

Draft to be released Nov. 20

Residents given extra 45 days to review statement

By Amritha Alladi

Pacific Daily News

aalladi@guampdn.com

Guam residents will have more time to review the draft Environmental Impact Statement that will detail the environmental repercussions of the military buildup on Guam. The draft is scheduled to be released Nov. 20.

Earlier this week, Guam officials — Sens. Judith Guthertz and Rory Respicio, Gov. Felix Camacho and Guam Delegate Madeleine Bordallo — had asked military officials to extend the 45-day period assigned for the public review and comment period for the draft.

Responding to their request, U.S. Navy Secretary Ray Mabus told Bordallo during a meeting in Washington, D.C., on Wednesday that Deputy Secretary of Defense William Lynn had approved an extension of 45 days, a press release issued from the Joint Guam Program Office stated.

In a letter to Maj. Gen. David Bice of the U.S. Marine Corps, Camacho had asked for an extension of 75 days, but the 45-day extension “balances the need for additional time to review a complex document with the Department’s requirement to complete the military buildup on Guam on a tight schedule,” the press release stated.

Camacho and members of the Guam Legislature were notified of the extension by acting Assistant Secretary of the Navy for Installations and Environment Roger Natsuhara, who is visiting Guam this week.

‘Scope, complexity and magnitude’

“We ... agree that the scope, complexity and magnitude of the buildup necessitates providing ample time for review of the DEIS,” Natsuhara said. “This complexity and magnitude are due, in part, to the Department of Defense’s desire

to ensure that the DEIS presents a thorough analysis of the environmental impacts of the pro-

posed actions on Guam and Tinian.”

The draft’s release will be made public through a notice in the Federal Register, the press release stated. The notice will detail where the draft can be reviewed, how to electronically access the document, how to submit a comment, and dates and locations of public hearings in Guam and the CNMI, the press release stated. Respicio has already said it will be available in public areas, such as mayors offices and libraries, so that people can have shared access. Residents should take advantage of the review period extension to read as much of the document as possible be-

cause this buildup will make permanent, long-term changes to island life, he said.

‘Treated equitably’

“The document will be a challenge, but we owe it to our children and future generations to do the best analysis that we can (to) ensure that Guam is treated equitably throughout this buildup,” he said.

Before the extension was granted on Wednesday, Guthertz had said the Navy’s refusal or approval to grant the extension would indicate how they will ultimately treat the people of Guam when the buildup happens.

On Thursday, Guthertz said the DOD’s response had shown “good faith,” which she hoped would be extended by Mabus when he considers the feedback provided by Guam’s residents on the EIS.

She, too, urged Guam residents to actively provide their comments on the EIS, as it will be the primary means for Guam residents to understand the “footprint” the buildup will leave on Guam: the buildup will impact Guam’s utilities and infrastructure, residents’ use of land, property and housing prices, and tourism, among other things, according to Respicio.

“The EIS review period will really be our only opportunity to influence this footprint,” Guthertz added. “Everyone who calls Guam home needs to take an active role in the review of the EIS.”

