

Paddler: Coral more important than carriers

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Guam may have been identified last week as an upcoming hub for U.S. national security in the Asia-Pacific region, but one Guam group feels dredging of the Apra Harbor for military projects isn't necessary to fulfill that goal.

According to Collin Smith, vice president of Marianas Paddle Sports Racing Association and supporter of We Are Guahan, the aircraft carrier wharf proposed to be built in the Apra Harbor would only lengthen the stay of carriers while destroying rare coral reefs. The Defense Department could consider other possible locations for the ammunitions wharf or adjust the scheduling of its aircraft carrier traffic so a longer stay isn't necessary, Smith suggested.

He was responding to questions about a reef tour arranged by We Are Guahan yesterday.

About 40 people paddled out to join a boat chartered by We Are Guahan to explore the Jade Shoals and Western Shoals yesterday, he said.

It was an educational opportuni-

ty for the group to inform the public on how the reef would be affected if the dredging takes place, according to Smith.

The group, We Are Guahan, consists of citizen-volunteers working to get the general public "thinking about issues related to the planned U.S. military relocation and buildup in Guam and the CNMI," according to their Web site, www.weareguahan.com.

Biologists were available at yesterday's reef tour to talk about marine life in the area, Smith said.

"It has unique type of coral formations you can't find anywhere else in the Mariana Islands," he added.

In the DEIS

The military plans to dredge about 2.3 million square feet of sea floor, according to the draft Environmental Impact statement. About 35 percent of that area is covered in coral reef that will be permanently destroyed, the document states.

Among the mitigation measures listed in the document, building an

artificial reef structure on another side of the island to provide alternative habitat for the organisms living there, isn't favored by biologists or environmentalists, Smith said.

Another option listed — reclaiming watershed — is too massive a project and will probably be negated by Guam's "chronic" fires, Smith said. The mitigation would

be worthless in such a case, he said.

"The bottom line is people just need to be aware this reef cannot be duplicated. They cannot duplicate what they take away from here," he said.

"I'm not against them ... using this as a place for the military," he said. "It's just ... they can do better." Smith said. "If they are going to do this, then they need to do a better job of studying its impacts because there are a lot of shortfalls in their study of the impacts."

At the same time, the document shows the new wharf would generate revenue for Guam.

When completed by 2015, aircraft carriers will spend about 63 days a year ported in Guam, accord-



HOW TO COMMENT

View the draft EIS and submit comments:

▲ Comments can be submitted online, in writing, or through public hearings to be held on Guam, Saipan and Tinian through the Feb. 17 deadline.

▲ View the draft online and provide feedback online.

WHERE TO FIND IT

▲ Visit the Agana Shopping Center reading room (second floor) to view a copy of the draft EIS. Hours are 10 a.m. to 8 p.m., Monday to Friday, and from 10 a.m. to 6 p.m. on weekends

▲ Visit the public library or the University of Guam Robert F. Kennedy Memorial Library in Mangilao.

▲ The EIS is also available at the mayors' offices in Yigo, Dededo, Barrigada, Agat and Mangilao, which are open 8 a.m. to 5 p.m., Monday through Friday.

ON THE NET

▲ **The EIS Web site:** www.guam-

www.guam-

www.guam-ing to the draft EIS.
The spending of aircraft personnel is expected to inject about \$13 million into the local economy every year

buildupeis.us

▲ **The One Guam Web site:**

www.one.guam.gov

▲ **The Joint Guam Program Office Web site:** www.jgpo.navy.mil

BACKGROUND

▲ The draft Environmental Impact Statement will provide a detailed account of how Guam's community will be affected through changes caused by the buildup. Factors of interest to Guam's community include access to recreation locations, safety, quality of life, labor-related issues, population increase and associated effects, Chamorro interests such as sacred burial ground and cultural sites, increase in traffic, utility requirements, small business opportunities, availability and cost of civilian housing, noise land use, educational facilities, public health and social services, the local fishing industry and tourism.

Draft Environmental Impact Statement, Joint Guam Program Office
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once the wharf is built. Stimulus will be about twice as high from 2011 to 2014, when the wharf is under construction, according to the docume-