

FINDING OF NO SIGNIFICANT IMPACT
FOR THE PROPOSED PACIFIC MISSILE RANGE FACILITY
INTEGRATED NATURAL RESOURCES MANAGEMENT PLAN
ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT
NAVAL FACILITIES ENGINEERING SYSTEMS COMMAND, HAWAII
PROJECT REFERENCE: CONTRACT #N62470-13-D-8017-KB01

Pursuant to Section 102(2)(c) of the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) and the Council on Environmental Quality (CEQ) regulations (40 Code of Federal Regulations [C.F.R.] Parts 1500–1508) implementing the procedural provisions of NEPA, the United States (U.S.) Department of the Navy (DoN or Navy) gives notice that an Environmental Assessment (EA) has been prepared. Based on this Finding of No Significant Impact (FONSI), an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) is not required for the 2023 Integrated Natural Resources Management Plan (INRMP) for the Pacific Missile Range Facility (PMRF) Complex on the islands of Kauaʻi, Oʻahu, Niʻihau, and Kaʻula, Hawaiʻi. The 2023 INRMP updates the 2010 INRMP for the same locations.

The DoN is aware of the November 12, 2024, decision in *Marin Audubon Society v. Federal Aviation Administration*, No. 23-1067 (D.C. Cir. Nov. 12, 2024). To the extent that a court may conclude that the CEQ regulations implementing NEPA are not judicially enforceable or binding on this agency action, the DoN has nonetheless elected to follow those regulations at 40 C.F.R. Parts 1500–1508, in addition to DoN’s procedures/regulations implementing NEPA at 32 C.F.R. Part 775, to meet the agency’s obligations under NEPA, 42 U.S.C. §§ 4321 et seq.

PROPOSED ACTION

The Proposed Action is to adopt and implement the 2023 PMRF INRMP in Hawaiʻi. The EA includes an analysis of potential environmental impacts associated with the implementation of the Preferred Alternative (implementation of the 2023 PMRF INRMP) and the No Action Alternative (continuation of the 2010 INRMP).

The EA focuses on eight sites under PMRF management; no resources requiring management are to occur at the Miloliʻi Ridge reflector sites on Kauaʻi or the Mount Kaʻala communication site on Oʻahu, which are therefore omitted from analysis. The EA further includes PMRF’s monitoring and proactive management activities to provide conservation benefits to aquatic species and habitats in nearshore waters adjacent to the installations. PMRF does not own or manage submerged lands seaward of the high-water mark; however, a Safety Zone (33 C.F.R. Section 165.1406) and Danger Zone (33 C.F.R. Section 334.1390) adjacent to Barking Sands are designated for Navy use and are therefore included in the INRMP study area. The offshore underwater ranges are within open ocean areas and extend into territorial waters, which are not under the jurisdiction of PMRF or INRMP study area and, therefore, are not included in the EA; however, the Navy conducts annual marine mammal monitoring in the Hawaiʻi Range Complex, which includes offshore areas at PMRF. An updated Biological Opinion and Letter of

Authorization for offshore activities covered under Hawai'i-California Training and Testing EIS/Overseas EIS (OEIS) is expected by December 2025.

Documents reviewed in the preparation of this FONSI were the 2010 PMRF INRMP (which became compliant on April 11, 2014), the 2002 Final EA (prepared for the 2001 PMRF INRMP), and the 2023 PMRF INRMP.

PURPOSE AND NEED

The purpose of an INRMP is to implement an ecosystem-based conservation program that provides for conservation and rehabilitation of natural resources in a manner that is consistent with the military mission, integrates and coordinates all natural resources management activities, provides for sustainable multipurpose uses of natural resources, and provides for public access for use of natural resources subject to public safety and military security considerations. The EA has been prepared to evaluate the effects of the activities described in the 2023 PMRF INRMP.

The purpose of the Proposed Action is to implement the 2023 PMRF INRMP, which provides an approach for natural resources management on PMRF-administered lands that is consistent with the Sikes Act (as amended) as well as the most recent Department of Defense (DoD) and DoN policy and guidance regarding INRMPs. The need for the Proposed Action is to provide a comprehensive, adaptive natural resources management approach for all PMRF properties. Both the INRMP and the natural resources management programs that it supports must meet DoD and DoN policy and guidance that collectively require a plan and management approach consistent with mission support (as defined in 10 U.S.C. Section 5062).

ALTERNATIVES CONSIDERED

The DoN Environmental Readiness Program Manual (Office of the Chief of Naval Operations Manual [M]-5090.1, 2021) states that for actions associated with the implementation of an INRMP, analysis of a Proposed Action and No Action Alternatives is acceptable without considering additional alternatives.

No Action Alternative (Current Management)

Under the No Action Alternative, the Proposed Action would not occur; therefore, the objectives and practices outlined in the 2010 PMRF INRMP would remain in place. The No Action Alternative would not meet the purpose and need for the Proposed Action; however, as required by NEPA, the No Action Alternative is carried forward for analysis as it provides a baseline for measuring the environmental consequences of a Preferred Alternative. Further, the No Action Alternative would be in violation of the Sikes Act, which requires that INRMPs be revised a minimum of every 5 years.

Preferred Alternative (Proposed Action)

The Preferred Alternative includes the adoption and implementation of a revised 2023 PMRF INRMP. The INRMP identifies concerns, creates objectives, and outlines strategies to address those concerns and achieve those objectives. To evaluate impacts clearly and concisely, the EA focuses on the strategies (also called resource management actions) and analyzes the effects of implementation of those strategies. The revised INRMP would meet the goals and objectives for

management of PMRF's natural resources in a manner that would be compatible with the military uses of the property and consistent with the Sikes Act.

SUMMARY OF EFFECTS

The following summarizes the potential environmental consequences of the Preferred Alternative and No Action Alternative. The study area for the analysis of effects to resources associated with the Preferred Alternative includes the lands and waters of PMRF owned or leased by the Navy that could be affected by the proposed INRMP activities. The environmental resource areas analyzed include: the physical environment including geology and soils, and water resources; biological resources including vegetation, nuisance and invasive animals, at-risk species of bat, birds, insects, marine mammals, marine reptiles, other at-risk marine species, and coastal and nearshore biological resources; and the social and cultural environment including land use, outdoor recreation, and cultural resources. Each resource area is analyzed by facility location. Potential impacts on physical, biological, and social and cultural resources analyzed in the EA are summarized as follows.

Per CEQ guidance, several resources received only screening-level analysis in the EA because implementation of either action either would not be likely to result in any potential environmental impacts on these resources or would have negligible impacts. These resources are air quality, airspace management, noise, infrastructure, transportation, public health and safety, hazardous materials and wastes, socioeconomics, and visual resources.

Strategies for data collection, database and records management, natural resources awareness, education, and personnel training would be implemented base-wide and would benefit natural resource management across all the resource areas. The Affected Environment and Environmental Consequences section of the EA omits evaluation of these strategies because they relate primarily to implementation of all the natural resource management strategies, would have only beneficial effects, and do not pertain to a particular natural resource.

Physical Resources. Implementing the activities described in the 2023 PMRF INRMP would result in benefits to physical resources in those locations where management actions are proposed. The most current best management practices would be used when implementing these and other INRMP projects to prevent negative effects to facility location physical resources. Therefore, implementation of the Preferred Alternative would not result in significant negative impacts to physical resources. The No Action Alternative would involve PMRF continuing to operate under an outdated INRMP. This would lead to no change to the management of physical resources. Though the benefits to physical resources resulting from implementation of the Preferred Alternative would not be realized, no significant negative impacts to existing water resources would occur.

Biological Resources. Implementing the activities described in the 2023 PMRF INRMP would result in benefits to biological resources in those locations where management actions are proposed. Species surveys and monitoring would add to knowledge of species distribution and abundance, ultimately aiding conservation efforts. Control of predators (including rodents, ungulates, and feral animals) and control of invasive and non-native species would reduce mortality and competition with species that can outcompete native species for resources. Habitat improvements would benefit native terrestrial and marine flora and fauna by providing the native habitats species require. Activities that result in education and outreach to the public, law

enforcement, and recreation personnel would increase stewardship of biological resources. Additionally, the use of the most current management practices in implementing these and other INRMP projects would prevent negative effects to biological resources. No significant impact to threatened and endangered species would occur. Therefore, implementation of the Preferred Alternative would not result in significant impacts to biological resources. The No Action Alternative would involve PMRF continuing to operate under an outdated INRMP. This would lead to no change to the management of biological resources. Though the benefits to resources resulting from implementation of the Preferred Alternative would not be realized, no significant negative impacts to existing biological resources would occur.

Social and Cultural Environment. Implementing the activities described in the 2023 PMRF INRMP would result in benefits to social and cultural resources in those locations where management actions are proposed. Continued coordination among facilities planners, resource managers, and State of Hawai'i and county officials would benefit from implementation of INRMP management actions at all eight facility locations. PMRF's recreation program would ensure recreationists are well-informed, including on the importance of natural resources stewardship. Development of a Natural Resources Information Center and associated components (e.g., brochures, educational information, self-guided nature-based walks) would benefit social and cultural resources while benefiting PMRF natural resources. Therefore, implementation of the Preferred Alternative would not result in significant negative impacts to the social and cultural environment. The No Action Alternative would involve PMRF continuing to operate under an outdated INRMP. This would lead to no change to the management of the social and cultural environment. Though the benefits to resources resulting from implementation of the Preferred Alternative would not be realized, no significant negative impacts to the existing social and cultural environment would occur.

Short-term effects to biological resources are expected and require management strategies identified above to eliminate or reduce their intensity to non-target species. It was also determined that a long-term beneficial effect on all biological resources would occur due to implementation of the revised INRMP.

Cumulative Impacts. The analysis considers additive impacts from Reasonably Foreseeable Future Actions (RFFAs) that may occur later in time or farther removed in distance from the proposed action but that have a reasonably close causal relationship to the Proposed Action. This analysis includes a review of public documents prepared by federal, state, and local government agencies, management plans, land use plans, and other planning-related studies to determine potential effects from RFFAs that could combine with the potential effects of the proposed action. This analysis also includes a search of the State of Hawai'i Office of Planning and Sustainable Development EA/EIS database to determine whether analyses of any properties adjacent to the PMRF facilities were completed and published for RFFAs. However, no significant negative cumulative effects to the resource areas analyzed in the EA would be caused by implementation of the Preferred Alternative.

MITIGATION MEASURES

The analysis in the EA determined the Proposed Action would not result in significant environmental impacts. Therefore, no mitigation measures are required for the project to reach a FONSI. However, the 2023 PMRF INRMP proposes natural resources management strategies that

carry over from, and build upon, strategies in the 2010 PMRF INRMP. Because implementation of the INRMP would involve ongoing actions, the EA analysis assumes a long-term duration of the impact for all resources.

PMRF developed the INRMP to ensure consistency with the installation's military mission and to support no net loss in military mission capability for the installation lands while providing for the conservation, rehabilitation, and the sustainable multipurpose use of natural resources on PMRF. The primary purpose of the INRMP is to provide a proactive natural resources management plan that guides PMRF in achieving natural resource management goals, mission requirements, and compliance with environmental regulations and policies. The 2023 PMRF INRMP would serve as a principal information source for the preparation of future environmental analyses for proposed base actions. Management strategies are presented in Table 2, "Alternatives Comparison," of the EA.

PUBLIC OUTREACH

Formal notification and opportunity for public participation were provided during the preparation of the EA. The Navy prepared a Draft EA to inform the public of the Proposed Action and alternatives and to allow the opportunity for public review and comment.

A Notice of Availability of the 2023 PMRF INRMP and Draft EA was published in *The Garden Island* newspaper on May 16–18, 2024. The documents were made available online on the Naval Facilities Engineering Systems Command, Pacific website. Hard copies were placed in the Waimea Public Library, Līhu'e Public Library, and Kapa'a Public Library. Comments were accepted from May 16, 2024, through June 15, 2024. Comments received on the 2023 PMRF INRMP and Draft EA were analyzed and, where appropriate, changes were incorporated into the Final EA.

Public comments received on the Draft EA that were addressed in the Final EA included addressing strategies to protect marine mammals (e.g., whales and dolphins) and addressing management issues of Hawaiian monk seals (*Monachus schauinslandi*) and sea turtles (primarily green; *Chelonia mydas*) in nearshore habitats. Comments regarding marine species were addressed by the Navy's Marine Species Monitoring Program that was developed in support of Navy Training and Testing EISs/OEISs and their associated Biological Opinions and Marine Mammal Protection Act Letters of Authorization; the Navy has been conducting marine mammal monitoring in the offshore areas of the PMRF since 2008. For sea turtles, a 2023 interagency agreement will allow the Navy to partner with the National Marine Fisheries Service, Pacific Islands Fisheries Science Center, to deploy SPLASH tags (Global Positioning System and Argos) on sea turtles at PMRF; additionally, an appendix was added to the INRMP specific to sea turtle management actions at PMRF.

FINDING OF NO SIGNIFICANT IMPACT

Based on the analysis presented in the EA, which has been prepared in accordance with the requirements of NEPA and DoN policies and procedures (32 C.F.R. Part 775), and in coordination with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and National Ocean and Atmospheric Administration, no significant impacts to the natural and human environments from the Proposed Action are expected. The Proposed Action includes continued implementation of the objectives and practices outlined

in the 2010 INRMP, with additional strategies proposed in the 2023 INRMP. The EA analysis concluded no significant adverse effects would occur to any of the resources from implementation of either alternative.

Conclusion

Based on review and evaluation of the information contained in the Final EA and comments received, I have determined that implementing the project will not constitute a major federal action significantly affecting the quality of the human environment within the meaning of Section 102(2)(c) of NEPA. The project is not without precedent and is not like actions that would normally require preparation of an EIS. Accordingly, preparation of an EIS for the proposed action is not required. Interested parties will be notified of the decision.

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Signature

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Date

Note: This FONSI and supporting references are available for public review at:

<https://pacific.navy.mil/About-Us/National-Environmental-Policy-Act-NEPA-Information/>