

**DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE
DEPARTMENT OF THE ARMY**

**FINDING OF NO SIGNIFICANT IMPACT (FNSI) FOR DECOMMISSIONING AND
DISMANTLING OF STURGIS AND MH-1A**

Pursuant to the Council on Environmental Quality regulations, 40 *Code of Federal Regulations* (C.F.R.) §§ 1500-1508, implementing procedural provisions of the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) and the provisions of 32 C.F.R. § 651, the United States Army Corps of Engineers (USACE) gives notice that an Environmental Assessment (EA) and Finding of No Significant Impact (FNSI) have been prepared for the decommissioning and dismantling of the vessel STURGIS and associated mobile high power nuclear plant MH-1A (hereafter referred to as STURGIS), which is currently moored at the Maritime Administration (MARAD) James River Reserve Fleet (JRRF), Ft. Eustis, Virginia and an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) is not being prepared.

Proposed Action:

STURGIS has been inactive, and the onboard MH-1A reactor has been in long-term Safe Storage (SAFSTOR), as a monitored deactivated defueled nuclear plant, for over 35 years. The USACE has no anticipated current or future needs for the vessel or onboard reactor.

The Proposed Action would be to award a decommissioning, dismantling and disposal contract to a domestic company that is technically capable of dismantling a vessel with a nuclear reactor onboard.

The purpose of the Proposed Action is to reduce residual radioactivity associated with the MH-1A to levels that allow release of STURGIS for dismantlement, and termination of the Army Reactor Office permit. All wastes will be segregated and disposed of at licensed/permitted facilities and remaining materials will be recycled (e.g., steel). The Proposed Action is needed now to reduce costs associated with maintaining STURGIS and meet the USACE mission objectives to decommission their nuclear reactors and terminate their long term storage permits.

Existing Conditions:

JRRF is located on the James River in Ft. Eustis, Virginia, and hosts moored ships, all of which are within the MARAD inventory and designated for disposal. JRRF is the oldest National Defense Reserve Fleet site, having begun operations during World War I.

Alternatives Analyzed: The Proposed Action may be implemented at private sector facilities located in one of four alternative locations (1) Hampton Roads Metropolitan Area, VA; (2) Baltimore, MD; (3) Charleston, SC; and (4) Galveston, TX. If the Charleston, SC, or Galveston, TX, Alternative is selected, then facilities at Brownsville, TX or Baltimore, MD would be used to complete the vessel dismantling. The EA analyzes four Proposed Action Alternatives and the No-Action Alternative.

The project sites, at JRRF and at the four alternative locations, are located in developed areas along the waterfront and have restricted access. If the USACE decides to implement the

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Proposed Action, no construction of new facilities would be required. Moreover, no dredging would be required. The vessel is non-operational (no propeller rotation or water intakes/discharges) and would require the use of several assist tug boats for transfer to the dismantling/decommissioning site(s).

The towing would meet the requirements for safety, navigation, environmental, and other safeguards. All recycling/dismantling activities would be conducted in compliance with applicable Federal and state environmental laws.

If the Government is unable to award a contract, the No-Action alternative would result by default. The No-Action alternative includes continuous berthing of STURGIS at JRRF and USACE's continued environmental liabilities and costs associated with continuing to maintain the vessel in a safe storage condition. The No-Action alternative does not meet the USACE's mission objectives and may result in future significant unplanned and unbudgeted expense.

Environmental Effects: The EA presents a review and analysis of the potential environmental impacts associated with the four Proposed Action Alternative locations, as well as the No-Action Alternative. Impacts to relevant resources that were evaluated include cultural, water, biological, air quality, waste management, and health and safety. The Proposed Action would not adversely affect these resources other than the vessel itself which is eligible for listing on the National Register of Historic Places (NRHP). A Memorandum of Agreement (MOA) with the VA DHR will establish responsibilities for the USACE to complete prior to moving forward with the Proposed Action. USACE has proposed the following mitigation measures to the VA DHR as part of the MOA:

- A. The Baltimore District shall prepare an electronic repository that incorporates all of the available documentation regarding the history and significance of the STURGIS barge. The documentation shall emphasize the nature of the electrical power generation capabilities of the STURGIS during its 10 years of service in the Panama Canal Zone, and will also address the origins of the vessel as a World War II -era Liberty Ship and its post- operational "mothballed" status after its retirement from the Panama Canal Zone. This documentation will be suitable for dissemination to the general interested public with the goal of creating a better understanding of the history of the STURGIS barge. This documentation will include information obtained from the U.S. Army Corps of Engineer's Office of History, including motion picture film, photographs, and documents, as appropriate.
- B. The Baltimore District shall provide the Virginia SHPO and the other consulting parties to this MOA with an opportunity to review and comment on the electronic repository and shall take the Virginia SHPO's and consulting parties' comments into account in developing the final public interpretation mechanism.
- C. The Baltimore District shall complete the documentation within two years of initiating the treatment and mitigation measures stipulated in this MOA.

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- D. The Baltimore District shall provide the Virginia SHPO and other interested parties, and the general public with access to the electronic repository.

This EA demonstrated that implementation of any one of the Proposed Action Alternatives would result in no significant impacts to human health or the environment.

Finding: Based on information gathered and analyzed within the EA, the Department of the Army finds that implementing the Proposed Action will not significantly impact the quality of the natural or human environment; therefore, an Environmental Impact Statement is not required. The EA addressing this action may be obtained by interested parties by contacting Ms. Brenda Barber at (410) 962-0030.

Date

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District Engineer
By Direction