ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT SUMMARY AND FINDING OF NO SIGNIFICANT IMPACT FOR NATIONAL OCEANIC AND ATMOSPHERIC ADMINISTRATION MARINE OPERATIONS CENTER – PACIFIC HOMEPORT SITE ALTERNATIVES

ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT SUMMARY

Purpose and Need

The National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) proposes to establish a new lease for its Marine Operations Center—Pacific (MOC-P). The need for this proposed action is to provide a single MOC-P facility that supports the critical management, operational and logistical functions of the NOAA Office of Marine and Aviation Operations (OMAO), its research vessels and the various NOAA programs they serve. These programs include oceanographic surveys and research by NOAA Line Offices, such as the National Marine Fisheries Services (NMFS) and the National Ocean Service (NOS). Many of these programs are generated from the NOAA Western Regional Center or the Montlake Northwest Fisheries Science Center in Seattle, and from other locations in the Western U.S.

The existing MOC-P is located at 1801 Fairview Avenue East on Lake Union in Seattle. OMAO has occupied this location since 1963; however, the long-term lease for this property expires in June 2011. OMAO officer and administrative staff associated with MOC-P are comprised of approximately 75 individuals. Ships' crews associated with the four vessels typically home-ported at MOC-P comprise approximately 115 personnel. From the existing MOC-P location, approximately 146 researchers deploy, primarily from April through September, on these or other NOAA vessels.

In July 2006 a fire destroyed the MOC-P piers, boat shed, and machine shop at Lake Union. Since then, MOC-P vessels have been temporarily berthed at various piers in the Puget Sound area. Administrative and warehouse functions at MOC-P continue at the existing MOC-P property at Lake Union in Seattle. The purpose of the proposed action is to select a single location that will best meet requirements found in the NOAA Solicitation for Offers (SFO) for its MOC-P facilities, staff and associated operations.

Proposed Action

NOAA's Office of the Chief Administrative Officer is proposing to establish a new lease for the MOC-P. The lessor of the selected site will, depending on the site selected, develop and/or refurbish a facility to meet requirements for MOC-P as outlined in the SFO. The MOC-P is one of two regional centers operated by the NOAA OMAO. Under the proposed action, OMAO would provide administrative and logistical support to ten research vessels distributed within its area of responsibility. The selected MOC-P site would be a permanent homeport for four NOAA vessels and be able to accommodate up to six NOAA vessels in total.

NOAA intends to select a lease property and anticipated improvements that meet an established U.S. Department of Commerce SFO. The proposed lease would involve the following types of facilities.

Upland Facilities – The leased land and facilities would be prepared to NOAA requirements and specifications. In general, this operating lease will include upland and submerged land areas for five distinct MOC-P facilities: (1) Administration Building, (2) Shops Complex (Electronics, Boat Shed, and Maintenance), (3) Warehouse and storage areas, (4) Piers and Berths, and (5) Specialized Site Area (e.g., contractor trailer, storage of hazardous materials). Upland property would support approximately 31,100 rentable square feet of interior spaces; in-water requirements include 1,560 linear feet of dedicated, large-ship pier, 400 linear feet of small boat pier, and 20,000 square feet of exterior lay-down space. For staff

and visitor parking, NOAA will require 75 to 100 on-site reserved parking spaces. Of these, 50 spaces shall be secured and lit in accordance with specified security requirements.

In-Water Facilities – The MOC-P in-water pier requires 1,560 useable linear feet of large-ship pier frontage space, or 260 linear feet for each of up to 6 vessels. The desirable pier width is 30 feet, with a minimum acceptable pier width of not less than 25 feet overall and at least 20 feet of usable width. Large vessels may range from 215 to 224 feet in length, 43 feet in width (beam) and 21 feet (maximum) in draft below waterline. MOC-P also requires 400 useable linear feet of small boat pier space (i.e., float dock). An additional 10,000 square feet of lay-down space is required for sites more than 10 driving miles from the NOAA Western Regional Center (WRC) in Seattle, Washington. Sites more than 50 miles from the NOAA WRC in Seattle, Washington must provide an additional 50 secure parking spaces.

Site Alternatives Considered

The SFOs was issued by NOAA and directed to U.S. harbors in the greater Puget Sound area, including ports as far north as Bellingham and as far west as Port Angeles, Washington. The SFO was extended south beyond the Columbia River to ports along the Oregon coast to Newport, Oregon and southeast to Portland, Oregon on the Willamette River (Barrows, 2008). Offers for facilities at the following four locations were received in response to the SFO:

- 1801 Fairview Ave East, Inc., Lake Union, Seattle, Washington (existing MOC-P). This Site Alternative is hereafter referred to as Site Alternative 1 or the Lake Union site.
- Port of Port Angeles, Port Angeles, Washington (Terminal 3). This Site Alternative is hereafter referred to as Site Alternative 2 or the Port Angeles site.
- Port of Bellingham, Bellingham, Washington (Bellingham Shipping Terminal). This Site Alternative is hereafter referred to as Site Alternative 3 or the Bellingham site.
- Port of Newport, Newport, Oregon (Dock 2). This Site Alternative is hereafter referred to as Site Alternative 4 or the Newport site.

These four Site Alternatives were analyzed in a Draft and Final EA, along with the No-Action Alternative. The No-Action Alternative assumes continuation of the status quo and no new comprehensive upland and in-water facility for MOC-P. Under this scenario, the current lease for existing MOC-P facilities will eventually lapse. All NOAA vessels typically homeported at MOC-P, including the NOAA Ship *Shimada* coming on-line in 2009, would be berthed indefinitely at temporarily arranged berths in the Pacific Northwest. Preparation for cruises and dockside vessel support would occur at various unknown ports made available to NOAA. The No-Action Alternative is not preferred and would reduce MOC-P's overall ability to meet its mission and budget efficiently and effectively.

Environmental Impacts and Mitigation Measures

NOAA prepared an EA analyzing the proposed action in conformance with procedural requirements of the National Environmental Policy Act of 1969 (NEPA). The document adheres to requirements of NOAA Administrative Order 216-6, Environmental Review Procedures for Implementing the National Environmental Policy Act (amended May 20, 1999).

Based on an evaluation of the proposed action's effect on the human environment, it was determined that no significant impacts would result. The EA analyzed the following issue areas:

- Land Use
- Geological Resources
- Air Quality

- Water Resources
- Recreational Resources
- Cultural Resources
- Flora and Fauna
- Essential Fish Habitat
- Wetlands and Navigable Waters
- Floodplains
- Coastal Zone Management
- Agricultural Resources
- Noise
- Transportation
- Utilities and Solid Waste
- Visual and Aesthetic Resources
- Hazardous Materials
- Socioeconomics
- Cumulative Impacts

No significant unavoidable adverse impacts to any resource area were identified.

It is expected that the lessor will mitigate potential effects by following the usual permitting and regulatory requirements and compliance with the requirements of the SFO. There are no recommended measures for the following environmental resources: land use, air quality, recreational resources, noise, transportation, utilities and solid waste, visual and aesthetic resources, and socio-economics. The following is a summary of suggested mitigation measures in other resource areas for each of the site alternatives:

Geological Resources

For Site Alternatives 1, 2, 3 and 4 - Use of the standards outlined in the SFO which in general include Recommended Provision 6, *Standards for Existing Federally Owned and Leased Buildings*, the International Building Code for new buildings, and Unified Facilities Criteria 4-152-01, *Design for Piers and Wharfs*.

Water Resources

For Site Alternatives 1, 2, and 3 – Impacts to water quality would be minimized by implementing measures that would result in adherence to the following regulations: water quality restrictions imposed by the WDOE (Chapter 173-201A WAC), and waste material disposal per WAC 220-110-070. Example mitigation measures are suggested in the Final EA.

For Site Alternative 4 – Impacts to water quality would be minimized by implementing measures that would result in adherence to the water quality standards imposed by ODEQ (OAR 340-041). Example mitigation measures are suggested in the Final EA.

Cultural Resources

For Site Alternatives 1, 2, 3 and 4 - As no adverse effects to known historic, archaeological, or cultural resources were identified, no mitigation is necessary. However, it is possible that deeply buried, intact archeological deposits are present below the fill. If NOAA proceeds with one of these alternatives, mitigation commensurate with future plans of development may be appropriate.

Flora and Fauna

For Site Alternatives 1, 2, and 3 - Impacts to aquatic species and habitats would be minimized by implementing measures that result in adherence to the following regulations: waste material disposal per WAC 220-110-070; and water quality restrictions imposed by the WDOE (Chapter 173-201A WAC). Example mitigation measures are suggested in the Final EA.

For Site Alternative 4 - Impacts to aquatic species and habitats would be minimized by implementing measures that result in adherence to the water quality standards imposed by ODEQ (OAR 340-041). Suggested measures include a pre-construction survey for short-stemmed sedge and actions to minimize adverse impacts to eelgrass beds, shell fish beds, and fish spawning and nursery areas.

For Site Alternatives 2 and 4, which require dredging, planning and construction practices are suggested in the Final EA.

Essential Fish Habitat

For Site Alternatives 1, 2, 3, and 4 - The same recommended measures as for Flora and Fauna apply to minimize the potential for impacts to Essential Fish Habitat, along with additional recommended planning and construction practices.

Wetlands

For Site Alternatives 1, 2, and 3 - A JARPA should be completed and submitted for coordination with the USACE under Section 10 of the RHA and Sections 404 and 401 of the CWA, the WDOE and locally affected governments.

For Site Alternative 4 - The proposed project would require review and approval under the state of Oregon Removal Fill Law (ORS 196.800 through 196.990), Section 10 of the RHA and Sections 404 and 401 of the CWA. The OSL, the DLCD and the USACE have designed a streamlined process for reviewing permit applications for fill and removal permits. Their joint permit form is submitted after the local county planning department has reviewed and signed it.

Floodplains

Site Alternatives 2 and 4 appear to be within a base flood plain. The lessor must ensure compliance with the requirements of the SFO as it pertains to base floodplains, and be consistent with Executive Order 11988.

Coastal Zone Management

For Site Alternatives 1, 2 and 3 - The Washington State coastal program's federal consistency coordinator should be consulted regarding review under the WDOE CZMP application process.

For Site Alternative 4 - The Oregon State coastal program's federal consistency coordinator should be consulted regarding review under the OCMP application process.

Agricultural Resources

For Site Alternative 4 - Advance notification of the schedule for proposed in-water activities should be provided to the Hatfield Marine Science Center's Molluscan Broodstock Program, so that necessary changes, such as the frequency of water filter monitoring and replacement, could be undertaken by the Program during this period.

Hazardous Materials

For Sites 1, 2, 3, and 4 - implement recommendations within a Phase I Environmental Site Assessment accepted by NOAA; comply with state and federal RCRA hazardous waste generation and disposal, and hazardous materials use and storage notification requirements; implement an appropriate soil/sediment handling and disposal approach; implement an asbestos demolition survey and abatement plan for

proposed building demolitions and/or renovations; implement a lead-based paint demolition survey and abatement plan for the proposed building demolitions and/or renovations.

For Site Alternatives 2 and 3 – Prepare a hazardous materials closure plan to address the storage of hazardous materials at the site, including any existing aboveground storage tanks (ASTs), and obtain approval of this plan by the WDOE; develop an appropriate hazardous materials storage and management plan, in compliance with WDOE Tier II Reporting (if applicable).

For Site Alternatives 2, 3, and 4 – comply with 40 CFR Part 112, regulating petroleum-storage tanks and mandating preparation of a Spill Prevention, Control, and Countermeasures Plan, if applicable.

For Site Alternative 4 - comply with local, state and federal regulations and proper standards of care during removal of any hazardous materials prior to demolition, transfer of such materials to another location, and/or disposal of such materials, emptying, cleaning and removal of ASTs, and disconnection and removal of the diesel generator; develop an appropriate hazardous materials business plan in compliance with local and state requirements.

FINDING OF NO SIGNIFICANT IMPACT

The Council on Environmental Quality (CEQ) Regulations state that the determination of significance using an analysis of effects requires examination of both context and intensity, and lists ten criteria for intensity (40 CFR 1508.27). In addition, NOAA Administrative Order (NAO) 216-6, Section 6.01(b) 1 – 11, provides eleven criteria, the same ten as the CEQ Regulations and one additional for determining whether the impacts of a proposed action are significant. Each criterion is discussed below with respect to the proposed action and considered individually as well as in combination with the others.

1. Can the proposed action reasonably be expected to cause both beneficial and adverse impacts that overall may result in a significant effect, even if the effect will be beneficial?

No. The EA analyzes the proposed action at four potential sites and the no-action alternative. No other viable alternatives were considered. The EA describes the proposed action and environmental settings, and analyzes associated environmental consequences based on established standards and criteria. Analyses for each of the following topics and resource areas were undertaken: Land Use, Geological Resources, Air Quality, Water Resources, Recreational Resources, Cultural Resources, Flora and Fauna, Essential Fish Habitat, Wetlands and Navigable Waters, Floodplains, Coastal Zone Management, Agricultural Resources, Noise, Transportation, Utilities and Solid Waste, Visual and Aesthetic Resources, Hazardous Materials, Socioeconomics, and Cumulative Impacts.

The EA characterizes each environmental impact and cites mitigation measures to reduce anticipated impacts to a less-than-significant level. A summary of mitigation measures is provided within each document and are repeated in this FONSI document.

2. Can the proposed action reasonably be expected to significantly affect public health or safety?

No. Public health and safety effects are not expected to be significant. Any construction activities have the potential to adversely affect public health and safety (e.g., noise and dust); however, in this case these effects are not anticipated to be significant if the mitigation measures recommended in the EA are implemented.

3. Can the proposed action reasonably be expected to result in significant impacts to unique characteristics of the geographic area, such as proximity to historic or cultural resources, park lands, prime farmlands, wetlands, wild and scenic rivers, or ecologically critical areas?

No. No known historic, archaeological or cultural resources were identified on any of the site alternatives; however it is possible that deeply buried, intact archaeological deposits may be present below the artificial fill at each of the sites. Site Alternative 2 is considered to have a moderate-high probability of buried cultural resources, due to an "Indian Village" being depicted on a historic map of the area. The other Site Alternatives are considered to have a moderate probability of buried cultural resources. It is considered that the proposed mitigation measures relating to archaeological resources will mean that the proposed action is not expected to result in significant impacts to historic and cultural resources.

None of the four site alternatives are in proximity to park lands, prime farmlands or wild and scenic rivers. The project area is not within and/or does not contain any environmentally sensitive habitats (ESH) or other ecologically critical areas; however, essential fish habitat is present in potentially affected areas. With the implementation of suggested mitigation measures, construction and operation of the project would not result in any significant direct or indirect effects to essential fish habitat.

4. Are the proposed action's effects on the quality of the human environment likely to be highly controversial?

No. The proposed action involves lease of a site for use as NOAA's MOC-P Homeport. The chosen site would be developed by the lessor to meet NOAA's requirements, including in-water structures and land-based facilities. Each site contains existing pier or waterfront structures and similar maritime activities.

This EA analyzes the effects of proposed action on the human environment. A draft of this document was circulated and made available for review and comment by interested members of the public and government agencies. NOAA accepted comments on the draft during an formal 30-day public comment period beginning June 10, 2009, and ending July 10, 2009. No highly controversial topics were raised during the comment period.

5. Are the proposed action's effects on the human environment likely to be highly uncertain or involve unique or unknown risks?

No. The anticipated effects of the proposed action on the human environment are evaluated the EA for specific locations based on conceptual plans and worst-case conditions. There is a low level of uncertainty in these anticipated effects because final design details have not been prepared by the selected offeror. However, while effects may occur, mitigation measures were recommended that would eliminate the potential for highly uncertain effects and unique or unknown risks.

6. Can the proposed action reasonably be expected to establish a precedent for future actions with significant effects or represent a decision in principle about a future consideration?

No. The proposed action is consistent with applicable regulatory requirements. The acceptance of facilities at a selected site is contingent upon the lessor meeting all requirements within the DOC Solicitation for Offers (SFO), including regulatory permits and approvals. No precedents would

result for future actions with significant effects or a decision in principle about a future consideration.

7. Is the proposed action related to other actions that when considered together will have individually insignificant but cumulatively significant impacts?

No. The proposed action is not reliant upon or connected to other actions, nor is it relied upon for the occurrence of other actions. For each of the subject areas analyzed in the EA, the contribution of the proposed project to a cumulatively significant impact is not considerable, provided the recommended mitigation measures are implemented. Therefore, the proposed action will not result in a significant cumulative impact to the human environment.

8. Can the proposed action reasonably be expected to adversely affect districts, sites, highways, structures, or objects listed in or eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places or may cause loss or destruction of significant scientific, cultural, or historical resources?

No. No known historic, archaeological or cultural resources were identified during site surveys at each site alternatives; however it is possible that deeply buried, intact archaeological deposits may be present below the artificial fill present at each site alternative. Should disturbance below the depth of existing fill be necessary, recommended mitigation measures relating to archaeological resource management are expected to result the identification and avoidance of significant historic or cultural resources.

9. Can the proposed action reasonably be expected to have a significant impact on endangered or threatened species, or their critical habitat as defined under the Endangered Species Act of 1973?

No. Although it is possible that threatened and endangered species may be present on or near each of the four site alternatives, the proposed action is not expected to have a significant effect on such species, nor adversely affect the continued existence of such species, provided that recommended mitigation measures are implemented.

10. Can the proposed action reasonably be expected to threaten a violation of Federal, state, or local law or requirements imposed for environmental protection?

The effect of the proposed action on the human environment has been analyzed relative to applicable Federal, state and local environmental laws or regulations. No regulatory violations or other significant environmental effects are expected to result provided that mitigation measures recommended in the EA are implemented.

11. Can the proposed action reasonably be expected to result in the introduction or spread of a non-indigenous species?

No. No transport, release, propagation or spread of non-indigenous species is associated with the proposed action. NOAA policies to prevent the introduction of non-indigenous species due to the release of bulge water or other opportunities for transport will continue to be followed.

DETERMINATION

In view of the information presented in this document and the analysis contained in the supporting Environmental Assessment prepared for the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration Marine Operations Center – Pacific Homeport Site Alternatives, it is hereby determined that the undertaking of

the proposed action will not significantly impact the quality of the human environment. In addition, all beneficial and adverse impacts of the proposed action have been addressed to reach the conclusion of no significant impacts. Accordingly, preparation of an environmental impact statement for this action is not necessary.

William F. Broglie
NOAA Chief Administrative Officer

7/29/2009
Date