

Society for Animal Protective Legislation

• a division of the Animal Welfare Institute •

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PLEASE
READ
CAREFULLY

Marine Life Threatened by Deadly Navy Action Your Letters Needed by March 31

[There are many March 13, 2008
people who CARE about the Welfare of Marine
Life!

Dear Humanitarian:

Marine life on the Eastern Seaboard may be at risk. On the heels of several successful lawsuits challenging the US Navy's use of mid-frequency active (MFA) sonar because of its harmful effects on marine animals, plans are still underway to formalize and increase training exercises into the massive Atlantic Fleet Active Sonar Training (AFAST) Study Area.]

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(They have to listen to sounds they do not want to hear & there is NO ESCAPE. IMAGINE LISTENING TO MUSIC YOU HATE CONTINUOUSLY)

The Navy conducts training exercises out of its myriad installations dotted along the East Coast and Gulf of Mexico; some of these and similar exercises have resulted in mass strandings of marine mammals. Fortunately, the public is able to provide comments to the Navy on its most recent plans, and now we need you to speak up. Additional information about the dire situation is printed on the reverse of this page to assist you in taking action.

WHAT YOU CAN DO:

Please respectfully submit comments on the Draft Environmental Impact Statement for the AFAST Study Area by March 31, 2008. In addition to the information provided on the following page, here are some suggestions about what to include in your comment letter:

- As a resident of an area adjacent to the AFAST Study Area, you enjoy its marine environment and have an obligation and right to speak up for its animals.] ✓
- The Navy's operational requirements should not supersede its marine stewardship obligations.] 648
- Exercises should not be conducted at night or during other periods when visibility is poor;] 649
- Areas where marine animals are known to congregate, such as feeding and breeding areas, should be completely avoided;] 650
- Areas close to the migration path of the endangered North Atlantic right whale should be off-limits to Navy traffic during the migration season;] 651
- The Navy should have at least three trained and dedicated marine mammal observers on all ships equipped with MFA sonar and employ dedicated marine mammal aerial surveillance to look for marine animals an hour before and an hour after an exercise;] 652
- When an animal (including dolphins, who typically bow ride) is observed within 2,000 yards of the sonar dome, the sonar should be shut down until the animal has left the area.] 653
- An after action report for each exercise documenting ship positions and sonar use should be prepared and made publically available at no charge.] 654

Write to:

Naval Facilities Engineering Command, LANTDIV
Attn: Code EV22 (Atlantic Fleet Sonar Project Manager)
6506 Hampton Blvd.
Norfolk, VA 23508-1278
Fax: (888) 875-6781

FACTS ABOUT MARINE ANIMALS, NAVY SONAR AND AFAST

US Atlantic Coast Rich in Marine Life

[The Eastern Seaboard is rich in marine animal diversity. There is a rapid change in sea temperature off the East Coast because of the Gulf Stream, so both tropical and temperate species overlap ranges in the region. Dolphin species found in the areas include bottlenose, common, striped, spinner, Risso's and Atlantic white-sided dolphins. Whale species include pilot, fin, minke, pygmy and dwarf sperm, humpback, sei and sperm whales. This area is also home to beaked whale species and the highly endangered North Atlantic right whale, of whom only 300 individuals remain.]

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The Navy has Chosen the Alternative that Could Impart the Most Harm

The Navy considered four alternatives when selecting training sites within the Study Area: a) sites that would enable the Navy to fulfill its operational requirements while avoiding areas of biological significance, such as whale feeding areas, year-round; b) sites that would avoid such areas on a seasonal basis; c) sites based solely on areas of biological significance and avoiding those areas completely by training elsewhere; and d) sites based on the Navy's operational requirements only, and disregarding any biologically sensitive areas. The Navy chose the fourth, citing operational impedance as the reason for not choosing a more protective and precautionary alternative.]

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Ocean Noise Impacts to Marine Animals

A growing body of research confirms that human-generated noise – especially the type of MFA sonar to be used at the AFAST Study Area – can disturb, harm and kill marine life. [The Scientific Committee of the International Whaling Commission has found that the evidence linking military sonar to whale strandings is "very convincing, and appears overwhelming."] Other bodies acknowledging and addressing the issue include the United Nations, the European Parliament and the World Conservation Union.]

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[Sonar-related strandings have occurred in the Canary Islands, Greece, Bahamas, Madeira, Washington State, Hawaii, North Carolina, and Southern Spain, amongst other locations. The 2000 Bahamas incident involved 16 whales of three species stranded along 150 miles of shoreline as naval ships used MFA sonar in the area. [The Navy has acknowledged that its sonar use resulted in the deaths of the whales. Similarly, in the report of the Hanalei Bay, Hawaii live-stranding of up to 200 melon headed whales, the DoC said the Navy's MFA sonar use was a "plausible, if not likely contributing factor" in the event, which resulted in the death of a calf.]

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662 [Intense ocean noise also can injure and kill fish, [with studies showing that commercial catch rates can decrease up to 80 percent when loud sound is in the area.] [As the science on the impacts of ocean noise grows, so do the findings relating to its impacts on marine life. Without comprehensive knowledge of its impacts on all marine life, precaution must prevail.]

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[The Marine Mammal Protection Act prohibits the "taking" of marine mammals without DoC permission. The Navy disingenuously states that since "most animals" will not be impacted by its preferred action, it will have no significant impact and cause no significant harm to populations of marine mammals, turtles, fish, fish habitat, invertebrates or sea birds.]

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[The Navy admits that its MFA sonar levels, calculated using the Navy's own questionable numbers, will cause an estimated 120 animals to become deaf – a death sentence since marine mammals use sound for essential life functions. Further, it expects over 20,000 animals to suffer temporary deafness (which can also lead to death) and tens of thousands to be behaviorally impacted.] [The Navy is asking the DoC for permission to kill or injure up to 10 beaked whales – those known to strand most often as a result of MFA sonar use.] [It also admits wanting to avoid investigation should a beaked whale be found "dead coincident with Navy activities" because it would "unnecessarily interfere with Navy training exercises."]

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