




**COMMONWEALTH of VIRGINIA**  
**DEPARTMENT OF CONSERVATION AND RECREATION**

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**MEMORANDUM**

DATE: November 16, 2006

TO: J. M. Hinson  
Naval Facilities Engineering Command  
ATTN: Code EV21 (Atlantic Fleet Sonar PM)  
6506 Hampton Blvd.  
Norfolk, VA 23508-1278

FROM: Robert Munson, DCR-DPRR 

SUBJECT: DCR-06-070: Dept. of Navy-Athletic Fleet Sonar Training

The Department of Conservation and Recreation (DCR) has searched its Biotics Data System for occurrences of natural heritage resources from the area outlined on the submitted map. Natural heritage resources are defined as the habitat of rare, threatened, or endangered plant and animal species, unique or exemplary natural communities, and significant geologic formations.

According to the information in our files, the Loggerhead sea turtle (*Caretta caretta*, G3/S1B,S1N/LT/LT), has been documented within the project area. The Loggerhead sea turtle is characterized by a large head with blunt jaws. The carapace and flippers are a reddish-brown color; the plastron is yellow. Loggerheads nest on ocean beaches, generally preferring high energy, relatively narrow, steeply sloped, coarse-grained beaches. Loggerheads mate from late March to early June. Loggerheads face threats on both nesting beaches and in the marine environment. The greatest cause of decline and the continuing primary threat to loggerhead turtle populations worldwide is incidental capture in fishing gear, primarily in longlines and gillnets, but also in trawls, traps and pots, and dredges (USFWS, 2005).

Due to the legal status of the Loggerhead sea turtle, DCR recommends coordination with the Virginia Department of Game and Inland Fisheries (VDGIF), and the United States Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) to ensure compliance with protected species legislation. Additionally, several state and federally-listed whales and marine mammals are located in the project vicinity. Due to the legal status of these species, DCR recommends coordination with the National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) to ensure compliance with protected species legislation.

DCR recommends Alternative B, designation of seasonal active sonar training areas in each OPAREA based on the operational criteria and quantitative and geographic analysis. DCR recommends the avoidance of high areas of marine mammal activity and use of seasonal training, at times of inactivity or lower activity.

In addition, our files do not indicate the presence of any State Natural Area Preserves under DCR's jurisdiction in the project vicinity.

Any absence of data may indicate that the project area has not been surveyed, rather than confirm that the area lacks natural heritage resources. New and updated information is continually added to Biotics. Please contact DCR for an update on this natural heritage information if a significant amount of time passes before it is utilized.

The Virginia Department of Game and Inland Fisheries maintains a database of wildlife locations, including threatened and endangered species, trout streams, and anadromous fish waters, which may contain information not documented in this letter. Their database may be accessed from [http://www.dgif.virginia.gov/wildlife/info\\_map/index.html](http://www.dgif.virginia.gov/wildlife/info_map/index.html) , or contact Shirl Dressler at (804) 367-6913.

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on this project.

cc: Eric Davis, USFWS  
Andy Zadnik, VDGIF  
Ken Hollingshead, NMFS