lead SEAWOLF submarine (SSN 21) to conduct preacceptance trial operations from piers 32 and 33 at the SUBASE. At that time, no proposal was made concerning a home port for SEAWOLF Class submarines.

In 1994, President Clinton announced SUBASE New London as the preferred home port for SEAWOLF submarines. This preferred homeporting announcement modified the initial proposed action such that the NEPA process had to be re-initiated. A notice of intent was published in the Federal Register in June 1994, indicating the Navy would prepare a DEIS analyzing the impacts of homeporting SEAWOLF Class submarines at one of three alternative locations: SUBASE New London, Naval Submarine Base Kings Bay, GA, and Naval Station Norfolk, VA. Scoping meetings were held in August 1994 at each alternative home port location.

In February 1995, a Draft
Environmental Impact Statement for
SEAWOLF Homeporting was
distributed to federal, state, and local
agencies and elected officials, special
interest groups, and interested
individuals. Public hearings were held
in each alternative home port location
in March 1995. Oral and written public
comments and Navy responses to those
comments were incorporated into a
Final Environmental Impact Statement
(FEIS) which was distributed to the
public for a review period that ended on
25 September 1995.

The primary consequence of implementing the proposed homeporting action is the effect of the removal of approximately 1.1 million CY of sediment from the Thames River and disposal of that material at the NLDS. Some of the sediment (350,000 CY) within the material to be dredged is moderately contaminated with metals and polyaromatic hydrocarbons (PAHs). These sediments require covering with non-contaminated sediment.

Sediments within the project area were tested to determine suitability for open water disposal. Metals, PAHs, polychlorinated biphenyls (PCBs), and pesticides were tested. Test results indicate that there are varying amounts of metals and PAHs in the sediments. No PCBs or pesticides were detected in any of the sediment samples.

Bioaccumulation studies revealed that channel sediments from pier 17 south to the south end of the SUBASE caused statistically significant bioaccumulation of several PAH compounds, zinc, and lead. None of the sediments tested, however, were significantly toxic to sensitive organisms. These sediments are, therefore, suitable for open water

disposal provided that adequate capping with clean sediment is done.

Channel sediments from the I–95 bridge to the south end of SUBASE did not exhibit any bioaccumulation or toxicity. Therefore, these sediments are suitable for unconfined open water disposal and will be used as capping material for the contaminated sediments of this project. There is more than enough clean sediment to cover the 350,000 CY of contaminated sediment to guarantee the 50 centimeter cap required by the Army Corps of Engineers and the CT Department of Environmental Protection.

Impacts to water quality, air quality, benthic organisms, and aquatic habitat will briefly occur during dredging and disposal activities. These impacts, however, are not considered significant within the context of the project location and with implementation of specific mitigation measures described herein.

Shore facilities and infrastructure impacts associated with SEAWOLF homeporting at the SUBASE will be minimal because the three SEAWOLF submarines will replace existing fast attack submarines as the older submarines are decommissioned. It is projected that by 1999 there will be 17 submarines homeported at the SUBASE, including 2 of the 3 SEAWOLF class submarines, compared to 24 submarines currently homeported there. Consequently, no change or addition in submarine support services, ordnance storage, supply facilities, magnetic signature measurement facilities, or intermediate maintenance facilities will be required at the SUBASE to support SEAWOLF homeporting. The declining submarine loading will allow SEAWOLF personnel and their dependents to occupy existing bachelor and family housing. Personnel support services are adequate to support the SEAWOLF crews. Training facilities already exist at SUBASE. Selection of another home port location would require replication of these facilities. Utility consumption is expected to decline corresponding to a reduction in the total number of submarines homeported at the SUBASE.

Considering all factors, the preferred and selected alternative is homeporting at SUBASE New London. In the narrower context of environmental factors only, the alternative that would incur marginally fewer impacts would be that of homeporting at Naval Station Norfolk where minimal dredging would be required and where dredged material disposal occurs at Craney Island. That alternative was not selected because it would cost substantially more and does

not provide for the operational readiness, training, and synergy of compatible functions provided at SUBASE New London. This conclusion is also supported by the Navy's ability to mitigate impacts at New London to below the level of significance.

Comments Received on the FEIS

Ten comment letters were received following publication of the FEIS. Several of these letters simply indicated the writer's preferences. Others presented substantive comments dealing with mitigation measures, storm effects on the NLDS, and potential alternatives for either homeporting the SEAWOLF or for the disposal of the dredged sediment that the commenters believed had not been adequately addressed in the FEIS.

Studies of major storm events have been conducted at the NLDS. A comparison of bottom topography from 1985 to 1992, a period that included two hurricanes, demonstrated that little, if any, change in topography occurred at the NLDS.

Four alternatives for homeporting or disposal of dredged material were addressed in comment letters: (1) Use of the Naval Undersea Warfare Center (NUWC) New London for SEAWOLF homeporting; (2) in-channel "borrow pit" disposal of dredged sediment; (3) 'washing'' of dredged material to remove contaminates; and (4) sediment dewatering to reduce the overall volume of dredged material requiring disposal. All of these suggested alternatives were specifically addressed in the EIS, with the exception of in-channel borrow pit disposal. The latter is a variation of capping, a process that was thoroughly addressed in the EIS. While addressed in the EIS, none of these suggested alternatives were considered reasonable alternatives and therefore were not discussed in great detail. The comment letters did not identify any substantive environmental information concerning the proposed action or suggested alternatives that had not already been considered during the EIS process. Consequently, as discussed below, it was determined that none of the suggested alternatives warranted additional discussion in the EIS.

The NUWC alternative was discounted as a practicable long-term SEAWOLF home port because of incompatible existing functions and land use and because the facility has been considered for closure as part of the Base Closure and Realignment Act process. In fact, after careful analysis the Department of Defense recommended closure of the NUWC facility at New London except for existing piers. Although Congressional direction for