

# MOTSU JOINT LAND USE STUDY OVERVIEW

## OVERVIEW AND STUDY PURPOSE

Across the country, as communities surrounding military installations experience population growth and urban development, the military's ability to maintain its testing, training, and operational missions can be impacted. In an effort to encourage military installations and communities to plan for the future collaboratively, the U.S. Department of Defense created the Joint Land Use Study (JLUS) program, which is administered by the Office of Economic Adjustment. The JLUS process brings together business leaders, citizens, local, state and federal officials, property owners, military officials, and others to identify opportunities for growth that is compatible, helping to preserve the military's ability to test, train, and operate, while also supporting the community's ability to expand its economic opportunities.

Although a Joint Land Use Study (JLUS) is primarily funded by the Office of Economic Adjustment, the communities that receive JLUS funding are responsible for developing and implementing the JLUS. Through their participation, the local government partners are working toward the betterment of the entire region by identifying potential areas of compatibility concern and developing recommendations that each community may choose to implement at its own discretion.

The Cape Fear Council of Governments served as the region's sponsor for the Military Ocean Terminal Sunny Point (MOTSU) JLUS, managing the grant process and the completion of the study. The study partners included Brunswick County, New Hanover County, and the municipalities of Boiling Spring Lakes, Leland, Carolina Beach, Kure Beach, Southport, the Cape Fear Council of Governments, Military Ocean Terminal Sunny Point, as well as a wide range of regional stakeholders and partner organizations.

Military Ocean Terminal Sunny Point (MOTSU) is the largest military munitions terminal in the world, the key ammunition shipping point on the Atlantic Coast, the Army's primary east coast deep-water port, and one of a handful of Department of Defense terminals equipped to handle containerized ammunition. MOTSU serves as a transfer point between rail, trucks, and ships for the export (and limited import) of ammunition, explosives and military equipment for the Department of Defense. The installation is operated by the Army's 596th Transportation Brigade, which is subordinate to the Military Surface Deployment and Distribution Command (SDDC).

The overarching purpose of conducting the MOTSU JLUS was to identify ways (1) to protect and preserve the military and defense-related operational capabilities of MOTSU; (2) to support continued and safe growth and economic development of MOTSU's neighboring communities; (3) to enhance communication and collaboration between military commanders and local officials; and (4) to establish policies and procedures for managing compatible land uses adjacent to and encroaching on MOTSU.

## PROJECT TEAM AND OVERSIGHT

The Cape Fear Council of Governments selected a consulting team to prepare the MOTSU Joint Land Use Study. The consulting team, led by Benchmark Planning, also included White & Smith (planning and legal specialists), Dial-Cordy (environmental specialists), and Marstel-Day (military encroachment policy specialists). The COG's Local Government Services Director served as the Project Manager; providing direct engagement with the consulting team, OEA, as well as two oversight bodies appointed to provide guidance through the study process.

The oversight boards were appointed with members representing each of the local governments participating in the JLUS. The JLUS Advisory Committee was comprised of senior staff leaders from each community, including managers and planning representatives. This committee provided direct technical input into the study and worked closely with the consulting team. A second committee, comprised of elected officials from each jurisdiction, served in the role of the JLUS Policy Committee. This committee provided high level leadership and oversight of the process, and was responsible for serving as liaisons to each of the governing boards of the participating jurisdictions. The Policy Committee also accepted the final report at the conclusion of the study process.

## STUDY PROCESS & PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT

The initial step in preparing the MOTSU JLUS involved several project meetings with the JLUS Project Manager during the first three months of 2018. During these initial meetings, key dates were discussed for the project schedule, initial stakeholders were identified, and the basic study process was discussed in more detail. The consulting team and Project Manager developed a Public Participation Plan that was designed to encourage participation in the process by key stakeholders and the general public. In addition, the consulting team and Project Manager held weekly phone conference calls to help keep the project moving forward in an efficient manner.

## STUDY AREA

The study area (see Figure 1) includes a 3-mile area around MOTSU's main terminal in Brunswick County and the Pleasure Island explosives safety clear zone (ESCZ ) (which is also known colloquially as the "buffer zone") across the Cape Fear River in New Hanover County. The study area also includes a 3/4-mile area along either side of the MOTSU rail corridor and around the Leland interchange yard. The study area covers portions of unincorporated Brunswick and New Hanover Counties, as well as all or portions of the City of Boiling Spring Lakes, the Town of Carolina Beach, the Town of Kure Beach, the Town of Leland, and the City of Southport. MOTSU is located in one of the fastest growing regions in North Carolina. MOTSU's main terminal operations are located in Brunswick County, which is the fastest growing county in the state. MOTSU's boundaries cross the county line into New Hanover County where the ESCZ abuts growing oceanfront communities as well as significant tourist attractions.

## SUNNY POINT

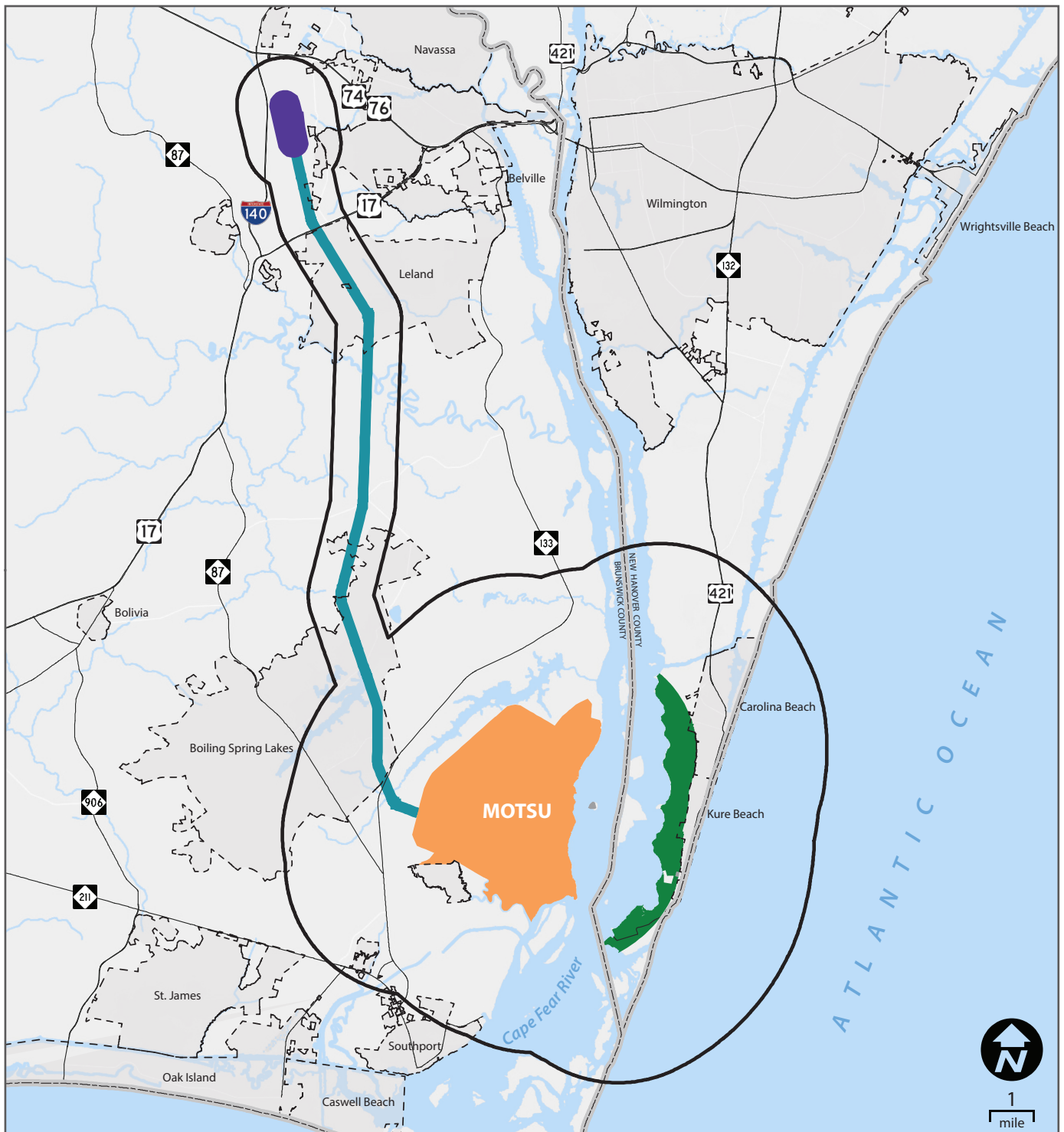
Military Ocean Terminal Sunny Point (MOTSU) was established by Congress in 1951, with land acquisition and construction of the terminal completed in 1955. The installation was conceived as a purpose-built ammunition transshipment terminal in response to safety concerns that had emerged during World War II, in particular the Port Chicago disaster, which claimed the lives of 320 servicemen, wounded 390 and caused significant damage in the urban area surrounding the port when an accidental detonation destroyed the port during ammunition loading operations in 1944.

Designed around the concept of providing the safest operational environment possible for handling hazardous cargoes, the Army acquired over 8,600 acres of land for the main terminal on the Cape Fear River in what was then a very rural area in southeastern Brunswick County. The Army also acquired over 2,000 acres of land on the eastern shore of the Cape Fear River to serve as the Explosives Safety Clear Zone, and another 600+ acres in the area that is now Leland, 16 miles from the main terminal, for a rail interchange yard. To facilitate movement to and from the interchange yard, the Army acquired land (primarily as easements) and constructed a rail corridor connecting the main terminal to the interchange yard.

From the point of its activation, MOTSU has served as an indispensable component of the Department of Defense's surface transportation network. It has a greater ammunition handling capability (measured in tons of net explosive weight) than all other Department of Defense munitions terminals combined, and the terminal provides munitions transshipment capabilities for all branches of the US Armed Forces, as well as allied nations through the DoD's Foreign Military Sales program. Over the last decade, the installation has been responsible for transshipping up to 500,000 tons of cargo during a single fiscal year, with an average annual workload in the range of 250,000 to 300,000 tons.

## MISSION COMPATIBILITY FACTORS

Threats to the long term sustainability of MOTSU's operational mission are directly tied to the nature of the operations that are conducted on the terminal. The primary potential threat to the mission is from incompatible urban growth / incompatible uses in areas that fall within its explosive hazards safety zones. The second primary compatibility factor is related to the installation's mission as a transportation dependent hub for munitions transshipment, with requirements for access to the installation via rail, the local highway network, and marine access via the Cape Fear River. A third primary factor in sustaining MOTSU's mission is ensuring that environmental constraints, such as habitat protection for endangered species, do not impede its operational capacity. This final primary compatibility factor is the relationship that is maintained between MOTSU, its host communities, other regional partners, and the public at large. Strong relationships help to mitigate potential threats to the mission by ensuring a collaborative environment in which problems can be identified and solved before they impact the mission.



**Military Ocean Terminal Sunny Point  
Joint Land Use Study**



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|-----------------|------------------------------|
| JLUS Study Area | MTSU Installation Components |
| Municipalities  | Main Terminal                |
| County Boundary | Pleasure Island ESCZ         |
| Water           | Rail Corridor                |
| Major Roads     | Leland Interchange Yard      |

Figure 1: JLUS Study Area Map