FINDING OF NO SIGNIFICANT IMPACT (FNSI)
FOR
1-126TH AV AVIATOR WATER SURVIVAL AND EXTRACTION TRAINING, OLD TOWN, MAINE

INTRODUCTION

The Maine Army National Guard (ME ARNG) has prepared an Environmental Assessment (EA) to identify and evaluate potential environmental effects from an aviator water survival and extraction training exercise in, on, and over the portion of Pushaw Lake that lies within the City of Old Town, Penobscot County, Maine. The EA has been prepared in accordance with the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA, 42 USC §4321-§4370-e.), The Army National Guard NEPA Handbook, dated 1 OCT 2011, the Council on Environmental Quality Regulations for Implementing Procedural Provisions of NEPA (CEQ Regulations, 40 CFR §1500-§1508), and *Environmental Analysis of Army Actions* (32 CFR Part 651).

1. Description of Proposed Action and Alternatives

Proposed Action. The MEARNG proposes to conduct aviator water survival and extraction training, which will include approximately five (5) hours of low level aviation and boat activity and the release of a small volume of a temporary dye to surface water in order to simulate realistic survival and search and rescue tactics and conditions.

The objectives of the Proposed Action are to train UH- 60 Blackhawk helicopter aircrews to survive emergency water landings ("ditching") and simultaneously train aircrews to rescue individuals from the surface of large water bodies. It is conducted pursuant to Army Aviation regulation AR 95-1. This training helps MEARNG aircrews become familiar and comfortable with their equipment and facilitates the reduction of the overall risk of overwater missions. The MEARNG Command identified this training as an immediate need due to increased Army Aviation operations over water. More detailed information concerning the Proposed Action may be found in the site-specific EA (separate document).

Alternatives Considered. The MEARNG used a two-phase site selection process to develop alternative locations for the Proposed Action. Early in the planning process, the MEARNG recognized key safety, logistics, and endangered species habitat issues and used these criteria to screen out unsuitable locations. Through the screening process, MEARNG identified eight (8) lakes in that met the minimum size, location, and endangered species requirements for the project. The initial list of sites was further evaluated against participant safety and environmental impact minimization criteria. The Preferred Action Alternative (PAA), Pushaw Lake, was the location that best met the MEARNG's evaluation criteria, scoring well with regard to both safety and environmental consideration and detailed analysis. All of the non-preferred alternative action locations were eliminated from further consideration. Thus, the EA evaluates the PAA, Pushaw Lake, and the No Action Alternative was considered as a baseline against the

environmental impacts of the PAA. Under the No Action Alternative, the MEARNG's proposed training would not take place.

2. Environmental Analysis

The potential environmental impacts associated with the Proposed Action are fully described in the EA. Per 40 CFR §1501.7(a)(3), MEARNG eliminated environmental resource areas that would be unaffected by the proposed training. The EA identifies the environmental resources that could be affected by the Proposed Action, including surface water resources, air quality and noise, and determines the significance of the impacts, if any, to each of these resources.

Based on the detailed analysis contained in the EA, the MEARNG determined that the proposed training exercise will not have any significant adverse impacts on the human or natural environments. Impacts from the PAA will primarily be associated with temporary increase in noise and air traffic.

3. Mitigation

Due to thorough project planning and design, no mitigation measures will be necessary to reduce significant adverse environmental impacts to less than significant levels.

4. Regulations

The Proposed Action will not violate NEPA, the CEQ Regulations, 32 CFR Part 651, or any other Federal, State, or local environmental regulations.

5. Commitment to Implementation

The National Guard Bureau (NGB) and MEARNG affirm their commitment to implement this EA in accordance with NEPA. The MEARNG and NGB will ensure that adequate funds are available to achieve the goals and objectives set forth in this EA.

6. Public Comment

The final EA and draft Finding of No Significant Impact (FNSI) will be available for public review and comment from ____ to _____. Comments received during the EA review process will be incorporated into the Final EA and FNSI. For further information contact:

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7. Finding of No Significant Impact

After careful review of the EA, I have concluded that the implementation of the Proposed Action would not generate controversy or have a significant impact on the quality of the human or natural environment. The FNSI will be signed and the action will be implemented. This analysis fulfills the requirements of NEPA and the CEQ Regulations. An Environmental Impact Statement will not be prepared, and the National Guard Bureau will issue a Finding of No Significant Impact.

_____ _____

Date

William M. Myer
Colonel, US Army
Chief, Environmental
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