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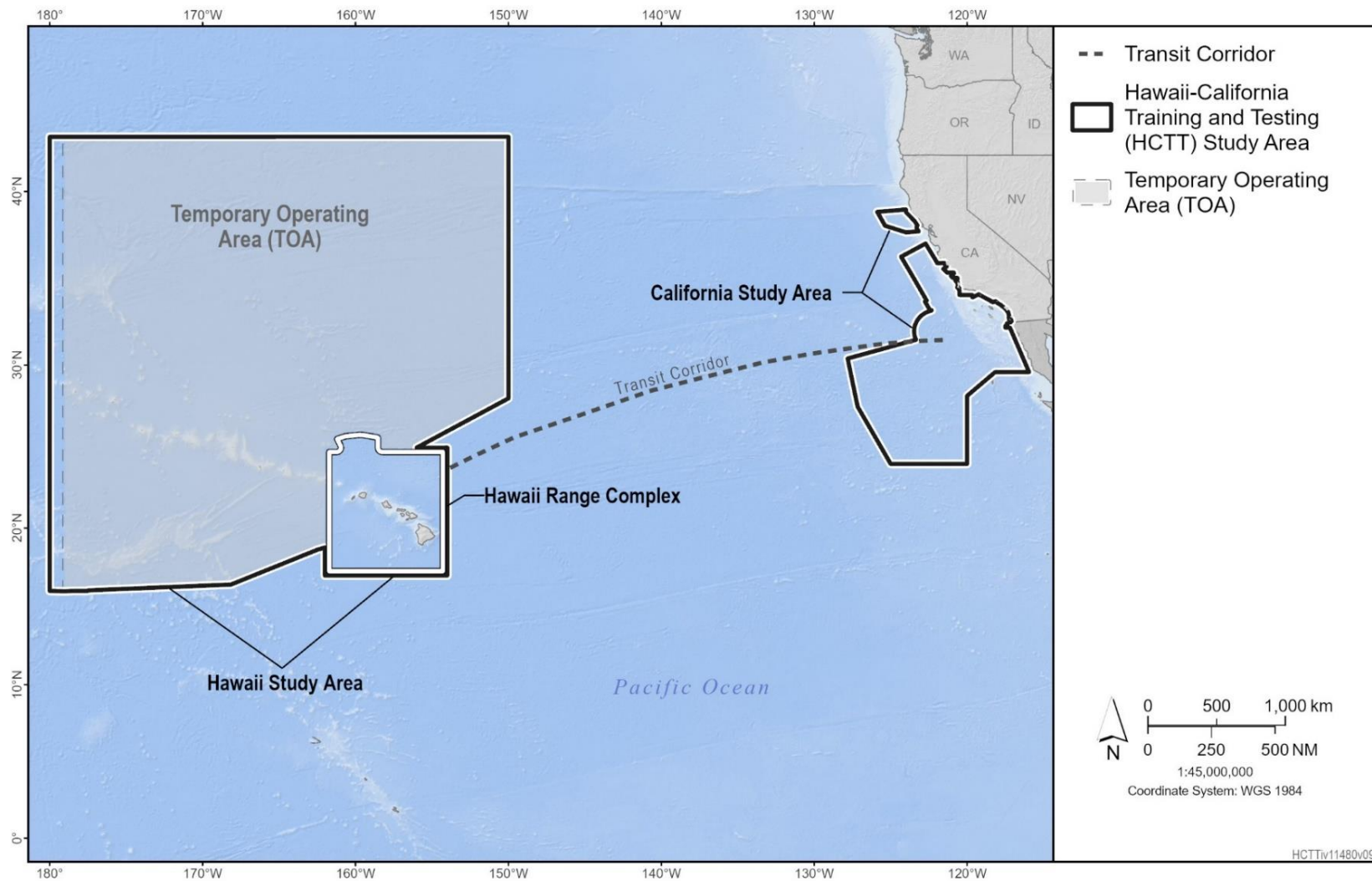
# 1 Purpose and Need for the Proposed Action

## 1.1 Introduction

The United States (U.S.) Department of the Navy (Navy) (including both the U.S. Navy and the U.S. Marine Corps [USMC]) jointly with the U.S. Coast Guard (USCG), U.S. Army (Army), and U.S. Air Force (USAF), has prepared this Environmental Impact Statement/Overseas Environmental Impact Statement (EIS/OEIS) pursuant to National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA). The Navy is the lead agency for the Proposed Action and is responsible for the scope and content of this EIS/OEIS. For this EIS/OEIS, Action Proponents within the Navy include Commander U.S. Pacific Fleet, the USMC, Naval Air Systems Command (NAVAIR), Naval Facilities Engineering and Expeditionary Warfare Center (EXWC), Naval Sea Systems Command (NAVSEA), Naval Information Warfare Systems Command (NAVWAR), and Office of Naval Research (ONR). In addition to the Navy Action Proponents, USCG, Army, and USAF are participating as Joint Lead Agencies due to the inclusion of their training activities, which are similar to Navy training covered in this EIS/OEIS. The lead and joint agencies are collectively referred to as the Action Proponents. As the lead federal agency, the Navy has coordinated closely with the joint lead agencies, and any commitments relative to the joint lead agency's proposed actions made in this EIS/OEIS are applicable to the joint lead agencies. The National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) is a cooperating agency.

The Action Proponents propose to conduct at-sea military readiness activities in the Hawaii-California Training and Testing (HCTT) Study Area, as represented in Figure 1-1. Military readiness activities are comprised of training and testing activities and can include the use of active sonar and other acoustic sources, as well as the use of explosives. Military readiness activities also include modernization and sustainment of ranges necessary to support these training and testing activities. The Study Area includes the waters of the Pacific Ocean along the coast of California, the waters around the Hawaiian Islands, and a transit corridor between these areas; the high seas west of California and surrounding Hawaii; pierside locations at Navy installations, within port transit channels and near civilian ports; and inshore waterways (e.g., San Diego Bay, Port Hueneme, Pearl Harbor).

Training and testing activities prepare the Action Proponents to fulfill their missions to protect and defend the United States and its allies but have the potential to affect the environment. In compliance with NEPA and Executive Order (EO) 12114, this EIS/OEIS assesses the potential environmental effects associated with the proposed at-sea military readiness activities to be conducted within the Study Area. These proposed activities are generally consistent with those analyzed in two separate NEPA planning documents, the 2018 Hawaii-Southern California Training and Testing (HSTT) EIS/OEIS completed in December 2018 (U.S. Department of the Navy, 2018) and the 2022 Point Mugu Sea Range (PMSR) EIS/OEIS (U.S. Department of the Navy, 2022), and are representative of the military readiness activities that the Action Proponents have been conducting off Hawaii and California for decades.



*Note: The Hawaii Study Area is approximately 2,000 nautical miles from the California Study Area. Typical Navy ship transit time between the Study Areas is five to seven days.*

**Figure 1-1: Hawaii-California Training and Testing Study Area**

This HCTT Study Area (Phase IV) differs from the HSTT Study Area (Phase III) in that HCTT includes an expanded Southern California (SOCAL) Range Complex (Warning Area 293 [W-293] and W-294 and the sea space beneath), new testing sea space between W-293 and PMSR, the inclusion of two existing training and testing at-sea range areas (PMSR and the Northern California [NOCAL] Range Complex), inclusion of ocean areas along the Southern California coastline from approximately Dana Point to Port Hueneme, and four amphibious approach lanes providing California land access from NOCAL and PMSR (Figure 1-2). This EIS/OEIS covers only the at-sea portion of the amphibious approach lanes.

## 1.2 The Navy's Environmental Compliance and At-Sea Policy

The Navy instituted the "At-Sea Policy" in 2000 to ensure compliance with applicable environmental regulations and policies and preserve the flexibility necessary for the Navy and Marine Corps to train and test at sea. This policy directed, in part, that Fleet Commanders develop a programmatic approach to environmental compliance at sea for ranges and Operating Areas within their respective geographic areas of responsibility (U.S. Department of the Navy, 2000).

The Navy is currently in the fourth phase of implementing this programmatic approach, which covers similar types of military readiness activities in the HSTT Study Area, PMSR Study Area, and the NOCAL Range Complex (collectively referred to as the HCTT Study Area). For further discussion of the first three phases, please see Section 1.2 of the 2018 HSTT EIS/OEIS.

## 1.3 Overview and Strategic Importance of Existing Range Complexes

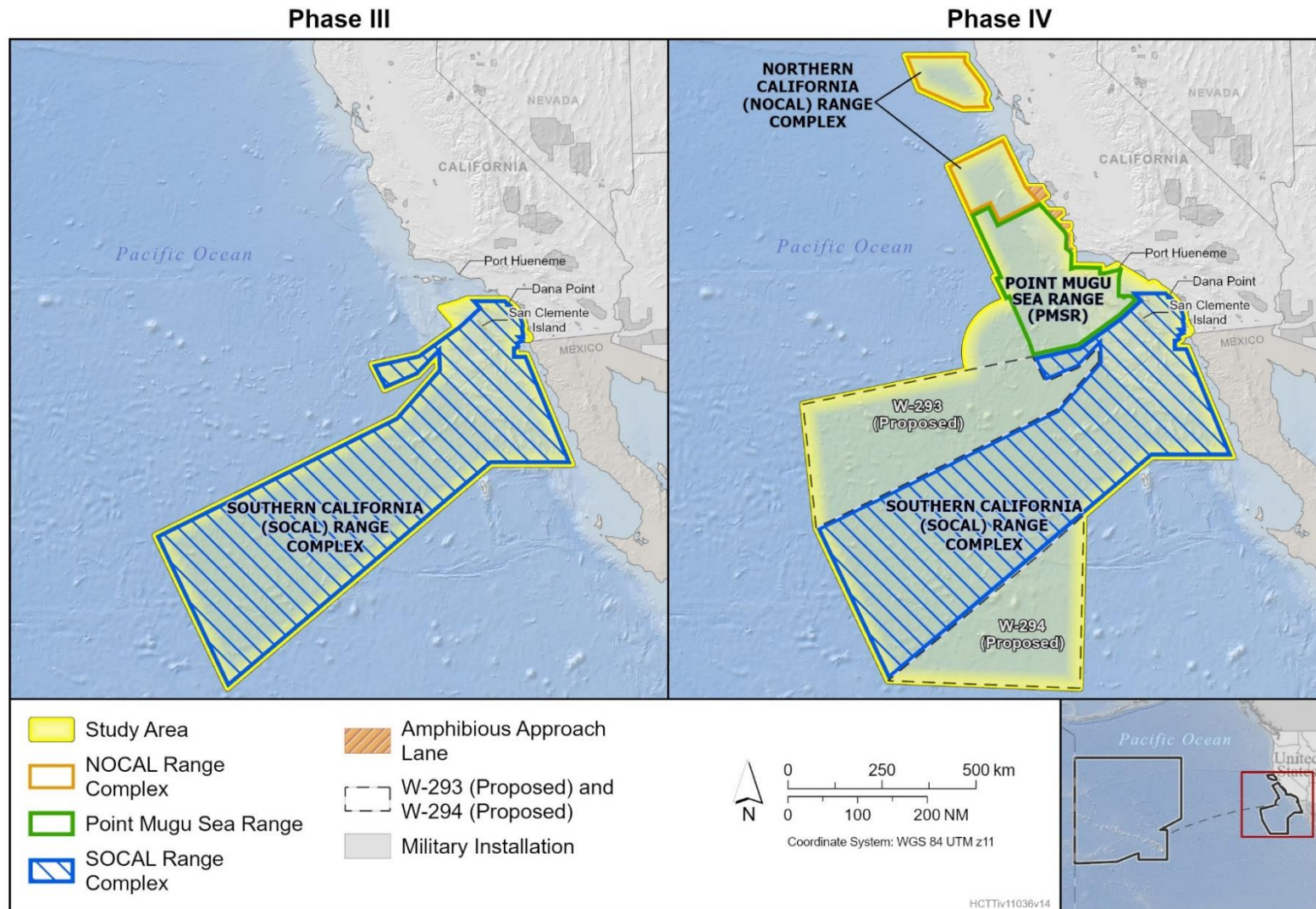
The ranges analyzed in this EIS/OEIS have each existed for many decades, dating back to the 1930s. Range use and infrastructure have developed over time as military readiness requirements in support of modern warfare have evolved.

Through each phase of environmental planning, the Navy has combined ranges for the purposes of NEPA analysis where similar training and testing is conducted, shown in Table 1-1.

**Table 1-1: History of NEPA/EO 12114 Coverage of the HCTT Study Area**

Phase	Hawaii Range Complex	Southern California Range Complex	Silver Strand Training Complex	Point Mugu Sea Range	Northern California Range Complex
I	2008 Hawaii Range Complex EIS/OEIS	2008 Southern California Range Complex EIS/OEIS	2011 Silver Strand Training Complex EIS	2002 Naval Air Warfare Center Weapons Division (NAWCWD) Point Mugu Sea Range (PMSR) EIS/OEIS	Note 1
II	2013 Hawaii-Southern California Training and Testing EIS/OEIS				
III	2018 Hawaii-Southern California Training and Testing EIS/OEIS				
IV	Hawaii-California Training and Testing EIS/OEIS				

Note 1: The 2014 U.S. Navy F-35C West Coast Homebasing EIS analyzed aircraft activities in airspace within the HCTT Study Area (W-283, W-285, W-532).



**Figure 1-2: Changes to the California Portion of the Hawaii-California Training and Testing Study Area**

The proximity of the ranges to Navy, USMC, USCG, Army, and USAF installations creates efficiency in the utilization of government resources as well as safe conditions in which forces may train and test. The Action Proponents' homeports and air stations are equipped with robust search and rescue capabilities, medical facilities, and alternate airfields, all of which are necessary components of safety for training and testing events. Proximity of ranges to homeports also provides fuel savings; exposes equipment to less wear and tear; and ensures that Navy, USMC, and USCG personnel do not spend unnecessary time away from their families during the training cycle. Less time away from home is an important factor in military readiness, morale, and retention.

The Navy's research, development, test, and evaluation organizations also require access to a realistic environment to conduct testing. The Study Area must provide the flexibility to meet diverse testing requirements to enable the testing community action proponent (systems commands) and ONR to certify advanced platforms and systems for utilization by the fleets in wide-ranging conditions at sea. This is important because testing in controlled conditions, similar to those in which the technology could be employed, enhances combat readiness.

#### **1.4 Proposed Action**

The Action Proponents' Proposed Action is to conduct military readiness activities, comprised of training, testing, and modernization and sustainment of ranges in the HCTT Study Area. NMFS' Proposed Action is to promulgate regulations and issue Letters of Authorization (LOAs) under the Marine Mammal Protection Act (MMPA) of 1972, as amended (16 United States Code [U.S.C.] 1361 et seq.) and would be a direct outcome of responding to the Navy's request for incidental take authorizations (ITAs).<sup>1</sup> A detailed description of the Proposed Action is provided in Chapter 2 (Description of Proposed Action and Alternatives).

#### **1.5 Purpose and Need**

The purpose of the Action Proponents' Proposed Action is to ensure the U.S. military services are able to organize, train, and equip service members and personnel, needed to meet their respective national defense missions in accordance with their Congressionally mandated requirements.<sup>2</sup> These missions are achieved in part by conducting military readiness activities within the Study Area in accordance with established military readiness requirements.

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<sup>1</sup> NMFS' issuance of MMPA ITAs (i.e., LOAs) is a major federal action (NMFS' Proposed Action) with a discrete purpose and need relative to NMFS' statutory and regulatory obligations. Consequently, NMFS has an independent responsibility to comply with NEPA. If NMFS makes the findings necessary to issue the requested LOAs, it will rely on the information and analyses in this document. NMFS intends to adopt this EIS/OEIS to fulfill its NEPA obligations and issue its own Record of Decision, if appropriate.

<sup>2</sup> See Title 10, Sections 8062 (Navy), 8063 (USMC), 7062 (Army), 9062 (USAF) U.S.C. and Title 14, Sections 101 and 102 U.S.C. (USCG) for each service's specific language. Army and USAF are included only for their activities in Hawaii with potential in-water effects.

The purpose of NMFS' action is to evaluate the Action Proponents' request for authorizations to take marine mammals, pursuant to section 101(a)(5)(A) of the MMPA and its implementing regulations administered by NMFS, and to decide whether to promulgate regulations and issue LOAs, including any conditions needed to meet the statutory mandate of the MMPA.

To issue an ITA, NMFS must evaluate the best available scientific information and find that the take will have a negligible impact on the affected marine mammal species or stocks and will not have an unmitigable impact on their availability for taking for subsistence uses (the latter finding is not relevant for this Proposed Action). NMFS must also prescribe permissible methods of taking and other "means of effecting the least practicable adverse impact" on the affected species or stocks and their habitat, and monitoring and reporting requirements. NMFS cannot issue an ITA unless it can make the required findings that the take would have a negligible impact on the affected species or stock.

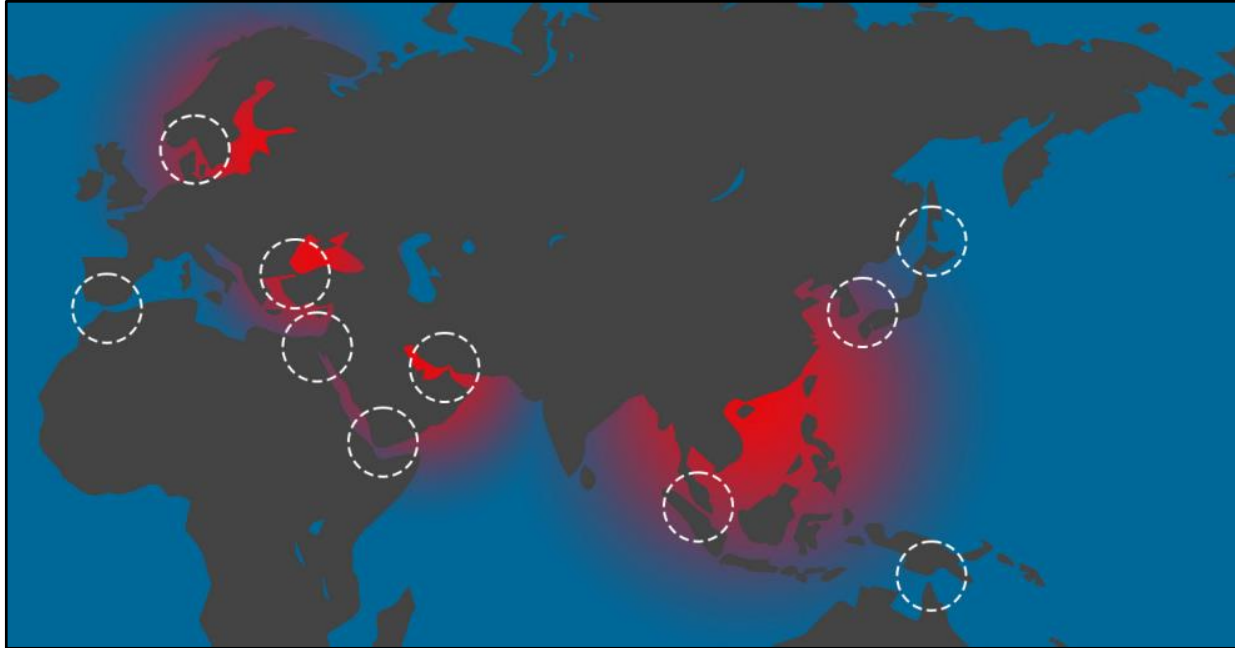
NMFS needs to render a decision regarding the request for authorizations due to NMFS' responsibilities under the MMPA (16 U.S.C. 1371(a)(5)(A)) and its implementing regulations. This EIS/OEIS analyzes the environmental effects associated with proposed military readiness activities within the Study Area, for which the Action Proponents are seeking authorization to take marine mammals. The analysis of mitigation measures includes the requirements for protection and management of marine resources. The analysis of mitigation measures considers benefits to species or stocks and their habitat, and analyzes the practicability and efficacy of each measure. This analysis of mitigation measures will be used to support requirements pertaining to mitigation, monitoring, and reporting that would be specified in the ITAs, if issued.

### **1.5.1 Why the Navy and Coast Guard Train**

The Chief of Naval Operations 2024 Navigation Plan states, "To prevail in war, naval forces need an integrated and distributed training capability to master high-end tactics, raise operator proficiency baseline, and generate readiness." The Navy is statutorily mandated to protect U.S. national security by being ready, at all times, to effectively prosecute war and defend the nation by conducting operations at sea. Operations at sea are essential to protecting U.S. national interests, considering that 70 percent of the earth is covered in water, 80 percent of the planet's population lives within close proximity to coastal areas, and 90 percent of global commerce is conducted by sea.

Through its continuous presence on the world's oceans, the Navy can respond to a wide range of situations because, on any given day, over one-third of its ships, submarines, and aircraft are deployed to overseas locations such as those illustrated in Figure 1-3. Before deploying, Sailors and Marines train to develop a broad range of capabilities to respond to threats, from full-scale armed conflict in a variety of different geographic areas and environmental conditions to humanitarian assistance and disaster relief efforts. Training prepares Navy and USMC personnel to be proficient in operating and maintaining the equipment, weapons, and systems they will use to conduct their assigned missions. Refer to Chapter 1, Section 1.4.1 and Section 1.4.2 in the 2018 HSTT EIS/OEIS for additional information on Navy Training.





*Source: U.S. Department of Defense (2022)*

**Figure 1-3: Key Maritime Regions Under Increased Threat**

The USCG enjoys a unique relationship with the Navy. By statute, the USCG is an armed force that trains and operates in the joint military arena at any time and functions as a specialized service under the Navy in time of war or when directed by the President. The USCG has national defense and statutory missions. The four major national defense missions are maritime intercept operations, deployed port operations/security and defense, peacetime engagement, and environmental defense operations. These missions are essential military tasks assigned to the USCG as a component of joint and combined forces in peacetime, crisis, and war. To effectively carry out these missions, the USCG's air and surface units train using realistic scenarios that support all of its statutory missions, to include training with the Navy and the other armed services. The statutory missions are ports and waterway security, drug interdiction, aids to navigation, search and rescue, living marine resources, marine safety, defense readiness, migrant interdiction, marine environmental protection, ice operations, and other law enforcement. The required training for each of these missions is very similar to the training the USCG conducts in support of the Department of Defense, because all USCG units are required to perform each mission at any given moment. The USCG has broad, multifaceted, jurisdictional authority for management of activities over all waters subject to jurisdiction of the United States. The USCG's law enforcement and national defense mission authority is based in 14 U.S.C. section 102, requiring the USCG to "maintain a state of readiness to assist in the defense of the United States, including when functioning as a specialized service in the Navy pursuant to section 103." The USCG successfully achieves the missions listed above in part by conducting training within the Study Area to develop, sharpen, and maintain tactics, coordination, and personnel readiness. The USCG activities are discussed in detail at Appendix A.

### **1.5.2 Why the Army and Air Force Train**

The Army and USAF are increasingly required to operate in a marine environment and with naval forces, and therefore have an increased requirement to train in the maritime environment.



### 1.5.3 Why the Navy Tests

The Navy's research and acquisition community, which is described in Table 1-2, provides weapons, systems, and platforms to the Navy to support its missions and give it a technological advantage over the United States' potential adversaries. This community is at the forefront of researching, developing, testing, evaluating, acquiring, and delivering modern platforms, combat systems, and related equipment to meet Fleet capability and readiness requirements. The Navy's research organizations and laboratories concentrate primarily on the development of new science and technology and include the initial testing of concepts that are relevant to the Navy of the future, including ship, aircraft, and weapons systems that support all Naval platforms throughout their life cycles, from acquisition through sustainment to end of life. Testing new weapons, systems, and platforms is a required step in the implementation process.

**Table 1-2: Navy Research, Testing, and Acquisition Community**

Command	Description
Naval Air Systems Command (NAVAIR)	NAVAIR develops, acquires, delivers, and sustains manned and unmanned naval aviation aircraft, weapons, and systems with proven capability and reliability to ensure Sailors and Marines achieve mission success.
Naval Sea Systems Command (NAVSEA)	NAVSEA develops, acquires, delivers, and maintains surface ships, submarines, unmanned vehicles, and weapon systems platforms that provide the right capability to the Naval Service.
Naval Information Warfare Systems Command (NAVWAR)	NAVWAR (previously Space and Naval Warfare Systems Command) identifies, develops, delivers, and sustains information warfare capabilities and services that enable naval, joint, coalition, and other national missions operating in warfighting domains from seabed to space, and performs such other functions and tasks as directed.
Office of Naval Research (ONR)	ONR, a research funding organization, which plans, fosters, encourages, and conducts a broad program of scientific research (e.g., in collaboration with universities, industry, small businesses) that promotes future naval sea power, enhances national security, and meets the complex technological challenges of today's world.
Naval Facilities Engineering and Expeditionary Warfare Center (EXWC)	EXWC provides research, development, testing, and evaluation (RDT&E), and in-service engineering and life-cycle management for the shore, oceans, and expeditionary domains. EXWC supports the Fleet by developing and delivering specialized waterfront, littoral, and undersea facilities; RDT&E, engineering, and sustainment expertise in marine and offshore structures; seafloor surveys; ocean construction; and underwater cables. EXWC testing activities involve the deployment and operation of technologies that advance the knowledge and tactical applications of marine energy, autonomous systems, and cable systems.

## 1.6 The Environmental Planning Process

NEPA requires federal agencies to examine the environmental effects of their proposed actions within the United States and its territories. An EIS/OEIS is a detailed public document that assesses the potential effects that a major federal action might have on the human environment (including the natural and biological environment). Since NEPA does not apply globally, President Carter issued EO 12114 in 1979, furthering the purpose of NEPA by creating similar procedures for federal agency activities affecting the environment of the global commons outside U.S. jurisdiction.

This EIS/OEIS considers future activities conducted at sea, updated training and testing requirements in an updated Study Area, and range modernization and sustainment. It also incorporates current best available science to include an updated Navy Acoustic Effects Model; updated marine species density estimates developed by the Navy in cooperation with NMFS; and updated *Criteria and Thresholds for Acoustic and Explosive Effects Analysis* developed by the Navy in cooperation with NMFS. In addition, this EIS/OEIS also supports the issuance of federal regulatory authorizations (upon the expiration of the current HSTT authorization and consultations in 2025), under the MMPA and the Endangered Species Act (ESA), using the best available science and analytical methods to assess potential environmental effects.

This EIS/OEIS is designed to comply with the requirements of both NEPA and EO 12114 and support additional legal compliance requirements, as further described in Chapter 6.

## 1.7 Scope and Content

This EIS/OEIS analyzes military readiness activities that could potentially affect human (e.g., socioeconomic) and natural resources, especially marine mammals, sea turtles, and fishes, as well as other marine resources. A reasonable range of alternatives are analyzed, including the No Action Alternative and two action alternatives, which are both technically and economically feasible and meet the purpose and need of the Action Proponents' proposal. In this EIS/OEIS, the Action Proponents analyzed direct, indirect, and cumulative effects.

NMFS is a cooperating agency because the scope of the Proposed Action and alternatives involves activities that have the potential to affect protected resources under the agency's jurisdiction and for which they have special expertise, including marine mammals, threatened and endangered species, essential fish habitat, and national marine sanctuaries. NMFS' special expertise and authority are based on its statutory responsibilities under the MMPA, as amended (16 U.S.C. section 1361 et seq.), the ESA (16 U.S.C. section 1531 et seq.), and the Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act as amended (16 U.S.C. section 1801 et seq.). The Navy, as lead agency, has requested ITAs under the MMPA, as amended, to take marine mammals incidental to the Action Proponents' proposed training and testing activities. The request was combined for efficiency purposes due to similar effects of similar activities, but separate authorizations would be the responsibility of separate U.S. military services to ensure compliance. NMFS is required to evaluate the applicant's request pursuant to the specific requirements of the MMPA and, if appropriate, issue an ITA under the MMPA. NMFS' issuance of MMPA ITAs (i.e., LOAs) is a major federal action (NMFS' Proposed Action) with a discrete purpose and need relative to NMFS' statutory and regulatory obligations. NMFS has an independent responsibility to comply with NEPA and intends, after independent review, to rely on the information and analysis in this EIS/OEIS to fulfill its NEPA requirements. NMFS intends to adopt this EIS/OEIS and issue a Record of Decision associated with its decision to grant or deny the Navy's request for ITAs pursuant to section 101(a)(5)(A) of the MMPA if appropriate.

The Navy, USCG, Army, and USAF will each issue a Record of Decision that provides the rationale for choosing one of the alternatives.

### 1.8 Incorporation by Reference

This EIS/OEIS refers to other environmental documents that provide related information and analyses, which help keep this EIS/OEIS more concise. Cited references may provide additional information in support of this document's analysis. Therefore, documents listed in Table 1-3 are incorporated by reference.

**Table 1-3: Documents Incorporated by Reference**

Reference	Description
Naval Facilities Engineering Command Pacific (2014)	Wave Energy Test Site (WETS) Environmental Assessment (EA)
U.S. Department of the Navy (2018)	Hawaii-Southern California Training and Testing (HSTT) EIS/OEIS
U.S. Department of the Navy (2020)	Optimized Fleet Response Plan
U.S. Department of the Navy (2022)	Point Mugu Sea Range (PMSR) EIS/OEIS

### 1.9 Organization of this Environmental Impact Statement/Overseas Environmental Impact Statement

This EIS/OEIS is organized as shown in Table 1-4.

**Table 1-4: Organization of this Environmental Impact Statement/Overseas Environmental Impact Statement**

Chapter/ Appendix	Title	Description
Chapter 1	Purpose and Need for the Proposed Action	Purpose of and need for the Proposed Action
Chapter 2	Description of the Proposed Action and Alternatives	Proposed Action, alternatives considered but eliminated in the EIS/OEIS, and alternatives to be carried forward for analysis in the EIS/OEIS
Chapter 3	Affected Environment and Environmental Consequences	Existing conditions of the affected environment and analysis of the potential effects of the proposed training and testing activities for each alternative
Chapter 4	Cumulative Impacts	Analysis of effects of the Proposed Action when added to past, present, and reasonably foreseeable future actions
Chapter 5	Mitigation	Mitigation measures that will be implemented to avoid or reduce potential effects
Chapter 6	Regulatory Considerations	Considerations required under National Environmental Policy Act and description of how the Action Proponents comply with other federal, state, and local plans, policies, and regulations
Appendix A	Activity Descriptions	A description of the proposed training and testing activities
Appendix B	Activity Stressor Matrices	Relationship between stressors associated with the proposed training and testing activities and the environmental resources analyzed

Chapter/ Appendix	Title	Description
Appendix C	Biological Resources Supplemental Information	Background and affected environment information on the biological resources found in the Study Area
Appendix D	Acoustic and Explosive Effects Supporting Information	Background information on the acoustic and explosive energy, propagation, and methods used to determine how biological resources may be affected
Appendix E	Acoustic and Explosive Effects Analysis for Marine Mammals, Reptiles, and Fishes in the Hawaii-California Training and Testing Study Area	The analysis of how biological resources are potentially affected by acoustic and explosive energy in the water
Appendix F	Non-Acoustic Effects Supporting Information	Information and methods used to determine how biological resources may be affected by non-acoustic stressors
Appendix G	Air Quality Emissions Calculations and Record of Non-Applicability	Background information, emission factor development, and calculations for the analysis of potential effects to air quality
Appendix H	Description of Systems and Ranges	Detailed information on typical systems (e.g., military hardware, weapons, aircraft, vessels, etc.) used during training and testing and the ranges where military readiness activities would occur
Appendix I	Military Expended Materials, Direct Strike, and Ship Strike Effects Analysis	The methods, calculations, and results for quantifying the effects to bottom substrate from explosions, the potential for military expended materials to strike a marine mammal or sea turtle, and the probability of a vessel strike to a marine mammal
Appendix J	Agency Correspondence	Agency correspondence applicable to this project
Appendix K	Geographic Mitigation Assessment	Describes the Navy's methodology in assessing potential mitigation areas within the HCTT Study Area to avoid or reduce potential effects on marine mammals in key areas of biological importance
Appendix L	Public Involvement/Comment Responses	The Action Proponents' public involvement process, including a list of agencies, government officials, tribes, groups, and individuals on the distribution list for receipt of the Draft EIS/OEIS. Includes a summary of the scoping comments received and a copy of all scoping comments received. Public comments on the Draft EIS/OEIS and the Action Proponents' responses are provided in the Final EIS/OEIS.
Appendix M	Federal Register Notices	Federal Register notices applicable to this project
Appendix N	List of Preparers	The key authors and reviewers of this EIS/OEIS

## **REFERENCES**

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