DRAFT - FINDING OF NO SIGNIFICANT IMPACT
American Samoa Department of Port Administration
Malaloa Wharf Extension, Pago Pago, Tutuila, American Samoa

Pursuant to provisions of the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) of 1969 (42 United States Code Section 4321 et seq.), the Council on Environmental Quality's (CEQ's) NEPA-implementing regulations (Title 40 of the Code of Federal Regulations [CFR] Parts 1500 through 1508), the Department of Interior (DOI)-Office of Insular Affairs (OIA) assessed the potential environmental consequences associated with the OIA-funded project of extending the existing Malaloa Wharf, Pago Pago, Tutuila Island, American Samoa.

Background

The American Samoa Department of Port Administration (AS-DPA) proposes to extend the current wharf in Malaloa, Pago Pago Harbor in Tutuila Island. The proposed extension is 453 feet-long and 45 feet-wide to provide wharf space for the American Samoa longliners. The wharf extension is to be built as a permanent structure and replicates the existing wharf. Dredging will also be conducted on the seaward side of the project footprint.

The Malaloa Wharf and the proposed action footprint is in the inner and northwestern most part of Pago Pago Harbor. Pago Pago Harbor is a relatively large inlet that deeply indents the southeast shore of Tutuila Island forming an extensive naturally protected deep water harbor. The harbor is the deepest in the South Pacific making it strategic for navigation. Pago Pago harbor has a maximum width of 9.6 km and a minimum width of 1.2 km. The Harbor was designated a special management area (SMA) by the American Samoa Coastal Management Act of 1990 because of its "unique and valuable characteristics" and the "imminent threat from development pressures" (ASCA § 24.0503). Its marine boundaries are defined by a straight line from Goat Island Point to the jetty at Leloaloa (ASCA § 26.0221) and include ~1.2 km^2 of marine habitat. The Pago Pago Harbor SMA includes the inner harbor area and fronts the western portion of a ~10.4 km^2 watershed in extensively impacted condition.

Purpose and Need

The wharf extension and associated dredging will address the space limitation issue of the American Samoa longliners and create additional wharf space for sportfishermen and visiting yachts. These longliners target the South Pacific Albacore mostly within the Territory's Exclusive Economic Zone. They also provide the fish for canned albacore that specifically supplies the US military. The local owners of longliners reached out to the Western Pacific Regional Fishery Management Council for assistance on the need for additional wharf space. The Council, in turn, provided some funding for a feasibility study. The American Samoa Department of Port Administration has applied for funds from the Department of Interior to fund the construction of the wharf extension.

Alternatives Considered

This Environmental Assessment analyzes 3 alternatives: No Action, Wharf extension using sheet piles (preferred action); and Wharf extension using end-bearing steel pipe piles. The No Action Alternative serves as the baseline against which the proposed action and other alternatives are analyzed. This environmental assessment evaluates potential effects on

environmental resources. Because this action does not constitute a major Federal action significantly affecting the quality of the human environment, preparing an environmental impact statement is not required and signing a finding of no significant impact is adequate and appropriate.

Preferred Alternative

Construct a longline wharf by extending an existing wharf in Malaloa, Pago Pago Harbor using sheet piles

Under this alternative, AS-DPA would construct a new wharf by extending an existing wharf in Malaloa, Pago Pago Harbor. The proposed wharf is located on land owned by the American Samoa government. The wharf will be 453 feet in length and 45 feet wide. It will use an existing access road currently used for the existing wharf. The project also proposes to dredge the shoreward side of the proposed wharf extension. The wharf extension is to be built as permanent structure in its respective area. This option most closely replicates the existing wharf. The design comprises steel sheet pile sections that enclose the new wharf on 3 sides and is connected to the west end of the existing wharf structure. The sheet piles are vibrated to a specified depth and supported at the top by tie rods attached to continuous double channel waters. The wharf is filled with dredged sand from the shoreside seabed and imported granular material and has a reinforced concrete slab on grade deck. Wharf construction will begin from the western edge of the existing wharf with construction of a soil berm that coincides with the centerline of the new wharf deck. The fill material used for the berm will comprise a mixture of imported rock to provide better stability, and sand dredged from the inner channel or shoreside.

It is envisaged that dredging of the inner channel will be carried out concurrently with the construction of the new wharf. Surplus dredged material will be transported off site. The surplus dredged material will be carted for disposal at the Government-owned landfill site located in Futiga. Dredging the shoreward side would involve relocating over 600 colonies of corals to minimize project impact.

The sheet piling is the preferred option since it replicates the existing wharf. Pier extension using end-bearing piles will involve longer piles if the seabed is deep and pile driving to a deeper depth would propagate more sound disturbance. In addition, a sheet piled wharf is stronger than an end-bearing piled wharf. Sheet piling or end-bearing piles will use a barge to launch construction. Sheet piling alternative is not only deemed as the lesser damaging alternative as piles are not driven deeper.

The depth of water on the harbor side of the wharf approximately matches the proposed design depth (Mean Sea Level - 15 feet) from whence the seabed falls away to deeper water. The depth of water on the landward side of the wharf varies but is less than design depth (Mean Sea Level - 12 feet), and the new access channel requires to be deepened. Dredging and filling is therefore necessary for this project. A dredge-to-fill operation proposes to excavate an access channel on the landward side of the new wharf and fill between the sheet pile bulkheads. The dredged in-situ material is similar in composition to the seabed soils under the new adjacent wharf. The dredging and filling operation is estimated to take 3 months to complete. During this period, disturbance of seabed soils in the immediate vicinity of the Project site is inevitable, however, provision has been

made to install a full depth silt curtain completely around the works' area.

No Action Alternative

Under this alternative, the AS-DPA would not extend the Malaloa Wharf. Under no action, American Samoa longline boats would have no wharf space. The No Action Alternative would not achieve the project purpose and need.

Summary and Environmental Assessment

In accordance with the National Environmental Policy Act, the AS-DPA has prepared an Environmental Assessment (EA) for the Malaloa Wharf Extension Project to evaluate the impacts of the Proposed Action on the environment. The EA was prepared utilizing agency coordination information received from National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, National Marine Fisheries Service and U.S. Environmental Protection Agency. All comments were addressed in the EA.

Based upon the conditions and the information contained in the EA, and in accordance with the requirements of the National Environmental Policy Act of 1969 (NEPA), the Council on Environmental Quality regulations implementing NEPA (Title 40 of the Code of Federal Regulations [40 CFR] Parts 1500–1508), the following is concluded:

A Finding of No Significant Impact. Therefore, an environmental impact statement will not be prepared because the Proposed Action will not result in any long-term adverse impacts on the environment. This information required by NEPA is provided in the EA. No action will be allowed to occur until 15 days after publication of this Finding of No Significant Impact.

Nikolao I. Pula Date
Director
Office of Insular Affairs
U.S. Department of Interior