3.10. AESTHETICS AND VISUAL QUALITY

3.10.1. Affected Environment

Visual resources are the natural and manmade features that give a particular environment its aesthetic qualities. In undeveloped areas, landforms, water surfaces, and vegetation are the primary components that characterize the landscape. Manmade elements (such as buildings, fences, piers, and wharves) may also be visible. These may dominate the landscape or be relatively unnoticeable. In developed areas, the natural landscape is more likely to provide a background for more obvious manmade features. The size, form, material, and function of buildings, structures, roadways, and infrastructure generally define the visual character of the built environment. These features form the overall impression of an area or its landscape character that an observer perceives. Attributes used to describe the visual resource value of an area include landscape character, perceived aesthetic value, and uniqueness.

3.10.1.1. EXISTING CONDITIONS

The aesthetics on NAVBASE Kitsap Bangor are typical of facilities and structures used to support military operations. For offsite views of NAVBASE Kitsap Bangor, the base blends well with the surrounding area because much of it is forested and hidden from view and is compatible with the surrounding rural landscape. The prevalent view of NAVBASE Kitsap Bangor is from the west looking east across Hood Canal to the wharves and piers of the waterfront. Views from NAVBASE Kitsap Bangor depend upon location, but include the Olympic Mountains, Hood Canal, and the various facilities on the base.

NAVBASE Kitsap Bangor is an active military base located on the eastern shoreline of Hood Canal. The base topography is characterized by flat-topped ridges on the eastern and southern portions of the base. The shoreline of Hood Canal lies adjacent to steep ravines and hillsides leading to the upper portions of the base. The Olympic Mountains lie to the west and provide a scenic backdrop for the base.

Much of NAVBASE Kitsap Bangor is undeveloped with large stands of coniferous trees. As shown in Table 3.6–1, approximately 68 percent of the base is forested, 27 percent is developed, and 4 percent is brush and shrubland (the forested and brush/shrub categories include wetlands). Many of the views within the base are of forested areas with adjacent development. The aesthetics within the base are typical of office buildings, residences, industrial facilities, and other structures used to support military operations. Common views from the base consist of the Hood Canal waterway in the foreground with the undeveloped forested Toandos Peninsula and Olympic Mountains in the background to the west. A military security buffer zone (closed to public access) is located across Hood Canal on Toandos Peninsula (Figure 3.8–1). Views to the east are largely obscured by forest and the 400-foot (120-meter) ridge of the Kitsap Peninsula.

Development along the waterfront is centered on support structures for naval vessels. The waterfront area of the base includes structural facilities, such as piers, wharves, and cranes. In addition, military submarines and other support craft traversing Hood Canal use these piers and wharves for berthing.

Although physical access to the base and associated facilities is restricted from the general public, the public has visual access to a large area along the waterfront from a distance. The principal public viewpoints of NAVBASE Kitsap Bangor available to the general public are from boats on Hood Canal and from the southern shore of Toandos Peninsula where public access is allowed. The view of the Bangor waterfront from the water where the public can see the base consists of open water in the foreground, industrial waterfront-type facilities such as piers and wharves in the middle ground, and forested hillsides in the background. Most of the base waterfront is enclosed within a floating barrier consisting of metal pontoons approximately 18 feet (5 meters) apart, topped by a metal mesh screen extending approximately 14 feet (4 meters) above the water surface. This barrier affects the appearance of the open-water areas along the base shoreline. Recreational boaters are allowed to pass by the base but are not allowed to stop or slow down. Yellow buoy markers about 0.5 mile (0.8 kilometer) offshore have been installed to define military water boundaries. Views from the waterside include naval vessels that traverse the area and other commercial vessels and private boats.

From the landside (north, west, and south), offsite views of NAVBASE Kitsap Bangor are mostly forested, similar to and blending with the surrounding rural landscape. Off-base views of the developed areas on base are largely concealed by terrain and vegetation. Rural residential areas on the north and south end of the base have oblique views to the Bangor waterfront. Some existing structures (such as piers and wharves) may be visible. Specifically, some properties along the shore in Vinland have line-of-sight to the existing MSF wharf. Also, large naval vessels operating on Hood Canal are fairly prominent depending on the viewer's distance and the vegetation on particular private parcels.

The Bangor waterfront operates during the evening hours, and the wharves, piers, and related upland facilities are lighted. Thus, the light from the waterfront area is visible from a distance at night, such as from locations on the Toandos Peninsula, approximately 1.5 miles (2.4 kilometers) away. Receptor locations specific to the proposed project locations are discussed in the following sections.

3.10.1.1.1. AESTHETICS AT THE LWI PROJECT SITES

Aesthetics at the LWI project sites are typical of the Bangor waterfront. The south LWI project site is located in the midst of the industrial waterfront and is set back between current structures and the surrounding landscape. The north LWI project site is located at the north end of the industrial waterfront. As discussed above, lighting on facilities and piers in the vicinity of the LWI project sites is visible from surrounding locations in Hood Canal and the opposite shore at nighttime. However, brightness is attenuated by distance to viewing locations. The closest populated area is Thorndyke Bay, located approximately 3.3 miles (5.3 kilometers) north of the proposed north LWI project site. Some facilities extend offshore and have direct line of sight with a few residential parcels to the north of the base; however, these residences do not have line-of-sight to the LWI project sites due to intervening land and topography. Indirect light (i.e., a lightened night sky) from the waterfront area may also be visible at adjacent properties located north and west of the base.

3.10.1.1.2. AESTHETICS AT THE SPE PROJECT SITE

Aesthetics at the SPE project site are also typical of the Bangor waterfront. The SPE project site is proposed to extend from the existing portion of the Service Pier just north of where the land juts out slightly (known as Carlson Spit). The SPE project site is in line with and extends to the west slightly more than existing structures. Lighting on the facilities and piers in the vicinity of the SPE project site is visible from surrounding locations in Hood Canal and the opposite shore at nighttime. However, brightness is attenuated by distance to viewing locations. Some of the SPE's proposed facilities extend offshore and have direct line of sight with a few residential parcels to the south of the base (the new pier crane and the Pier Services and Compressor Building); however, these residences are approximately 0.6 mile (1.0 kilometer) from the SPE project site with intervening land, vegetation, and topography in the view. Indirect light (i.e., a lightened night sky) from the waterfront area may also be visible at adjacent properties located south of the base.

3.10.1.2. CURRENT REQUIREMENTS AND PRACTICES

There are no specific laws and regulations for aesthetic resources, although the *TRIDENT Support Site Master Plan* for the base contains policies that relate to visual resources (TRIDENT Joint Venture 1975). The plan contains long-range development goals and planning objectives that are useful for aesthetics. One of the long-range goals was to "…provide for an aesthetically pleasing physical working and living environment without compromising the efficient and economic accomplishment of assigned missions." This goal is further outlined in the plan's physical form objectives:

- Coordinate the development of facilities, exterior spaces, and landscaping to present a coherently organized image to residents, employees, and visitors;
- Maximize the use of views and site vistas in order to integrate site features and assets into the visual environment; and
- Develop a series of landscaped spaces, as a visual focus and functional relief for support site activities, in the residential areas, as well as in the community, personnel support, and administration areas.

Section 3.13 discusses project-associated consultations with the SHPO. The Navy consulted with the SHPO regarding the potential effect of the LWI and SPE projects on the visual context and aesthetic environment of the waterfront area in relation to historical properties (discussed in Section 3.13) and American Indian resources (discussed in Section 3.14).

3.10.2. Environmental Consequences

3.10.2.1. APPROACH TO ANALYSIS

The evaluation of impacts on visual resources considers the degree of visible change that a proposed action may cause, taking into account the value and sensitivity of the visual environment. An impact on aesthetics would occur if the changes in the existing environment were visually incompatible with surrounding areas, affected a large number of viewers, or modified the visual character of an area that contributes to the public's appreciation of the environment.

Views of the LWI and SPE project sites include those from off base, particularly Hood Canal and, to a lesser extent, those from the base itself, such as the KB Dock, the existing Service Pier, administrative and storage facilities, other maintenance and pier facilities, and the adjacent upland vicinity.

3.10.2.2. LWI PROJECT ALTERNATIVES

3.10.2.2.1. LWI ALTERNATIVE 1: NO ACTION

Under the No Action Alternative, the LWIs would not be built and overall operations would not change from current levels. Therefore, there would be no impacts on visual resources.

3.10.2.2.2. LWI ALTERNATIVE 2: PILE-SUPPORTED PIER

Overall, due to limited visual access, distance from public viewpoints, and the current modified visual context, LWI Alternative 2 would have little impact on the visual context and aesthetic environment outside of NAVBASE Kitsap Bangor during construction or operation.

CONSTRUCTION

Construction and related activities tend to cause visual disturbance to the landscape because of the changing nature of the views as construction proceeds. Visual clutter is caused by heavy construction equipment such as barges, cranes (including up to 80 days of pile driving), backhoes, etc., and stockpiled materials, which may be moved around a construction site. However, these activities are temporary, and impacts on visual character are also temporary, lasting only for the duration of construction (up to 2 years).

The project site along the waterfront is mostly shielded from onshore, close-in views by topography and to the east by the base itself. To the west, the Naval Restricted Area creates a buffer and separates viewers from the base waterfront by at least a half mile (0.8 kilometer), which would reduce the apparent visual scale of the construction sites. The closest off-base viewing locations on land are to the west along the Toandos Peninsula in Jefferson County, approximately 1.5 miles (2.4 kilometers) from the project site. The closest populated area is Thorndyke Bay, approximately 3.3 miles (5.3 kilometers) northwest of the north LWI project site. There are no publicly accessible places on land from which to view the project sites close up. Facilities under construction and construction equipment would be visible from a distance, resulting in a minor, temporary impact on visual character at those distant viewing locations.

OPERATION/LONG-TERM IMPACTS

The LWI would be consistent with the Bangor industrial waterfront and therefore would be considered compatible with the existing visual character. The surrounding visual context is already modified by manmade features such as Delta Pier, Marginal Wharf, and EHW-1, and the LWI would conform to the existing scale, lighting, and distribution of sites along the waterfront. Also, because of distance and intervening features, visibility of the LWI from off-base land areas would be limited.

The on-land towers would conform visually to other development and lighting along the waterfront. Lighting would increase slightly (at abutment only), but would be consistent with the existing industrial lighting characteristics of the Bangor waterfront and would have minimal impact on the overall viewshed.

The closest viewing locations would be on Hood Canal and the opposite shore in Jefferson County, as defined in the preceding section. Because the LWI, including the abutments and PSBs would conform visually to other development along the waterfront, they would not substantially change the visual character of the existing setting but would increase the industrial appearance of the waterfront. Vessels passing by would have closer, more direct views of the LWI project sites than from on-land sites; however, the visual character of the LWI would be similar to other industrial development at the base, resulting in a minimal visual impact.

Overall, LWI Alternative 2's visual compatibility, distance from populated areas, and the intervening features between populated areas would result in a minimal visual impact.

3.10.2.2.3. LWI ALTERNATIVE 3: PSB MODIFICATIONS (PREFERRED)

The impacts of LWI Alternative 3 would be similar to those of Alternative 2 since visual access is limited and would have little impact on the visual context and aesthetic environment outside of NAVBASE Kitsap Bangor during construction or operation.

LWI Alternative 3 would differ from Alternative 2 because there would be fewer barge trips, 50 fewer days of pile driving (no more than 30 days for Alternative 3 compared to up to 80 days for Alternative 2, and the PSB system would be greater in length at the project sites. No pile-supported pier would be constructed for this alternative, although Alternative 3 would include three observation posts that Alternative 2 would not have.

CONSTRUCTION

Visual impacts from construction would be less than for LWI Alternative 2, as the construction of the PSBs would not disturb any more land or vegetation than described for Alternative 2, and there would be fewer barge trips to/from the project sites, fewer piles, and no pile-supported pier would be constructed.

OPERATION/LONG-TERM IMPACTS

The PSB modifications would be the same design as the existing PSBs and would conform visually to other development along the waterfront; therefore, there would not be a substantial change in the visual character of the existing setting. There would be a minimal increase in the industrial appearance (including lighting) of the waterfront, but this would be less than for Alternative 2, because there would be no pier structure. The on-land towers would conform visually to other development and lighting along the waterfront. The lighting (abutments only) levels would be consistent with the existing industrial lighting characteristics of the Bangor waterfront and would have minimal impact on the viewshed. Alternative 3 would have three observations posts that Alternative 2 would not have, but these posts would be smaller than Alternative 2's piers and compatible with other industrial structures on this section of the waterfront.

Vessels passing by would have closer, more direct views of the LWI structures; however, the visual character of the PSBs and abutments would be similar to other land-based viewpoints and would not be visually distinct.

3.10.2.2.4. SUMMARY OF LWI IMPACTS

Impacts on aesthetics associated with the construction and operation phases of the LWI project alternatives, along with mitigation and consultation and permit status, are summarized in Table 3.10–1.

Table 3.10–1. Summary of LWI Impacts on Aesthetics

Alternative	Environmental Impacts on Aesthetics
LWI Alternative 1: No Action	No impact.
LWI Alternative 2: Pile-Supported Pier	*Construction:* Temporary disturbance of existing visual landscape during construction. *Operation/Long-term Impacts:* Minimal increase in the appearance of the industrial facilities at the waterfront over the long term.
LWI Alternative 3: PSB Modifications (Preferred)	*Construction:* Temporary disturbance of existing visual landscape during construction (less than for Alternative 2). *Operation/Long-term Impacts:* Minimal increase in industrial appearance of the waterfront over the long term (lesser impact than for Alternative 2 due to no pier structure and fewer lighting fixtures).
Mitigation: Because construction of the LWI would not affect aesthetics significantly, mitigation measures are not necessary.	
Consultation and Permit Status: The Navy consulted with the SHPO on the potential effect of the LWI projects on the visual context and aesthetic environment of the waterfront area in relation to historical properties (described in Section 3.13) and American Indian resources (described in Section 3.14). No other consultations or permits are required.	

SHPO = State Historic Preservation Officer

3.10.2.3. SPE PROJECT ALTERNATIVES

3.10.2.3.1. SPE ALTERNATIVE 1: NO ACTION

Under the No Action Alternative, the SPE would not be built and overall operations would not change from current levels. Therefore, there would be no impacts on the visual resources.

3.10.2.3.2. SPE ALTERNATIVE 2: SHORT PIER (PREFERRED)

Overall, due to limited visual access, distance from public viewpoints, and the current modified visual context, SPE Alternative 2 would have little impact on the visual context and aesthetic environment outside of NAVBASE Kitsap Bangor during construction of SPE Alternative 2.

CONSTRUCTION

Construction and related activities tend to cause visual disturbance to the landscape because of the changing nature of the views as construction proceeds. Visual clutter is caused by heavy construction equipment such as barges, cranes, backhoes, and stockpiled materials, which may be moved around a construction site. However, these activities are temporary, and impacts on visual character are also temporary, lasting only for the duration of construction (up to 2 years).

The project site along the waterfront would be mostly shielded from onshore, close-in views by topography and to the east by the base itself. To the west, the Naval Restricted Area creates a buffer and separates viewers from the waterfront by at least 0.19 mile (0.31 kilometer) to the SPE project site, which reduces the apparent visual scale of construction equipment. The closest off-base viewing locations on land are approximately 1.5 miles (2.4 kilometers) from the SPE project site on the opposite side of Hood Canal in Jefferson County, and the northernmost edge of Olympic View approximately 0.6 mile (1.0 kilometer) south of the SPE project site (view partially obstructed by vegetation and land). There are no publicly accessible places on land from which to view the project sites close-up.

The Proposed Action would result in clearing approximately 7 acres (2.8 hectares) of vegetation in the upland areas to accommodate a parking lot and other facilities. The parking lot would be approximately 0.2 mile (0.3 kilometer) east of the coastline and surrounded by fairly dense vegetation which acts as a buffer and would significantly reduce the visual impact. The proposed Waterfront Ship Support Building would be constructed on an existing parking lot approximately 0.04 mile (0.06 kilometer) east of the coastline. The proposed Waterfront Ship Support Building would be sited between existing facilities that support the pier services and ship maintenance and behind an existing pier structure. This building would not be visible from offbase except from boats on Hood Canal. It would be partially hidden by other structures and vegetation and would be consistent in appearance with nearby structures. The existing PSBs would be relocated to attach to the end of the SPE; this would not result in a change in the overall visual aesthetic of this feature. Facilities under construction and construction equipment would be visible from the locations identified above, resulting in a minor, temporary (up to 2 years) impact on visual character at those locations.

OPERATION/LONG-TERM IMPACTS

The SPE would be consistent with the Bangor industrial waterfront and therefore would be considered compatible with the existing visual character. The surrounding visual context is already modified by manmade features such as the KB Dock, the existing Service Pier, the Carderock Pier, and other maintenance facilities that support the pier services and ship maintenance; and the SPE would conform to the existing scale, lighting, and distribution of sites along the waterfront. Also, because of distance and intervening features, visibility of the SPE from off-base land areas would be limited. As described in the preceding section, the closest viewing locations are Hood Canal outside the Naval Restricted Area, the community of Olympic View, and the opposite shore in Jefferson County. Because the SPE structure and PSBs would conform visually to other development along the waterfront, the SPE and its support facilities would not substantially change the visual character of the existing setting but would increase the industrial appearance (including lighting) of the waterfront. Lighting would increase, but would be consistent with the existing industrial lighting characteristics of the Bangor waterfront and would have minimal impact on the overall viewshed.

Vessels passing by would have closer, more direct views of the SPE project sites; however, the visual character of the SPE would be similar to other industrial development of the base.

Overall, SPE Alternative 2's visual compatibility, distance from populated areas, and the intervening features between populated areas would result in a minimal impact.

3.10.2.3.3. SPE ALTERNATIVE 3: LONG PIER

Similar to SPE Alternative 2, SPE Alternative 3 would have little impact on the visual context and aesthetic environment outside of NAVBASE Kitsap Bangor. This alternative differs from SPE Alternative 2 in that the pier structure would be longer to accommodate an in-line configuration for two submarines. SPE Alternative 3 would have the same upland development as SPE Alternative 2, including the parking lot, Waterfront Ship Support Building, and roadway improvements.

CONSTRUCTION

The impact of SPE Alternative 3 on visual resources would be greater than described for SPE Alternative 2 because the pier structure would be longer (975 feet [297 meters] for Alternative 3 versus 540 feet [165 meters] for Alternative 2). Nevertheless, Alternative 3 would also result in a minimal increase in industrial appearance (including lighting) of the waterfront, based on a minor adverse change to the visual appearance with low viewer response to this change.

Similar to SPE Alternative 2, construction and related activities would be temporary and impacts on visual character also would be temporary, lasting only for the duration of construction (maximum of 205 days of pile driving as compared to 161 days for SPE Alternative 2, up to 2 years total of construction activities). The Alternative 3 project site would be the same as for Alternative 2, but construction would extend at least an additional 435 feet (133 meters) due to the longer pier.

OPERATION/LONG-TERM IMPACTS

The SPE Alternative 3 pier structure would extend an additional 435 feet (133 meters) than SPE Alternative 2 and could be viewed from the most western point of Olympic View located south of the base. Although the SPE would conform visually to other development along the waterfront, it would still impact the visual character from the Olympic View viewpoint. There would be a minimal impact on the view from Olympic View as it is buffered by a distance of approximately 0.6 mile (1.0 kilometer) and the partially developed portion of land that juts out slightly between Olympic View and the pier structure. There would be a minimal increase in industrial appearance (including lighting) of the waterfront over the long term, which would present a greater impact than Alternative 2 due to the larger SPE structure and PSB relocation. The increase in lighting would be greater than for Alternative 2 due to the longer pier structure, but would be consistent with the existing industrial lighting characteristics of the Bangor waterfront and would have minimal impact on the overall viewshed.

Vessels passing by would have closer, somewhat more direct views of Alternative 2; however, the visual character would be similar to other industrial development of the base.

3.10.2.3.4. SUMMARY OF SPE IMPACTS

Impacts on aesthetics associated with the construction and operation phases of the SPE project alternatives, along with mitigation and consultation and permit status, are summarized in Table 3.10–2.

Table 3.10–2. Summary of SPE Impacts on Aesthetics

Alternative	Environmental Impacts on Aesthetics
SPE Alternative 1: No Action	No impact.
SPE Alternative 2: Short Pier (Preferred)	*Construction:* Temporary (up to 2 years) disturbance of existing visual landscape during construction. *Operation/Long-term Impacts:* Minimal increase in industrial appearance (including lighting) of the waterfront over the long term (50-year project lifespan).
SPE Alternative 3: Long Pier	*Construction:* Temporary (up to 2 years) disturbance of existing visual landscape during construction (moderately less than Alternative 2). *Operation/Long-term Impacts:* Minimal increase in industrial appearance (including lighting) of the waterfront over the long term (50-year project lifespan; greater impact than for Alternative 2 due to longer SPE structure and additional lighting fixtures). Minimal impact to the view from the most western point of Olympic View when viewing north (buffered by distance and landscape).
Mitigation: Because construction of the SPE would not affect aesthetics significantly, mitigation measures are not necessary.	
Consultation and Permit Status: The Navy consulted with the SHPO regarding the potential effect of the SPE project on the visual context and aesthetic environment of the waterfront area in relation to historical properties (described in Section 3.13) and American Indian resources (described in Section 3.14). No other consultations or permits are required.	

SHPO = State Historic Preservation Officer

3.10.2.4. COMBINED IMPACTS OF LWI AND SPE PROJECTS

LWI Alternative 2 would contribute new construction of a pile-supported pier, lighting towers, shoreline abutments, and temporary visual clutter associated with construction. LWI Alternative 3 would contribute additional PSB units, on-land towers, shoreline abutments, observation posts, and temporary visual clutter associated with construction. SPE Alternative 2 would contribute new construction of a short pier, parking lot, Pier Services and Compressor Building, Waterfront Ship Support Building, additional lighting fixtures, roadway improvements, and temporary visual clutter from construction. SPE Alternative 3 would make a greater contribution to the combined impacts than SPE Alternative 2 with the construction of a long pier that would extend an additional 435 feet (133 meters).

Combined, the LWI and SPE project impacts on visual aesthetics would increase the overall industrial appearance and the visual presence of the waterfront industrial area on areas within the direct vicinity of the project sites. However, the new facilities would be visually compatible by conforming to match the scale, lighting, and character of existing manmade features surrounding the project sites.

Combined impacts would be limited by being consistent with the overall existing character and not expanding beyond the existing boundaries of the NAVBASE Kitsap Bangor waterfront area. There would be a minimal combined visual impact from the increase in lighting to offshore areas of Hood Canal and neighboring land parcels due to buffering from distance, vegetation, landforms, and topography around the project site locations.

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