

NEWS RELEASE

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Navy to look at environmental impact on road to Laurelwood

COLT'S NECK, N.J. – The Navy has entered into a scoping period as the preliminary process to drafting an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) in order to evaluate the potential impacts of creating an access route to the Laurelwood housing complex at Naval Weapons Station Earle in 2010, as required by a 1988 contract between the Navy and the housing developer.

During this scoping period, the public is invited to an open house on **Nov. 27** at the **Brookdale Community College, Donald D. Warner Student Life Center, any time between 4 and 8 p.m.** There will be no formal presentation by the Navy. Instead, there will be individual poster stations describing key elements of the project and the EIS process. This format encourages one-on-one communication and each person will have the opportunity to give written comments during the open house. The public's comments are invited and welcomed as they help to refine and improve the analysis of the proposed action. The comment period begins Nov. 9 and lasts until Dec. 14, 2007. Written comments may be given at the open house, mailed, or entered on the Navy's public web site for this action.

Mail to:
NAVFAC Atlantic
Attn: Code EV21LR
6506 Hampton Blvd.
Norfolk, VA 23508

Or visit:
www.laurelwoodeis.com

Background

In 1988, a 52-year lease agreement was executed between the Navy and the developer, Laurelwood, Inc. The developer constructed 300 homes at no cost to the taxpayer. Within the lease agreement, there were two phases stipulated. During the first phase, which expires in 2010, only military and their dependents are allowed to occupy the Laurelwood homes. During this time, the Navy guarantees rent payments, currently at about \$3.5 million per year, to the developer for the occupancy of all 300 units. The second phase runs from 2010 until expiration in 2040. During this timeframe, the Navy is not obligated to pay rent to the developer and does not intend to rent the units, so the developer can rent units to civilians.

The lease requires the Navy to provide "unimpeded access" between the Laurelwood housing area and adjacent state primary or secondary roads by April 2010 to allow the developer to make the units available to the public. When the lease expires in 2040, the developer is required to demolish the 300 housing units and restore the property to its original condition.

Over the years, due to unforeseen changes in homeporting, the Navy's need for military housing has diminished. The current occupation level of Laurelwood is at four percent.

The Environmental Impact Statement

The Environmental Impact Statement is part of the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) process, which is designed to gather information and involve the public in order to give the decision makers the best available information possible when making important decisions.

At least four possible access routes to the Laurelwood housing will be evaluated in the EIS. For each potential route, the Navy will thoroughly analyze potential impacts to the environment, to include:

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| Rare, threatened and endangered species | Security |
| Wetlands and floodplains | Social and economic impacts |
| Air quality | Schools |
| Water quality | Traffic |
| Cultural resources | Community facilities and general services |

Community

While the Navy intends to fully analyze all the areas listed above, community services, security and schools have already been identified as concerns to the surrounding community. Because NWS Earle was acquired under exclusive jurisdiction, some services normally provided by the community, such as fire, police, and rescue, will continue to be provided by the Navy. Sanitary wastewater treatment, water distribution, and electrical services would also continue to be provided by the Navy or through their systems, with the developer paying for this service.

This provision of unimpeded access will not affect the security of NWS Earle. Because of the sensitive nature of the mission at NWS Earle, robust security of the base and its assets is the highest priority, according to CAPT Gary Maynard, Commanding Officer of NWS Earle. While unimpeded access to the 801 housing is required by the 1988 agreement, prospective tenants will not have access to any other areas of the base. This housing area will be isolated from the remainder of the base by proven security fencing. This housing area is further isolated from the main area of the base by its geographical location and thick perimeter of woodlands, which blocks views of the everyday business at the base. Regular security patrols will be implemented along these fence lines as is currently done on the station's perimeter fence.

Where children of Laurelwood residents attend school will be a decision for New Jersey State and local officials to make. When Laurelwood and the 200 adjacent housing units were constructed, Tinton Falls offered to accept those children into the Tinton Falls schools. Any determination regarding a change of school districts is the province of the state and local governments. The Federal Government does offer compensation for the impact of federally-connected students through the Federal Impact Aid program, which is administered by the Department of Education. Adjustments to Federal Impact Aid to support the educational needs of federally-connected children must be negotiated between local and state elected officials and the Department of Education.

Timeline

Once the scoping period ends, the Navy will develop and issue a Draft Environmental Impact Statement and copies will be available on the public web site and at various public facilities. The Draft EIS will also be provided to individuals who requests one. It is anticipated that this document will be issued in the Fall of 2008. At that point, the public will have an opportunity to comment on the content of the Draft EIS. The Navy will then analyze all the comments received and prepare and issue the Final Environmental Impact Statement, which is expected in Spring of 2009. The public will again have an opportunity to comment on this document. After a minimum 30-day comment period, the Secretary of the Navy will review the Final EIS and issue a Record of Decision on the action.