
Endangered Species Act, National Marine Fisheries
Service, Headquarters

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DEPARTMENT OF THE NAVY
OFFICE OF THE CHIEF OF NAVAL OPERATIONS
2000 NAVY PENTAGON
WASHINGTON, DC 20350-2000

IN REPLY REFER TO

5090
Ser N456M/8U158134
21 April 2008

Mr. P. Michael Payne
Division Chief
Permits, Conservation, and Education Division
National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS)
National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration
B-SSMC3, Room 13821
1315 East-West Highway
Silver Springs, MD 20910

Dear Mr. Payne:

The Commander, U.S. Pacific Fleet (CPF) is preparing an Environmental Impact Statement/Overseas Environmental Impact Statement (EIS/OEIS) to assess the potential environmental impacts associated with Navy training in the Gulf of Alaska (GOA). Specifically, the Proposed Action is to continue and increase training activities in the GOA. A collection of actions will be evaluated within the EIS/OEIS.

The No Action Alternative is the continuation of training activities associated with large-scale Joint training events in the GOA. Two action alternatives are proposed to accomplish the Proposed Action. Alternative 1 consists of an increase in the number of training activities from levels described in the No Action Alternative, along with force structure changes associated with the introduction of new weapon systems, vessels, and aircraft into the Fleet. Alternative 2 consists of all elements of Alternative 1 plus the addition of a second summertime carrier strike group exercise in the GOA each year.

The purpose of the Proposed Action is to:

- Support U.S. Pacific Command (PACOM) and U.S. Northern Command (NORTHCOM) training requirements;
- Support Joint Task Force 519 (JTF-519) training requirements;

- Achieve and maintain Fleet readiness using the GOA to support and conduct current, emerging, and future training activities;

Accommodate new training requirements associated with the introduction of new weapons and systems to the Fleet; and

- Support civilian authorities in homeland defense training exercises.

More specific descriptions of the alternatives are included in enclosure (1).

Conduct of these activities will likely result in acoustic exposure of marine mammals listed under the Marine Mammal Protection Act (MMPA) from mid-frequency active sonar (MFAS) and impulsive sources, and likely requires a Letter of Authorization (LOA). As such, the Navy will be submitting an LOA request to your office in the coming months for these activities. It is expected that species for which an LOA is sought will include species listed under the Endangered Species Act.

As applicant for a Letter of Authorization, the Navy requests your office initiate early consultation procedures with the Endangered Species Division, in accordance with Section 7(a)(3) of the Endangered Species Act and its implementing regulation at 50 CFR §402.11. In accordance with these regulations, the attached Preliminary Draft Description of the Proposed Action and Alternatives for the GOA Navy Training Activities EIS/OEIS serves as the Navy's definitive proposal outlining the action (Enclosure 1). As previously stated, the effects of the proposed action for purposes of the MMPA permit will be from exposure to acoustic energy from MFAS and impulsive sources. The level of magnitude of these effects is still being modeled, and will be included in the Navy's request for an LOA.

Title 10, Section 5062 of the United States Code requires the Navy to be "organized, trained, and equipped primarily for prompt and sustained combat incident to operations at sea." The current and emerging training activities in the GOA will be used to meet this legal requirement. Thus, in accordance with 50 CFR §402.11(b), this letter serves as the Navy's statement that it intends to implement the proposal should an MMPA Letter of Authorization be obtained from your office.

We appreciate your continued support in helping us to meet our Section 7 responsibilities. My point of contact for this matter is Ms. Elizabeth Phelps, 703-604-5420 or Elizabeth.Phelps@navy.mil.

Sincerely,



Ronald Tickle
Head, Operational Environmental
Readiness and Planning Branch
Environmental Readiness Division
(OPNAV N45)

Enclosure:

(1) DRAFT - Gulf of Alaska Navy Training Activities EIS/OEIS
Description of Proposed Action and Alternatives (Dated March
2008)

Copy to:

Chief of Naval Operations (N43)
Commander, U.S. Fleet Forces Command (N73, N77)
Commander, U.S. Pacific Fleet (N01CE, N3, N7)
Commander, Naval Installations Command (N45)
Commander, Navy Region Northwest (N40)
Commander, Naval Facilities Engineering Command, Northwest
(N45)



DEPARTMENT OF THE NAVY
OFFICE OF THE CHIEF OF NAVAL OPERATIONS
2000 NAVY PENTAGON
WASHINGTON, DC 20350-2000

IN REPLY REFER TO

5090
Ser N456K/10U158083
4 March 2010

Ms. Angela Somma
Division Chief Endangered Species Division
Office of Protected Resources
National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration
National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS)
B-SSMC3 Room 13821
1315 East-West Highway
Silver Springs, MD 20910-3282

Dear Ms. Somma:

The Commander, U. S. Pacific Fleet (CPF) is planning to conduct training activities in the Gulf of Alaska (GOA). Navy has determined that conduct of these activities may affect endangered species under National Marine Fisheries Service's (NMFS) jurisdiction occurring within the geographic vicinity of the GOA. In accordance with 50 CFR §401.12(f), the Navy is submitting its Biological Evaluation (BE) [Enclosure (1)] and is requesting formal consultation pursuant to Section 7(a)(2). This BE assesses the potential effects of the proposed actions on species protected under the Endangered Species Act (ESA) that potentially occur within the GOA under NMFS' jurisdiction.

CPF is preparing an Environmental Impact Statement/Overseas Environmental Impact Statement (EIS/OEIS) to assess the potential environmental impacts associated with the Navy's training activities in the GOA. Through our cooperating agency agreement, the Navy and NMFS worked together to develop the DEISs/OEISs prior to release for public comment in December 2009.

The Navy submitted a Marine Mammal Protection Act request for rulemaking and an application for a Letter of Authorization on 20 March 2009. The Navy did not request the NMFS permit division to initiate early consultation.

In accordance with 50 CFR §401.14(c) the attached BE includes: (1) a description of the proposed action; (2) descriptions of the specific areas where the proposed action will occur (also called Study Area); (3) descriptions of the listed species and critical habitat that may be affected by the actions; (4) the potential effects on listed and proposed species or critical habitat; (5) an analysis of cumulative effects; and (6)

measures proposed by the Navy to mitigate potential effects of the proposed action.

Additional technical information regarding the process by which the Navy determined the listed species distribution in these geographic areas is detailed in Enclosure 2. We are providing this report as additional relevant technical information for purposes of consultation under the ESA.

My staff point of contact for this matter is Dr. Kelly Brock who can be reached at 703-604-5420 or via email at Kelly.brock@navy.mil; CPF's point of contact for this matter is Mr. Alex Stone, who can be reached at (619) 545-8128 or via email at alexander.stone@navy.mil.

Sincerely,



Ronald E. Tickle
Head, Operational Environmental
Readiness and Planning Branch
Environmental Readiness Division
(OPNAV N45)

Enclosures:

- (1) Biological Evaluation for Gulf of Alaska Navy Training Activities.
- (2) Marine Resources Assessment for the Gulf of Alaska Operating Area (Draft Report September 2006 - CD Copy).

Copy to (w/o enclosures):

DASN (E)
OPNAV (N43)
COMPACFLT) (N01CE1)
NAVFACENGCOM Northwest (N45)

National Marine Fisheries Service
Anchorage Field Office
Protected Resources Division
Attn: Mr. Brad Smith
222 West 7th Avenue, Box 43
Anchorage, AK 99513