

Mariana Islands Training and Testing

Supplemental Environmental Impact Statement/ Overseas Environmental Impact Statement

www.nepa.navy.mil/mitteis

ID#-EISX-007-17-USN-1744382878

June 2025



Introduction

Military personnel must be ready to respond to any situation that may arise, ranging from engaging in large-scale conflict, to providing humanitarian assistance and disaster relief, to conducting maritime security operations (e.g., protecting international shipping, deterring piracy, providing port and harbor security, fighting drug smuggling). The success and safety of service members depend on realistic training using evolving technology that prepares them to respond to an urgent situation or an act of aggression at a moment's notice. Maintaining rigorous, comprehensive training regimens ensures aircraft, vessels, and equipment are ready to deploy and military personnel are prepared to carry out their duties as required.

Military research, development, testing, and evaluation (referred to as "testing") activities are also critical for maintaining readiness. The Department of Defense continually researches and develops new technologies to ensure the U.S. military remains the most advanced and capable in the world. These technologies must be tested and evaluated before military personnel can rely on them in real-world situations.

The Department of the Navy (lead agency), including both the U.S. Navy and the U.S. Marine Corps; the U.S. Air Force; the U.S. Army; and the U.S. Coast Guard (referred to as "Action Proponents"), are preparing a supplement to the 2015 Mariana Islands Training and Testing (MITT) Environmental Impact Statement (EIS)/Overseas EIS (OEIS) and the 2020 MITT Supplemental EIS (SEIS)/OEIS to assess the potential environmental effects associated with the Proposed Action to continue military readiness activities at sea and on Farallon de Medinilla (FDM) within the MITT Study Area (referred to as "Study Area") (Figure 1). The Navy as the lead agency for the Proposed Action is responsible for the scope and content of the SEIS/OEIS.

Proposed Action

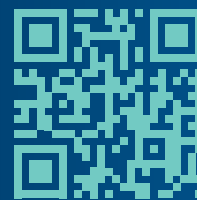
The Proposed Action is to continue military readiness activities at sea and on FDM within the Study Area. Military readiness activities include activities associated with training, testing, and range modernization and sustainment. At-sea military readiness activities may include the use of active sonar, explosives, and other sources of sound. The Action Proponents would continue to employ mitigation measures when conducting at-sea activities to reduce or avoid potential adverse effects on marine species. Proposed range modernization and sustainment includes placement and maintenance of subsurface targets, such as training minefields, and placement of temporary instrumentation in the Study Area.

Proposed training and testing activities are similar to those previously analyzed and are representative of activities conducted around the Mariana Islands for decades, with some updates to the type, frequency, duration, intensity, and location. Proposed training continues to include joint- and combined-force exercises, including those in which foreign partners and allied nations participate.

Virtual Scoping Presentation

The Action Proponents encourage you to visit the project website at www.nepa.navy.mil/mitteis to view a virtual scoping presentation and learn more about the Proposed Action, its purpose and need, National Environmental Policy Act and National Historic Preservation Act Section 106 processes, and public involvement opportunities.

Realistic training and testing are crucial for military readiness, personnel safety, and national defense.



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Seventy percent of the earth is covered in water, 80 percent of the planet's population lives in proximity to coastal areas, and 90 percent of global commerce is conducted by sea. The priorities of the Department of the Navy and other U.S. military services are to maintain open navigable seas, provide world-wide humanitarian support in crises, deter aggression, and win decisively in war. The Action Proponents must train Sailors, Marines, Airmen, Soldiers, and Coast Guardsmen in realistic environments in preparation to defend the United States and its territories, allies, and interests.

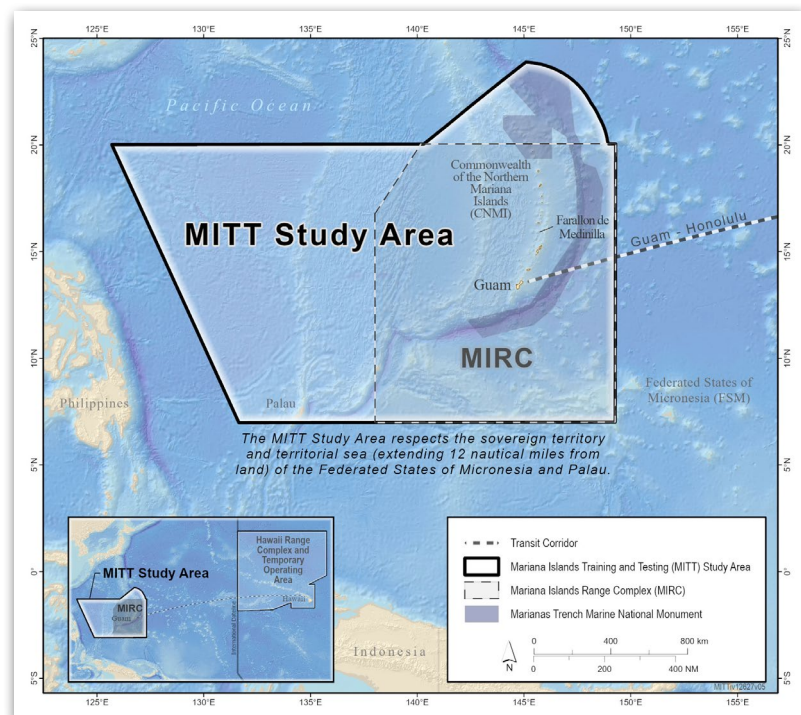
The Action Proponents' research, acquisition, and testing community includes research organizations, laboratory facilities, and testing centers. This community researches, develops, acquires, and evaluates weapons, systems, manned and unmanned aircraft, surface ships, submarines, unmanned underwater vehicles, and other specialized technologies which give the U.S. military services a technological advantage over potential adversaries. Testing activities must be conducted at sea to ensure these technologies perform as designed and expected in the environment where they will be relied upon by the services.

The Navy will seek the reissuance of an authorization under the Marine Mammal Protection Act and consultations under the Endangered Species Act to support at-sea military readiness requirements within the Study Area beyond July 2027 and will comply with other applicable laws and regulations.

- Updates to training and testing activities previously analyzed and which currently reflect the most up-to-date compilation of activities deemed necessary to accomplish military readiness requirements;
- A revised acoustic effects model;
- Updated marine mammal density data, acoustic effects criteria, and thresholds;
- Research published since the 2015 MITT EIS/OEIS and the 2020 MITT SEIS/OEIS; and
- Range modernization and sustainment in a manner necessary to support these training and testing activities.

Mariana Islands Training and Testing Study Area

The Study Area remains unchanged from that considered in the 2020 MITT SEIS/OEIS. The Study Area includes the at-sea areas of the Mariana Islands Range Complex (MIRC); additional areas on the high seas north and west of the MIRC; the transit corridor between the MIRC and the Hawaii Range Complex; Navy pierside and harbor locations on Guam; and the land-based training area on FDM. The SEIS/OEIS does not include changes to the land-based activities on Guam, Saipan, Tinian, and Rota previously analyzed in 2015. Therefore, land-based activities on these islands will not be reanalyzed in the upcoming SEIS/OEIS.



● **Figure 1** Mariana Islands Training and Testing Study Area

National Environmental Policy Act Process

The National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) is a U.S. law that requires federal agencies to identify and analyze the potential environmental effects of a proposed action before deciding whether to proceed with that action. The law encourages and facilitates public involvement to inform decision makers on actions that may affect the community or the environment.

Resources to Be Evaluated

The Action Proponents will analyze the reasonably foreseeable effects the Proposed Action may have on the human, natural, and cultural environments, including:

- Sediments and water quality
- Air quality and greenhouse gases
- Marine habitats
- Marine mammals
- Sea turtles
- Marine birds
- Marine vegetation
- Marine invertebrates
- Fishes
- Terrestrial species and habitats
- Cultural resources
- Socioeconomics
- Public health and safety



Environmental Protection at Sea

The Action Proponents protect marine species and reduce potential effects on the marine environment when training and testing at sea by establishing and adhering to mitigation measures, such as:

- Establishing activity-based mitigation zones
- Posting qualified Lookouts to visually observe mitigation zones for marine species prior to and during activities
- Maneuvering vessels, such as reducing speed, to maintain distance from observed marine species
- Implementing geographic mitigation areas with seasonal or year-round restrictions



The Navy is a world leader in marine species research, investing more than \$20 million each year in research and monitoring, and is dedicated to protecting the marine and coastal environments as it trains and tests.



Consultations with Regulatory Agencies

The Action Proponents invited the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration's National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) to be a cooperating agency in the preparation of the SEIS/OEIS. NMFS was requested to be a cooperating agency because of its expertise and regulatory authority over marine resources. As a cooperating agency, NMFS subject matter experts review sections related to potential effects on marine mammals and other protected marine species. Additionally, after independent review, NMFS may adopt the SEIS/OEIS to fulfill its NEPA obligations for the rule-making process under the Marine Mammal Protection Act.

The Action Proponents will also consult with appropriate Guam and Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands (CNMI) agencies on the Coastal Zone Management Act; with NMFS and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service on the Endangered Species Act; with NMFS on the Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act; and with historic preservation offices of Guam and the CNMI for the National Historic Preservation Act (NHPA).

Public Involvement

Public involvement is a fundamental aspect of the NEPA process, and there are opportunities for the public to participate in the development of the SEIS/OEIS (Figure 2). The Action Proponents welcome, value, and appreciate the public's input.

Public and agency input allows decision makers to consider community concerns and benefit from local knowledge. The public participates in the NEPA process during the following stages:

- **Scoping Period:** Help to identify concerns, potential effects, relevant effects of past actions, and possible alternative actions.
- **Draft SEIS/OEIS Public Review and Comment Period:** Evaluate and provide substantive comments on the analysis of the Proposed Action and alternatives.
- **Final SEIS/OEIS 30-Day Wait Period:** Review the Final SEIS/OEIS and Action Proponent responses to substantive public comments received on the Draft SEIS/OEIS.
- **Record of Decision:** Become informed of the explanations for the Action Proponents' decision and plans for mitigation and monitoring.

National Historic Preservation Act Section 106

The NHPA is a law that requires federal agencies to identify and consider the potential effects of their actions on historic properties and look for ways to avoid, minimize, or mitigate effects. Historic properties may include archaeological sites, sacred and religious sites, submerged historic resources, traditional cultural places, or historic buildings, structures, or objects.

The public scoping period supports consultation under Section 106 of the NHPA and its implementing regulations, as members of the public are invited to provide comments about potential effects on historic properties.

Public involvement is an important part of the NHPA Section 106 process. The Action Proponents encourage the public to help identify historic properties within the Study Area and share information regarding the identification of or potential effects on historic properties by providing a written comment during the public scoping comment period. You may submit a comment, or a request for information on the NHPA Section 106 consultation process, roles of consulting parties, and how you may participate (see Submitting Comments section below).

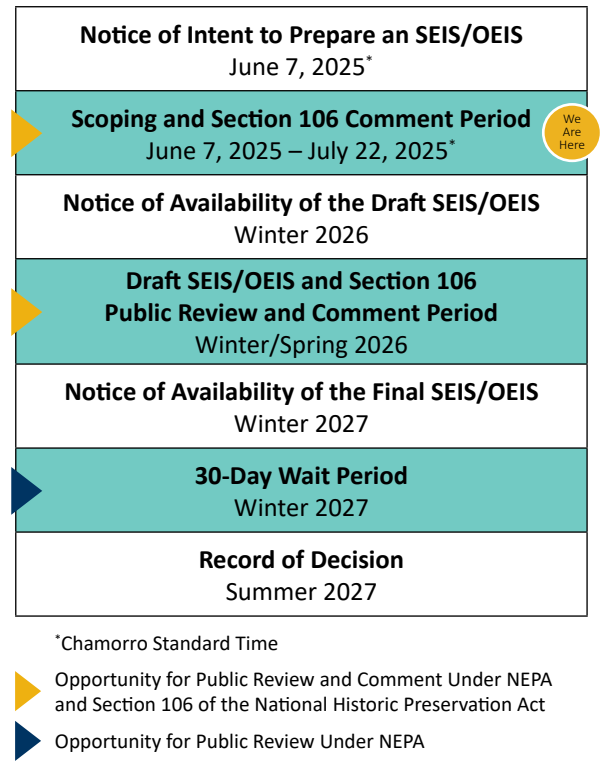
Submitting Comments

The public is invited to comment on the scope of the SEIS/OEIS, including identifying potential alternatives or issues that should be addressed in the NEPA analysis, relaying environmental concerns, identifying historic properties, and providing information or analysis relevant to the Proposed Action or the project's potential to affect historic properties pursuant to Section 106 of the NHPA. The Action Proponents are accepting scoping comments from **June 7 to July 22, 2025**, Chamorro Standard Time (ChST).

Substantive comments will be considered under NEPA and pursuant to Section 106 of the NHPA and may be submitted via the project website at www.nepa.navy.mil/mitteis or by mail to:

Naval Facilities Engineering Systems Command Pacific
Attention: MITT SEIS/OEIS Project Manager
258 Makalapa Drive, Suite 100
Pearl Harbor, HI 96860-3134

Scoping comments must be postmarked or received online by **11:59 p.m. ChST on July 22, 2025**, for consideration in the Draft SEIS/OEIS.



● Figure 2 National Environmental Policy Act Process

Programmatic Agreements Under the National Historic Preservation Act Section 106

The Navy, as the lead agency, will initiate consultation in accordance with Section 106 of the NHPA. The Navy will comply with the existing *2020 Programmatic Agreement Between the Commander, Joint Region Marianas and the Guam State Historic Preservation Officer, Regarding Military Training and Testing on and within the Surrounding Waters of the Island of Guam* and the *2022 Programmatic Agreement Between the Commander, Joint Region Marianas and the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands Historic Preservation Officer, Regarding Military Training and Testing on and within the Surrounding Waters of the Islands of the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands* in coordination with the historic preservation offices of Guam and the CNMI and all signatories to those agreements.

Public involvement is a fundamental aspect of the NEPA and NHPA Section 106 processes. To improve and strengthen the SEIS/OEIS, the Action Proponents welcome, value, and appreciate the public's input. Please share this information to help inform your community.