

**Dungeness National Wildlife Refuge Quarters Replacement
Environmental Assessment
Finding of No Significant Impact (FONSI)**

March 7, 2016

An environmental assessment (EA) was prepared by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (Service) to evaluate management actions and alternatives for replacing the Mellus Cabin housing (quarters) located at Dungeness National Wildlife Refuge (Refuge). This Finding of No Significant Impact (FONSI) documents the Service's decision to implement Alternative B, as it is described in the EA.

Alternatives Considered

Alternative A (Current Management). The Refuge would continue to house volunteers, interns, and/or staff in the deteriorating Mellus Cabin and use associated structures at the cabin's current site under Alternative A. Current structures and utilities at the site include the cabin, volunteer office, garage, well, septic tank and drain field, and electrical and water services. The site is currently located adjacent to the upland forest trail approximately 700 feet up the trail from the toe of the spit, 340 feet from the bluff overlooking the Strait of Juan de Fuca, and 100 feet from the edge of the bluff overlooking the spit. The cabin is currently vacant and not fit for habitation, because repairs are needed to remove rodents and block their re-entry to the cabin, and to replace the decaying roof, before the cabin can be used safely as quarters.

Alternative B (Preferred Alternative). The Mellus Cabin and attached volunteer office would be demolished and the associated septic system would be decommissioned under our preferred alternative. The well, electricity and ATV garage would remain on site. The site and adjacent grassy field would be partially rehabilitated. New refuge quarters—1-2 park model style manufactured structures with space for parking would be established to the east of the Refuge vehicle garage/motor pool in the current refuge administrative area. The proposed new housing would utilize the administrative area's existing septic tank and drain field, and would be connected to existing electrical services near the headquarters office. The quarters would also be connected to the existing water service supplied by Estates Water.

Alternative C. All structures and associated utilities at the Mellus Cabin site would be removed and or decommissioned including the cabin, garage, volunteer office, well, septic system, and electricity under Alternative C. The entire site and adjacent grassy field would be reforested. As a consequence of this alternative, the Refuge would lose facilities that could compromise visitor safety and equipment upkeep. The new refuge quarters would be constructed in the same space and manner as described in Alternative B.

Alternative D. Structures at the Mellus Cabin site would be removed under Alternative D. New quarters—1-2 park model structures, would be established in the wooded area northeast of the Refuge entrance. Tenants would park in the visitor parking area. A new septic and drain field would need to be cleared and constructed, and electrical service would need to be installed from the Refuge office to the new site. The new quarters would be connected to the existing water service supplied by Estates Water.

Alternative E. Structures at the Mellus Cabin site would be removed as described in Alternative C. New quarters would be constructed in the same space and manner as described in Alternative D.

Comparison of Effects Across Alternatives

Alternative A. Effects to hydrology, air quality, and water quality would all be neutral or negligible. There may be a minor long-term negative effect to soil and the nearshore habitat due to the proximity of Mellus Cabin to the bluff and the potential of accelerated erosion due to the continued use of the septic system. The impacts to all habitats and associated species, cultural resources, visitation, public uses, human health, environmental justice, and economics are expected to be neutral. Illegal uses of the refuge, such as closed area and after hours trespassing, collecting plants and other objects, camping, and other activities would not change.

Alternative B. Due to the removal of structures and the decommissioning of on-site septic, the effects to hydrology and nearshore habitats are expected to be positive, but negligible over the long-term. Because of the restoration, a negligible to minor positive effect is expected to native habitat and the forest, birds and amphibians near the site. Because some currently open areas would be restored to forest, there may be a negligible negative effect to pollinators.

No impacts are expected to other species, cultural resources, environmental justice, or economics. And, only negligible effects are expected to visitation, human health, and illegal uses. A long-term minor positive effect is expected for public use, because man-made structures would be removed and replaced with native vegetation. There would be a negligible short-term negative impact to public use during demolition of the Mellus Cabin.

We anticipate this alternative would cost less than alternatives C, D, and E, because it would require less demolition than alternatives C and E, and no clearing of wooded areas as opposed to D and E; the ability to tie into existing septic and electrical utilities in the administrative area would save construction money, and it would require less staff time committed to visitor safety and traffic control during construction, than alternatives D and E.

Alternative C. Under Alternative C, we would not have costs associated with clearing wooded areas like alternatives D and E do. However, the cost of this alternative would be greater than alternative B because it requires full demolition and removal of all facilities and utilities. Because we could tie the new facility into existing septic and electrical utilities at the administrative area, Alternative C would require less staff time to provide safety and traffic control for visitors during construction of new facilities than alternatives D and E. Most effects would be similar to those described under Alternative B, except that the costs to demolish and remove all facilities would be greater.

Alternative D. Because restoration of habitat would be balanced with the destruction of new forested habitat, we would not expect Alternative D to have an overall negative or positive effect on the physical environment. A long-term negligible positive impact is expected to the nearshore habitat due to decommissioning of the Mellus Cabin septic system. Some negligible negative impacts are expected to birds and pollinators due to clearing and construction, with no effects expected to other species.

The impacts to cultural resources, illegal uses of the Refuge, environmental justice and economics are expected to be neutral. Impacts to human health are expected to be negligible. There may be a minor short-term negative impact to visitation due to the construction of facilities adjacent to public access. Impacts to overall public uses are expected to be minor and negative in the short-term due to demolition and construction. Because removal of man-made structures would be balanced by construction of new facilities within the public use area, the long-term effects to public use are expected to be negligible.

We anticipate this alternative would cost more than alternatives B and C due to the need to clear wooded areas for placement of the new quarters, construction of septic facilities, and installation of electrical service. Compared to alternatives B and C, construction activities near the entrance to the Refuge would also create a longer term impact to Refuge visitors and increased staff time devoted to traffic control and safe visitor egress around the site. Alternative D has more negative and less positive effects than Alternatives B and C.

Alternative E. All effects should be similar to those described under Alternative D. We anticipate this alternative would cost more than alternatives B and C due to the need to clear wooded areas for placement of the new quarters, construction of septic facilities, and installation of electrical service. Compared to alternatives B and C, construction activities near the entrance to the Refuge would create a longer term impact to Refuge visitors and staff due to traffic control and safe visitor egress around the site. In addition this alternative requires full demolition of all structures and utilities at the Mellus Cabin site which would add increased costs to the project. Alternative E has more negative and less positive effects than Alternatives B and C.

Public Involvement

The EA was available for a 30-day public review ending February 18, 2016. Clallam County property search was used to provide letters of notice to properties accessed by Holgerson Road. Notice of the EA was provided to the Jamestown S'Klallam Tribe Cultural Resources Program. The Tribe's Cultural Resource Specialist did provide comment which is available in the EA in Appendix A. No other comments were received.

Selection of Management Alternative

Alternative B would have more positive and less negative impacts to visitors, habitat, and wildlife than alternatives D and E; it would cost less than the other action alternatives—C, D, and E, and would allow the Refuge to maintain critical facilities that would be lost in alternatives C and E. Alternative B would also reduce the Refuge's infrastructure adjacent to the bluff, thereby reducing instability of the bluff due to water intrusion from the septic system. Removing these facilities would provide an example to the community of responsible bluff management.

Conclusions

The Service has prepared this Finding of No Significant Impact (FONSI) in compliance with requirements of the National Environmental Policy Act of 1969 (NEPA). This FONSI documents the Service's decision to replace the refuge's current Mellus Cabin quarters, and install 1-2 park model style structures east of the refuge vehicle garage/motor pool.

This FONSI was prepared for an action that would not normally require development of an environmental impact statement. Similar actions have been carried out elsewhere without significantly affecting the quality of the human environment.

Based on review and evaluation of the information contained in the EA, I have determined that implementing Alternative B will not constitute a major Federal action significantly affecting the quality of the human environment within the meaning of section 102(2)(C) of NEPA. Accordingly, preparation of an environmental impact statement for the proposed action is not required.

This FONSI and supporting references are available for public review at Washington Maritime National Wildlife Refuge Complex, 715 Holgerson Road, Sequim, WA 98382. These documents can

also be found on the internet at <http://www.fws.gov/refuge/dungeness/>. Interested and affected parties are being notified of our decision.



Jennifer Brown-Scott, Project Leader
Washington Maritime National Wildlife Refuge Complex



Date

Appendix A:
Comments Received during Public/Agency
Review Period and Service Responses

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS or Service) received comments from the Jamestown S'Klallam Tribe regarding the Environmental Assessment (EA) for Dungeness National Wildlife Refuge Quarters Replacement. A copy of the letter is provided below.



ATTN: Virginia Parks
U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
Cultural Resources Team
Re: Mellus Cabin Removal

January 21, 2016

Ms. Parks,

The Jamestown S'Klallam Tribe has received a request for comments for the removal of the Mellus cabin within the Dungeness National Wildlife Refuge. With respect to cultural resources, the Jamestown S'Klallam Tribe is not aware of any sites that would be impacted by the proposed project. However, should the scope change or if new data is revealed during implementation, please let us know.

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on this project. If you need any additional information, please contact me at 360-681-4638 or dbrownell@jamestowntribe.org.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "David Brownell", is written over a light blue circular background.

David Brownell
Cultural Resources Specialist
Jamestown S'Klallam Tribe