

**CALIFORNIA COASTAL COMMISSION**

45 FREMONT STREET, SUITE 2000  
SAN FRANCISCO, CA 94105-2219  
VOICE AND TDD (415) 904-5200



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**DATE:** July 18, 2007

**TO:** Coastal Commissioners and Interested Parties

**FROM:** Peter M. Douglas, Executive Director  
Alison Dettmer, Deputy Director, Energy, Ocean Resources and Federal Consistency Division  
Mark Delaplaine, Manager, Energy, Ocean Resources and Federal Consistency Division

**RE:** Negative Determinations Issued by the Executive Director  
[Executive Director decision letters are attached]

<b>PROJECT #:</b>	ND-033-07
<b>APPLICANT:</b>	U.S. Navy
<b>LOCATION:</b>	San Nicolas Island
<b>PROJECT:</b>	Water pipeline replacement
<b>ACTION:</b>	Concur
<b>ACTION DATE:</b>	7/9/2007

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July 9, 2007

Ronald J. Dow  
Director, Environmental Division  
Naval Base Ventura County  
ATTN: Emilie N. Lang  
311 Main Road, Suite 1  
Point Mugu, CA 93042-5033

Subject: Negative Determination ND-033-07 (Water pipeline replacement project at San Nicolas Island, Ventura County)

Dear Mr. Dow:

The Coastal Commission staff has reviewed the above-referenced negative determination. The Navy proposes to replace an existing but deteriorating offshore water pipeline located at the eastern end of San Nicolas Island at Coast Guard Beach. San Nicolas Island, owned and operated by the Navy since the mid-1940s, is located approximately 65 miles south of Point Mugu and is a range and instrumentation test site under the command of Naval Base Ventura County. The Navy currently uses a reverse osmosis water purification system to produce potable water for its island installations. However, at high activity levels potable water demand exceeds the capacity of the reverse osmosis system and periodic barge deliveries of potable water via the offshore water pipeline terminal become necessary. Repairs were made to the pipeline and terminal in 2003 but underwater inspection in 2006 revealed that corrosion to this approximately 15-year-old structure renders it unsuitable for permanent long-term use. Replacement of the pipeline and terminal is required to ensure that the island has a reliable and adequate supply of potable water. The proposed offshore water line would be located parallel to and southeast of the Navy's existing offshore fuel pipeline and north of the existing offshore water pipeline. A flexible hose will extend between the pipeline terminus and a floatation device at the ocean surface to allow transfer of water from a barge to the undersea pipeline. The existing pipeline and terminal would be retained as an emergency back-up facility until the end of its useful life. The four to five week construction period would occur during late September and October 2007.

The Navy proposes to use horizontal directional drilling (HDD) to install the water pipeline, which will consist of 1,355 feet of continuous steel pipe, at a depth beneath the ocean floor of 25 to 30 feet. The upland drilling site is located approximately 20 feet above sea level and the offshore exit point is located in 45 feet of water. The Navy has developed an HDD monitoring plan that establishes monitoring and response criteria to minimize the environmental effects of

this operation on water quality and marine resources. The plan includes a description of HDD operations, provisions for Navy and contractor personnel training, monitoring elements, and drilling fluid spill response and clean-up plans. The HDD monitoring plan is similar to previous plans the Commission has concurred with for the Navy's use of HDD technology in coastal waters (most recently with CD-043-06 for the installation of cables below the seafloor offshore of San Clemente Island, and with ND-006-07 for installation of cables below the floor of San Diego Bay at Naval Base Point Loma).

The upland drilling site is located in a previously-disturbed area approximately 835 feet from elephant seal and sea lion haul-out and breeding/pupping grounds in the island. Given this distance and the scheduling of construction during the fall, the proposed activity will not affect elephant seal or sea lion populations at San Nicolas Island. While there are no known archaeological or paleontological resources within the project area, a Navy archaeologist will inspect all excavated areas during construction and should any resources be discovered, work will be halted until actions are taken to ensure compliance with the National Historic Preservation Act. Construction and operation of the proposed water pipeline will occur on San Nicolas Island and in adjacent offshore waters. As these areas are presently closed to the general public due to military security and public safety reasons, the proposed pipeline will not adversely affect public access or recreation.

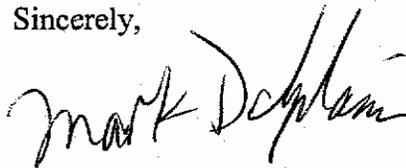
To address the potential coastal zone resource issues resulting from the eventual retirement of the existing and proposed offshore water pipelines, the Navy added the following language to its negative determination after consultation with Commission staff:

*Naval Base Ventura County will conduct a thorough analysis of the feasibility and potential impacts associated with the removal of the water pipeline installed in the marine environment as part of this project when it reaches the end of its useful life. Additional analysis will also be conducted to examine the feasibility and potential impacts associated with the removal of the existing water pipeline when it is no longer serving a viable function as a contingency unit or water transport pipeline. This analysis will be submitted to California Coastal Commission staff upon completion. Naval Base Ventura County acknowledges that if this analysis or other information relative to the performance or removal of the water pipelines in the marine environment indicate an adverse affect on marine water quality, marine habitat, or other coastal uses or resources, the Commission has the authority pursuant to regulations implementing the Coastal Zone Management Act to reopen this negative determination (see 15 CFR § 930.45(b)).*

Based on this added commitment, the Commission staff concludes that the project incorporates measures to address potential coastal zone effects resulting from the abandonment of decommissioned water pipelines in the marine environment offshore of San Nicolas Island.

In conclusion, the Coastal Commission staff agrees that the proposed offshore water pipeline will not adversely affect coastal resources. We therefore concur with your negative determination made pursuant to 15 CFR 930.35 of the NOAA implementing regulations. Please contact Larry Simon at (415) 904-5288 should you have any questions regarding this matter.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Mark Douglas". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, sweeping initial "M".

(for)

PETER M. DOUGLAS  
Executive Director

CCC – South Central Coast District  
California Department of Water Resources  
Governor's Washington, D.C., Office