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NAVY ANNOUNCES INTENT TO PREPARE A SUPPLEMENT TO THE GULF OF ALASKA NAVY TRAINING ACTIVITIES DRAFT SUPPLEMENTAL ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT STATEMENT/ OVERSEAS ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT STATEMENT

SILVERDALE, Wash — The U.S. Navy is preparing a Supplement to the December 2020 Gulf of Alaska (GOA) Navy Training Activities Draft Supplemental Environmental Impact Statement/Overseas Environmental Impact Statement (EIS/OEIS).

Since the release of the GOA Draft SEIS/OEIS in December 2020 and completion of Exercise Northern Edge 2021, the Navy recognized that the size and shape of the Temporary Maritime Activities Area (TMAA) no longer provides sufficient space for the realistic maneuvering of vessels and aircraft during training exercises. This Supplement will address a change to the Study Area to include more space for maneuvering vessels and aircraft in the GOA and the addition of a new mitigation area within the continental shelf and shelf slope area of the existing TMAA.

In the 2020 Draft Supplemental EIS/OEIS, the Navy is proposing to continue periodic military training activities within the GOA. The Navy is preparing the Supplemental EIS/OEIS to support the renewal of the federal regulatory permits and authorizations required for these activities under the Marine Mammal Protection Act and the Endangered Species Act, which expire in April 2022.

The analysis in the SEIS/OEIS will be updated with the proposed changes in the 2022 Supplement, including the additional maneuvering space and shelf mitigation area.

Key Updates Proposed in the 2022 Supplement to the 2020 Draft Supplemental EIS/OEIS:

Proposed changes to the Study Area include additional airspace and sea space to the west and south of the TMAA. This additional area is referred to as the Western Maneuver Area (WMA) and it is approximately 185,806 square nautical miles.

The TMAA, which is approximately 42,146 square nautical miles, would remain unchanged with all activities involving active sonar and explosives still occurring in this area only. No new or increased training activities are proposed as part of the revised proposed action. Proposed activities in the WMA would be limited to those associated with coordinated vessel movements and aircraft overflights.

The additional space gained in the proposed WMA would enable Navy personnel and units to practice more realistic, complex training scenarios in a safer, more efficient manner that would better prepare them to respond to real-world incidents.

Additionally, in direct response to agency, tribal, and public comments, the Navy is also proposing to implement a new mitigation area within the continental shelf and shelf slope area of the TMAA. This new mitigation area would be approximately 14,600 square nautical miles.

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The Navy would restrict the use of explosives in this area during training, up to 10,000 feet altitude, to protect marine species and biologically important habitat. The Navy anticipates the implementation of the proposed mitigation area would minimize impacts on marine mammals, fish species including salmon, and marine birds.

Public Involvement:

A supplement to the Draft SEIS/OEIS with analysis of the potential environmental effects associated with these proposed additions is expected to be available for public review and a 45-day comment period in March 2022. Information obtained during the comment period will be considered in preparation of the Final SEIS/OEIS.

Public comments received during the 2020 Draft SEIS/OEIS comment period are still valid and are being considered in the development of the Final SEIS/OEIS. Previously submitted comments do not need to be resubmitted.

No decision will be made to implement any alternative in the GOA Study Area until the National Environmental Policy Act process is complete and a Record of Decision is signed by the Navy.

Visit the project website at **www.GOAEIS.com** to learn more about the overall project and the Supplement.

Media seeking further information should contact Ms. Julianne Stanford with the Navy Region Northwest Public Affairs Office at julianne.stanford@navy.mil or 360-867-8525.

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