
3.4 Acoustic Environment (Airborne)

3.4 ACOUSTIC ENVIRONMENT (AIRBORNE)

3.4.1 AFFECTED ENVIRONMENT

For purposes of this Supplemental Environmental Impact Statement (EIS)/Overseas EIS (Supplemental EIS/OEIS), the Region of Influence for the acoustic environment (airborne) remains the same as that identified in the March 2011 Gulf of Alaska Navy Training Activities Final EIS/OEIS and includes the Temporary Maritime Activities Area (TMAA) (the Study Area). For underwater acoustics, please see Section 3.8 (Marine Mammals) and Appendix C (Acoustic Primer).

3.4.1.1 Existing Conditions

The general introduction to sound and sound characteristics is described in the 2011 GOA Final EIS/OEIS.

3.4.1.1.1 Ambient Sound

As described in the 2011 GOA Final EIS/OEIS, airborne noise sources at sea include those from manmade sources, such as sounds produced from commercial, fishing, research, and recreational vessels, and general and commercial aviation. United States Department of the Navy (Navy) training events may also add to these sounds intermittently and at various locations in the TMAA during an exercise period. These noise sources, or the amount of activities associated with noise sources, have not appreciably changed since the publication of the 2011 GOA Final EIS/OEIS. As such, the information and analysis regarding ambient sound conditions presented in the 2011 GOA Final EIS/OEIS remains valid.

3.4.1.1.2 Sound from Military Sources

Sound generated from military sources was described in the 2011 GOA Final EIS/OEIS. In summary, airborne noise attributable to military activities in the TMAA results from multiple sources, including naval ship power plants, military aircraft, target engine noise, bombs, missiles, and gunfire. Although it is possible that some new military aircraft and ships will be part of the Navy's future inventory, and would be used in the Proposed Action, these newer platforms generate sounds similar to those described in the 2011 GOA Final EIS/OEIS. However, no new or additional ordnance, missiles and targets, or other non-explosive impact airborne noise generating devices are being proposed in this Supplemental EIS/OEIS. As the sounds from military sources are similar to those analyzed in the 2011 GOA Final EIS/OEIS, the information and analysis regarding sources of military sound presented in the 2011 GOA Final EIS/OEIS remain valid.

3.4.1.2 Current Requirements and Practices

The requirements and practices associated with aircraft operations have not changed appreciably from those presented in the 2011 GOA Final EIS/OEIS. As such, the information regarding current requirements and practices presented in the 2011 GOA Final EIS/OEIS remains valid. However, Chapter 5 (Standard Operating Procedures, Mitigation, and Monitoring) of this Supplemental EIS/OEIS discusses the latest standard operating procedures and best management practices used by the Navy.

3.4.2 ALTERNATIVES ANALYSIS

All three alternatives (No Action Alternative, Alternative 1, and Alternative 2), as discussed in the 2011 GOA Final EIS/OEIS, remain the same for this Supplemental EIS/OEIS. The Navy conducted a review of existing federal and state regulations and standards relevant to the acoustic environment (airborne), as well as a review of new literature, to include laws, regulations, and publications pertaining to airborne acoustics. No additional information was found that indicates an appreciable change to the existing environmental conditions as described in the 2011 GOA Final EIS/OEIS. Because the existing conditions

have not changed appreciably, and no new Navy training activities are being proposed to occur in the TMAA in this Supplemental EIS/OEIS, re-analysis of the alternatives with respect to the acoustic environment (airborne) is not warranted. Subsequently, the conclusions made for the alternatives analyzed in the 2011 GOA Final EIS/OEIS remain unchanged in this Supplemental EIS/OEIS.

3.4.3 CONCLUSION

As described above, there is no information on existing environmental conditions that changes the affected environment, which forms the environmental baseline of the acoustic environment (airborne) analysis in the 2011 GOA Final EIS/OEIS. Additionally, no new Navy training activities are being proposed in this Supplemental EIS/OEIS that would affect the acoustic environment in the TMAA. Therefore, conclusions for acoustic environment (airborne) impacts made for the alternatives analyzed in the 2011 GOA Final EIS/OEIS remain unchanged in this Supplemental EIS/OEIS. For a summary of effects of the No Action Alternative, Alternative 1, and Alternative 2 on acoustic environment (airborne) under both the National Environmental Policy Act and Executive Order 12114, please refer to Table 3.4-4 (Summary of Effects by Alternative) in the 2011 GOA Final EIS/OEIS.