

FOREWORD

The Draft Atlantic Fleet Training and Testing (AFTT) Supplemental Environmental Impact Statement/Overseas Environmental Impact Statement (EIS/OEIS) was released for public review and comment September 20, 2024, through November 21, 2024. Changes in this Final Supplemental EIS/OEIS reflect responses to all substantive comments made on the Draft Supplemental EIS/OEIS during the public comment period. Public comments are summarized, and the responses to them are included in Appendix M (Public Involvement and Distribution).

While most sections in the Supplemental EIS/OEIS were changed in some manner between the Draft and Final versions, many of those changes entailed minor modifications to improve clarity. Global changes were made in nearly all sections and appendices in response to comply with Executive Order 14172 – *Restoring Names That Honor American Greatness*, Executive Order 14148 – *Initial Rescissions of Harmful Executive Orders and Actions*, and the recession of the Council on Environmental Quality regulations. Specifically, the “Gulf of America” replaced “Gulf of Mexico” in text and figures, the “Gulf of Mexico Range Complex” was renamed to “Gulf Range Complex,” and the analysis of climate change was removed. More specific key changes between the AFTT Draft Supplemental EIS/OEIS and Final Supplemental EIS/OEIS are outlined in the following paragraphs.

- **Chapter 1 (Purpose and Need) and Chapter 2 (Description of Proposed Action and Alternatives):**

Text was updated regarding the role of the National Marine Fisheries Service in this Supplemental EIS/OEIS. In addition, information was added regarding the requirement to prepare a Supplemental EIS/OEIS for complete or ongoing actions when substantial changes have been made to the Proposed Action that are beyond the scope of the original environmental planning document or significant new circumstances occur or information becomes available.

- **Chapter 2 (Description of Proposed Action and Alternatives):**

Locations of training and testing activities and nomenclature of Study Area names were revised as applicable. Annual levels of certain activities and resulting quantities of associated military expended materials and stressors generally remained unchanged.

- **Chapter 3 (Affected Environment and Environmental Consequences):**

There were no changes in the quantity of any stressor component between the Draft Supplemental EIS/OEIS and this Final Supplemental EIS/OEIS.

- **Section 3.1 (Air Quality):**

The section title was changed from “Air Quality and Climate Change” to “Air Quality.” Text related to greenhouse gases and ozone standards was revised in accordance with recent executive orders and guidance. Text was added to clarify that, relative to the 2018 Final EIS/OEIS, more current and detailed emission source data were used to determine the air quality effects and changes. Air quality conformity analyses were added for three new geographic areas. Air pollutant emission quantities were updated where applicable.

- **Section 3.2 (Sediment and Water Quality):**

Information on unintentional aerial fuel release was added. There were no other substantive changes in the section.

- **Section 3.3 (Habitats):**

There were no substantive changes in the section.

- **Section 3.4 (Vegetation):**

There were no substantive changes in the section.

- **Section 3.5 (Invertebrates):**

Text was added to indicate that the risk of effects of near-surface explosions on invertebrates would be low because most explosions would occur at locations and during times of the day associated with low invertebrate occurrence. Text was revised in applicable subsections to clarify that effects on common invertebrate species would not be detectable at the population level. Endangered Species Act (ESA) consultation status was updated to past tense to reflect completion of this requirement. Text was updated to reflect the December 2024 reclassification of pillar coral from threatened to endangered.

- **Section 3.6 (Fishes):**

In Section 3.6.2 (Affected Environment), a “Hearing and Vocalization” subsection was added, with reference to Appendix D (Acoustic and Explosive Impacts Supporting Information), Section D.5.1 (Hearing and Vocalization). Consultation status was updated to past tense to reflect completion of this requirement. ESA conclusions for various stressors, including differences between training and testing activities, were updated for applicable fish species and critical habitats to align with the completed consultations. In Section 3.6.3.7.1.1 (Impacts from Secondary Stressors under Alternative 1), information regarding the general lack of effects on benthic fish habitats resulting from explosions in the water column and at the surface was added. Also, ESA conclusions for secondary stressors were added.

- **Section 3.7 (Marine Mammals):**

Changes in ESA listings and critical habitat designations since the 2018 Final EIS/OEIS were added. Species information was updated as applicable (for example, incorporation of information from the most recent marine mammal stock assessment reports). An explanation of the analysis method was added, including the grouping of species based on similar biology or behaviors, the rationale for using general or geographically specific discussion, and the quantification of acoustic stressors at the species or stock level. The formatting of impact tables was revised. Supporting information and text describing potential effects was added or revised for clarity, as applicable. Marine mammal ESA conclusions for training and testing activities were revised to reflect the completed consultations.

- **Section 3.8 (Reptiles):**

Species occurrence information was corrected where applicable. The sonar impact table was updated. ESA conclusions were revised or clarified for multiple substressors. ESA consultation status was updated to past tense to reflect completion of this requirement.

- **Section 3.9 (Birds and Bats):**

ESA conclusions were corrected as applicable. ESA consultation status was updated to past tense to reflect completion of this requirement. There were no other substantive changes in the section.

- **Chapter 4 (Cumulative Impacts):**

Text regarding greenhouse gases was revised in accordance with recent policy and guidance. There were no other substantive changes in the chapter.

- **Chapter 5 (Mitigation):**

Section 5.6 (Visual Observations) was retitled Section 5.6 (Activity-Based Mitigation.) Text describing mitigation specific to acoustic stressors, explosives, and non-explosive ordnance was corrected or revised for clarity where applicable. Mitigation requirements and benefits were corrected or clarified in multiple mitigation area requirements tables. A requirement was added to all activity-based mitigations for explosives, to immediately suspend the use of explosives in an event if a marine mammal is visibly injured or killed as a result of detonation. Manta rays and hammerhead sharks were added to the observation requirements for Explosive Mine Neutralization (With Divers). Advisory mitigation measures were added to the Dynamic North Atlantic Right Whale Mitigation Area and the Rice's Whale Mitigation Area. Propulsion testing was restricted in the Rice's Whale Mitigation Area, the Southeast North Atlantic Right Whale Mitigation Area, and the new Martha's Vineyard North Atlantic Right Whale Mitigation Area. The Demolition Key Queen Conch Mitigation Area was added with a requirement to survey the area before explosives are used. An additional restriction for line charge testing was added to the Panama City Gulf Sturgeon and Sea Turtle Mitigation Area. A buffer was added to the Rice's Whale Mitigation Area and the Southeast North Atlantic Right Whale Mitigation Area for the use of explosive sonobuoys. Text regarding mitigation considered but eliminated was revised for applicable substressors.

- **Chapter 6 (Regulatory Considerations):**

Table 6-1 was revised to reflect changes made elsewhere in the document. Information on legal cases related to air quality was updated. The Florida Keys National Marine Sanctuary boundary was updated on applicable maps, and text describing multiple national marine sanctuaries was updated in applicable tables.

- **Appendix A (Activity Descriptions):**

Minor changes were made to the description of some training and testing activities. The description of Lookout procedures was updated. Reference to "Visual Observations" was changed

to “Activity-Based Mitigation.” The locations of some mitigation activities, as well as training and testing activities, were revised where necessary.

- **Appendix B (Activity Stressors):**

Stressors were corrected for a small number of training activities.

- **Appendix C (U.S. Coast Guard Supporting Information):**

The map showing representative Coast Guard locations was updated.

- **Appendix D (Acoustic and Explosive Impacts Supporting Information):**

Information on vessel noise characteristics was updated. Text was added to clarify that while data gaps on fish hearing and related noise effects exist, the “Fishes” section presents the best available science. New information relevant to the analysis of noise and explosive effects was added for fish and marine mammals.

- **Appendix E (Acoustic and Explosives Impacts Analysis for Marine Mammals, Reptiles, and Fishes in the Atlantic Fleet Training and Testing Study Area):**

There were no substantive changes in this appendix.

- **Appendix F (Biological Resources Supplemental Information):**

The ESA status of invertebrate species was revised as applicable. Information on fish distribution was updated. For marine mammals, information on proposed critical habitat designation and changes to ESA listing status was added as applicable.

- **Appendix G (Non-Acoustic Impacts Supporting Information):**

There were no substantive changes in this appendix.

- **Appendix H (Air Quality Emissions Calculations):**

The number and location of activities were updated where applicable for consistency with Chapter 2 (Description of Proposed Action and Alternatives). Reference to climate change was removed in accordance with recent executive orders and guidance. Navy vessel steaming days tables were removed in lieu of more current and detailed vessel and aircraft emission source activity data that became available following the release of the Draft Supplemental EIS/OEIS.

- **Appendix I (Military Expended Material and Direct Strike Impact Analysis):**

The surface area of a small number of training and testing locations was updated.

- **Appendix J (Cumulative Impacts Supporting Information):**

Information on wind farm projects and exporting liquified natural gas was updated in accordance with recent executive orders. Information on recreational fishing and maritime traffic was updated as applicable.

- **Appendix K (Activity Impact Determinations):**

Outdated references to the Council on Environmental Quality were deleted and replaced with reference to OPNAV M-5090.1 (Environmental Readiness Program Manual). Corrections were made in multiple impact descriptor conversion tables and significance determination tables, as applicable.

- **Appendix L (Agency Correspondence):**

Agency correspondence associated with the Coastal Zone Management Act, ESA, Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act, Marine Mammal Protection Act, National Historic Preservation Act, and National Marine Sanctuaries Act was added.

- **Appendix M (Public Involvement and Distribution):**

Section M.3 (Notification of Availability of Draft Supplemental Environmental Impact Statement/Overseas Environmental Impact Statement) was added. Section M.3 includes information on notification of the availability of the Draft Supplemental EIS/OEIS, public meetings, distribution of the Draft Supplemental EIS/OEIS, and comments on the Draft Supplemental EIS/OEIS along with Action Proponents' responses.

- **Appendix N (Federal Register Notices):**

There were no substantive changes in this appendix.

- **Appendix O (Geographic Information System Data Sources):**

Data source references were updated for several features and layers. Specific features and layers were identified, replacing a general reference to Chapter 2 of the Supplemental EIS/OEIS, where applicable.

- **Appendix P (List of Preparers):**

Changes were made to update the List of Preparers based on changes in personnel working on the project.

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