletown, CT, if the Army is able to acquire land suitable for the construction of the facilities. The new AFRC, OMS and AMSA shall have the capability to accommodate units from the following facilities: Connecticut Army National Guard Armories in Putnam, Manchester, New Britain and the CTARNG facility in Newington, CT, if the state decides to relocate those National Guard units.

To implement these recommendations, the Proposed Action is to construct a new Armed Forces Reserve Center (AFRC) and associated support facilities in Middletown, CT to support five U.S. Army Reserve units and six Connecticut Army National Guard (CTARNG) units relocating from the SGT Libby U.S. ARC, New Haven CT and the Army Reserve AMSA #69, Milford CT as well as CTARNG facilities in Manchester, Newington, and New Britain, CT.

The proposed AFRC would provide a 164,007 square foot (SF) 1000-member training facility with administrative, educational, assembly, library, learning center, vault, weapons simulator, and physical fitness areas for four Army Reserve units and six CTARNG units. Associated support facilities include a 34,979 SF Organizational Maintenance Shop (OMS) and a 3,886 SF unheated storage building. In addition, there would be approximately 8.76 acres of paved areas including approximately 3.80 acres of military equipment parking (MEP) areas and approximately 4.96 acres of privately-owned vehicle (POV) parking areas, walkways, and access roads. Implementing the BRAC Commission's recommendations

for Middletown, CT would result in the total assignment of 895 personnel to the new AFRC. Of these 895 personnel, there would be 842 reservists and 53 civilians. There would be 100 full-time personnel.

2.0 ALTERNATIVES CONSIDERED

The Army determined that the method to accommodate the realigning organizations, including the personnel and specialized functions, must be accomplished through new construction to meet the size and functional requirements of the BRAC Law. The EA evaluated four alternatives after an extensive and exhaustive site identification process: No Action Alternative, Cucia Park Alternative, Bysiewicz Industrial Subdivision (Liberty Park) Alternative, and Millennium Industrial Park (Ken Dooley Drive) Alternative.

These sites meet the Army's site suitability criteria outlined by the Secretary of the Army (price, sufficient building area, site access, environmental issues, zoning, and site-related construction costs), and the site-specific minimal engineering and environmental selection criteria to be considered feasible for implementing the Proposed Action. These include, but were not limited to: contain a net useable area of about 25 acres, meet Anti-Terrorism/Force Protection set back requirements, support intended construction, be environmentally clean, have ready access to public utilities, have reasonable cut or fill requirements, have proximity to a major roadway corridor, meet appropriate zoning/anti-terrorism considerations, be within the City of Middletown, be available for purchase by the Federal government.

EA Section 3.2 and Appendix J summarize and outline the site selection process and the alternatives evaluated by the Army for determination of reasonable sites for construction and operation of the AFRC.

No Action Alternative: The No Action Alternative is required by CEQ regulations to serve as the benchmark against which federal actions can be evaluated. The No Action Alternative describes the environmental baseline condition or the current status of the environment if the Proposed Action is not implemented. The No Action Alternative is evaluated in detail in the EA.

No action assumes that the various Army Reserve units located in areas around New Haven, CT; in Milford, CT; and at the CTARNG would continue to train at and operate from their current locations with current facilities. Many of these facilities are outdated, inadequate, and inefficient, and others are being closed under the BRAC law. Because suitable land for the facility has been identified in Middletown, and the BRAC Commission's recommendations have the force of law, continuation of the baseline is not possible without further congressional action. Therefore, the No Action Alternative was not selected.

Preferred Alternative

Cucia Park Alternative: This site, evaluated for construction and operation of the facility, is located on Smith Street in Middletown. The approximate 42-acre park is zoned industrial and is located within two miles of I-91. It is bordered to the north by Smith Street, to the east by I-91, to the south by a 250 foot wide powerline right-of-way and an industrial facility, and to the west by the Sawmill Brook and its floodplain. The property is within the City's designated industrial zone and surrounded in the immediate area by light commercial and industrial businesses. This alternative meets the Army's siting requirements for the AFRC, OMS, unheated storage building, and MEP area.

The site is forested and contains about 12.7 acres of jurisdictional wetlands, including two ponds, on the property. Construction could require the clearing of about 28 acres of forestland, the unavoidable loss of about 1.6 acres of wetlands, and direct loss of habitat for a state-listed special concern species, the Eastern box turtle. In accordance with Executive Order 11990, the Army has evaluated the impacts at this site and has determined there is no practicable alternative to avoid new construction in wetlands and that the

proposed action includes all practicable measures to minimize harm to wetlands which may result from such use. In making this finding the Army has taken into account the economic, environmental and other pertinent factors of other alternative sites.

Based on the evaluation of the significance of environmental impacts, the physical limitations for siting incoming activities, scheduling constraints imposed by the BRAC Commission, budgetary limitations, and availability of the reasonable alternatives evaluated, the Army has determined there are no additional realistic, distinct, or feasible alternatives to Cucia Park.

Additional Alternatives Considered

Bysiewicz Industrial Subdivision (Liberty Park) Alternative: This site evaluated for construction and operation of the facility is located at 591 Middle Street, about 0.5 miles from the preferred site, Cucia Park. The approximate 33-acre site is zoned industrial and is located within two miles of I-91. It is bordered to the west by industrial-zoned farmland (Boardman Lane property) and industrial-zoned undeveloped property (Millennium Industrial Park, Ken Dooley Drive), to the north by industrial development, to the east by Middle Street and to the South by a single family residence and the Yellow Freight Shipping company industrial complex. The site has been prepared for development including clearing, grading, new road construction and installation of sewer and stormwater systems.

This alternative meets the Army's siting requirements for the AFRC, OMS, unheated storage building, and MEP area, with one exception. To select this as the Army's preferred alternative, one of the Army's stated primary siting criteria is that the site must be available for purchase by the Federal government. Since the development and publishing of the EA, the available combination of lots within the Bysiewicz Industrial Subdivision (Liberty Park) Alternative that can accommodate the size and needs of the AFRC are no longer available for purchase to the Federal government. This site can not be purchased, and realignment of incoming organizations at this site can not occur. This Alternative is, therefore, not feasible.

Millennium Industrial Park (Ken Dooley Drive) Alternative: This site evaluated for construction and operation of the facility is located at Ken Dooley Drive. The approximate 39-acre Millennium Industrial Park is zoned industrial and located within two miles of I-91. It is bordered to the west by a residential neighborhood, to the south by farmland, including a farmhouse, to the east by industrial development, and to the north by Timber Ridge Road. This property was originally considered with the Boardman Lane site, but the Government decided not to consider further the Boardman Lane property after preliminary engineering studies concluded the AFRC could be constructed on the Millennium Industrial Park site. This alternative meets the Army's siting requirements for the AFRC, OMS, unheated storage building, and MEP area.

The site is forested and undeveloped, contains about 5.28 acres of jurisdictional wetlands on the eastern border. Construction could require the clearing of 35 acres of forestland, the unavoidable loss of about 0.2 acres of wetlands, and direct loss of state-listed species and habitat for the Eastern box turtle. The parcel requires significant blasting during site preparation for construction. Consideration has been given to the potential impact to residential neighborhoods with the construction and long-term use of the site. The engineering costs of site development have determined the site preparation, construction, and mitigation costs associated with the development of this site are substantially larger than the costs associated with construction of the Preferred Alternative. Therefore, selection of this Alternative as the location for realignment of incoming organizations is not feasible.

3.0 ENVIRONMENTAL ANALYSIS

The Environmental Assessment (EA), which is incorporated by reference into this Finding of No Significant Impact (FNSI), examined potential effects of the proposed action and no action alternative on 12 resource areas of environmental and socioeconomic concern: land use, aesthetic and visual resources, air quality, noise, geology and soils, water resources, biological resources, cultural resources, socioeconomics (including environmental justice and protection of children), transportation, utilities, and hazardous and toxic substances. The following paragraphs summarize expected effects associated with the Preferred Alternative for each resource, as discussed in the EA.

Land Use. Construction and operation will convert current forested recreational park use to its City-designated zoning use. This long-term impact to land use is not significant. The potential for impacts to the water quality in Sawmill Brook from a change in land use from forested to areas of impervious surface will be abated and addressed in the Clean Water Act Section 401 Water Quality Certification.

Aesthetic and Visual Resources. Under the Preferred Alternative, the direct and cumulative impacts would be similar. Short-term impacts would result from construction activities, and long-term impacts would occur to natural vistas due to building height and overall square footage required for new construction. Long-term impacts to the existing aesthetic and visual character in the project area and impacts to views and viewsheds are expected, but would not be significant. To minimize visual losses, the Army has located the equipment parking and maintenance areas away from the public frontage, retained the existing park and pond areas on the northern area, required New England style design for buildings, and included planted islands and landscaped buffer/drainage areas related to LEED silver site design principles.

Air Quality. Direct and indirect impacts would occur under the Preferred Alternative. The direct impacts include short-term impacts from increased construction and operation emissions, and long-term impacts associated with emissions from daily operations. A Conformity Analysis was conducted and the expected maximum annual direct and indirect emissions from this project/action have been estimated for the preferred alternative. The action is not considered regionally significant under 40 CFR 93.153 (i). A Record of Non Applicability is in Appendix D of the EA.

Noise. No significant direct impacts from noise would occur under the Preferred Alternative. During construction there would be short-term, localized noise impacts associated with increased construction traffic and the operation of construction equipment and machinery, power tools, and the delivery of construction materials. Indirect noise impacts would occur to wildlife. Operational noise impacts would be consistent with the intended zoning uses of the City of Middletown. Section 4.15 of the EA identifies the measures to minimize noise-related impacts.

Geology and Soils Short-term, and long-term direct impacts on soil would occur under the Preferred Alternative. These are not considered significant. Soil would be disturbed by construction activities such as grading, vegetation clearing, and excavating during construction of the new facilities. Increased impervious surfaces would result in permanent impacts to the soil. Soil will be removed from the project area in site preparations.

Water Resources. Under the Preferred Alternative, no construction will occur to waterbodies or within the Sawmill Brook floodplain. Indirect impacts would include increased run-off from soil disturbance and related construction. Long-term impacts would occur due to increases in impervious surfaces that can lead to increases in stormwater runoff and reduce groundwater recharge. Site-specific discharge criteria to ensure discharges are consistent with the State of Connecticut's implementation the federal Clean Water Act Section 401 and the Connecticut Water Quality Standards will be completed in the Water Quality

Certification for the federal action. Incorporating these compliance standards will minimize impacts and would not result in significant impacts.

Wetlands. The Cucia Park parcel was re-delineated in May 2009 at the request of the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers New England District Regulatory Division. The second delineation was a delineation of the entire property that would supersede the original delineation. About 12.7 acres of jurisdictional wetlands were determined to exist on the property. Under the current design, about 1.6 acres of the wetlands could be filled or impacted. A final determination of loss and mitigation requirements will be finalized in the Clean Water Act Section 404 permit process. The loss of wetlands will be offset by creation and enhancement of new wetlands in coordination with the City of Middletown and the State of Connecticut. In accordance with EO 11990, the Army has determined that there is no practicable alternative to the activities affecting wetlands. The action includes all practicable measures to minimize harm to wetlands.

Biological resources. Loss of vegetation at this site is expected from construction activities and not considered significant. No significant impacts to wildlife are expected under this alternative due to the remaining wildlife habitats that would support viable populations in the area. The project will have no known impacts to Federal endangered, threatened, or proposed listed species.

The project will impact potential habitat for the State-listed Species of Special Concern, the Eastern box turtle. For State listed Special Concern Species:

- The Army will incorporate measures recommended by the CT Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) to minimize impacts to potential habitat and its loss for the State-listed Species of Special Concern, the Eastern box turtle, as explained in Section 4.15 of the EA.
- The CT DEP will be notified at least 3 weeks prior to the initiation of construction activities to enable them to mobilize to identify locations of and relocate any populations of the squarrose sedge and Eastern box turtle, if desired.
- Prior to daily construction activities, the site will be investigated for individual species, and
- Construction crews will be educated to identify the species and what measures can be taken to avoid impact during site development.
- During operation of the facility for grassy areas not utilized, the grass mowing can be targeted to remain at about 8 inches.

Cultural resources. There would be no direct or indirect impact to NRHP eligible archaeological or architectural resources.

Socioeconomics (including environmental justice and protection of children). There would be no significant impact on socioeconomic resources.

Transportation. No significant direct or indirect impact on traffic would be expected during the construction of the proposed facility. The construction project would be small and construction related traffic is not expected to be significant. No significant adverse impacts would be expected to local traffic from the operation of the AFRC during the weekday a.m. and p.m. and Saturday p.m. peak hours. The projected traffic would not have an impact on level of service.

Utilities. No significant impacts would be expected from implementation of the Preferred Alternative. The site has adequate fire flow capacity.

Hazardous and toxic substances. There are no significant direct or indirect impacts related to hazardous materials, use, handling, and storage. Hazardous materials will be handled and stored in accordance with applicable regulations and label precautions and will not have any significant adverse impacts.

4.0 PUBLIC COMMENT

Interested parties were invited to review and comment on the EA and Draft FNSI during the 30-day comment period, April 24, 2009 through May 23, 2009. A Notice of Availability was published in the *Hartford Courant* and *The Middletown Press* on April 24, 2009.

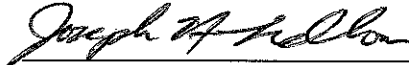
During the 30-day comment period a total of seven public comments on the Final EA and Draft FNSI were received from interested parties; one from CTDEP, one from the Mayor of the City of Middletown, one from the Mashantucket Pequot Tribe, one from the City of Middletown Water and Sewer Department, one from the City of Middletown Mayor's Advisory Panel, one from the Middletown Police Department, and one from the Secretary of State, Connecticut. A summary of the comments received on the EA and the U.S. Army's responses to those comments are included in Appendix K of the EA.

5.0 CONCLUSION

Based on the EA, it has been determined that implementation of the proposed action will have no significant direct, indirect, or cumulative adverse effects on the quality of the natural or human environment. Because no significant environmental impacts will result from implementation of the proposed action, an Environmental Impact Statement is not required and will not be prepared. Preparation of this FNSI is appropriate.

Date: _____

24 JUL 09



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