

Mariana Islands Training and Testing Supplemental Environmental Impact Statement/ Overseas Environmental Impact Statement

www.nepa.navy.mil/mitteis

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

March 2026



Military personnel must be ready to respond to any situation that may arise, ranging from engaging in large-scale conflict, to providing humanitarian response and aiding in disaster recovery, to securing the world's oceans. The success and safety of service members depend on realistic training using new 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 (collectively 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 before military personnel can rely on them in real-world situations.

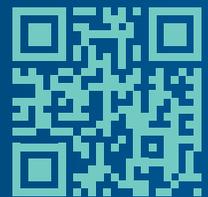
The Department of the Navy, including both the U.S. Navy and the U.S. Marine Corps; the U.S. Air Force; the U.S. Army; and the U.S. Coast Guard (collectively referred to as "Action Proponents"), have prepared a supplement to the 2015 Mariana Islands Training and Testing (MITT) Environmental Impact Statement (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) (No'os) within the MITT Study Area (referred to as "Study Area"). Military readiness activities include training, testing, and range modernization and sustainment activities (see sidebars on pages 2 and 3).

As the lead agency for the Proposed Action, the Navy is responsible for the scope and content of the SEIS/OEIS under the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) and Executive Order 12114 *Environmental Effects Abroad of Major Federal Actions*, and Section 106 compliance under the National Historic Preservation Act (NHPA).



Virtual Presentation

The Action Proponents encourage you to visit the project website at www.nepa.navy.mil/mitteis to view a virtual presentation and learn more about the Proposed Action and alternatives analyzed, potential effects on the environment and historic properties, National Environmental Policy Act and National Historic Preservation Act Section 106 processes, and public involvement opportunities. Project fact sheets are also available in English, CHamoru, Chamorro, and Carolinian on the project website and at public meetings.



www.nepa.navy.mil/mitteis

Proposed Military Readiness Activities

Proposed military readiness activities include training, testing, and range modernization and sustainment in the Study Area:

- Training continues to include joint- and combined-force activities in the Western Pacific, including those in which foreign partners and allied nations participate.
- Testing includes military research, development, testing, and evaluation activities associated with new technologies before use in real-world situations.
- Range modernization and sustainment activities include placement and maintenance of subsurface targets, such as training minefields, and placement of temporary instrumentation.



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

Proposed Action and Alternatives

The Proposed Action is to continue military readiness activities at sea and on FDM within the MITT Study Area (Figure 1). The purpose of the Proposed Action is to ensure the Action Proponents can organize, train, and equip service members and personnel to meet their respective national defense missions.

Proposed training and testing activities are similar to those previously analyzed and are representative of activities occurring around the Mariana Islands for decades, with some updates to the type, frequency, duration, intensity, and location. The Navy identified 10 military readiness activities to be analyzed as “new” in the SEIS/OEIS for the purposes of consolidating existing environmental analyses, reclassifying ongoing activities, or refining testing factors to ensure a comprehensive and consistent analysis.

The Action Proponents analyzed new information and changes to military readiness activities as they relate to potential effects on the environment. Examples of new information and changes to the Proposed Action since the 2015 and 2020 analyses include:

- An updated compilation of activities deemed necessary to accomplish military readiness requirements;
- A revised acoustic effects model;
- Updated marine mammal density data and acoustic effects criteria and thresholds;
- Best available science (new publications and emergent studies) since the previous environmental analysis; and
- Necessary range modernization and sustainment activities.

The Action Proponents are committed to complying with applicable federal laws and regulations. The Navy is seeking the reissuance of an authorization by the National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) under the Marine Mammal Protection Act to support at-sea military readiness requirements within the Study Area beyond July 2027, when the current authorization expires. The Action Proponents will also consult, as appropriate, with Guam and Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands (CNMI) agencies under the Coastal Zone Management Act; with NMFS and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service on effects to listed marine species under the Endangered Species Act (ESA); with NMFS on essential fish habitat under the Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act; and with historic preservation offices of Guam and the CNMI under the NHPA.

The Action Proponents analyzed three alternatives in the Draft SEIS/OEIS:

- **No Action Alternative:** Under this alternative, the Action Proponents would not conduct proposed military readiness activities within the Study Area, and NMFS would not reissue an authorization under the Marine Mammal Protection Act. For FDM, the lease agreement would remain in place, and the island would be maintained as a Navy range, though strike warfare training would cease. This alternative does not meet the purpose of and need for the Proposed Action because it prevents the Action Proponents from meeting statutory readiness requirements and would result in an unacceptable increase in risk to military personnel and national security. The No Action Alternative is included in the analysis to serve as a baseline for comparing the potential effects of Alternatives 1 and 2.
- **Alternative 1 (Preferred Alternative):** Under this alternative, proposed military readiness activities would occur into the reasonably foreseeable future. This alternative reflects a representative year of activity to account for fluctuations in deployment schedules. This alternative also includes testing unmanned aerial and surface vehicles for the integration of modern technology.
- **Alternative 2:** This alternative includes the same military readiness activities as Alternative 1 but assumes the maximum level of activity could occur every year over a seven-year period.

Mariana Islands Training and Testing Study Area

The Study Area remains unchanged from that presented in the 2020 environmental analysis. 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; pierside locations on Guam in Apra Harbor; nearshore areas of Guam and the CNMI; and the land-based training area on FDM.

Because the MITT SEIS/OEIS Proposed Action does not include any changes to the land-based activities on Guam, Saipan, Tinian, and Rota previously analyzed in 2015, the Action Proponents will not reanalyze land-based activities on these islands in this SEIS/OEIS. As was done in the 2020 SEIS/OEIS, the Action Proponents are updating the analysis for activities proposed to occur on and around FDM.



The MITT Study Area remains unchanged from that presented in the 2020 environmental analysis.

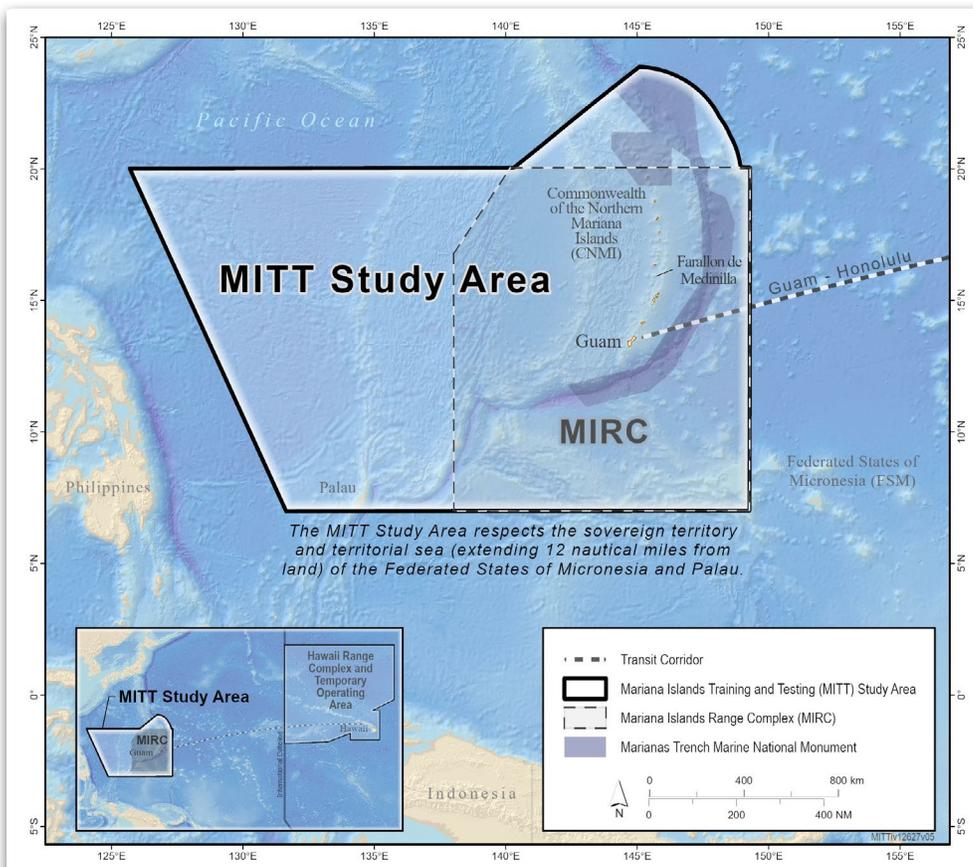


Figure 1 Mariana Islands Training and Testing Study Area

Importance of At-Sea Training

Seventy percent of the earth is covered by water, 80% of the planet's population lives in proximity to coastal areas, and 90% 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 response in crises, deter aggression, and win decisively in war. The Action Proponents must train military personnel in realistic environments in preparation to defend the United States and its territories, allies, and interests.

Importance of At-Sea Testing

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 that give U.S. military personnel a technological advantage over potential adversaries. Testing activities must occur at sea to ensure these technologies perform as designed and expected in the environment where they will be relied upon by the services.

Importance of Range Modernization and Sustainment

Range modernization and sustainment activities are periodically necessary, as the range provides the air, sea, and undersea space necessary for training and testing. Actions may be needed when existing components of the range require maintenance or replacement, thereby allowing for the full utilization of new technology, weapons, and systems' capabilities when training and testing.

Summary of Environmental Impact Analysis

The Action Proponents evaluated the potential environmental effects of the Proposed Action on the resource areas defined under NEPA:

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

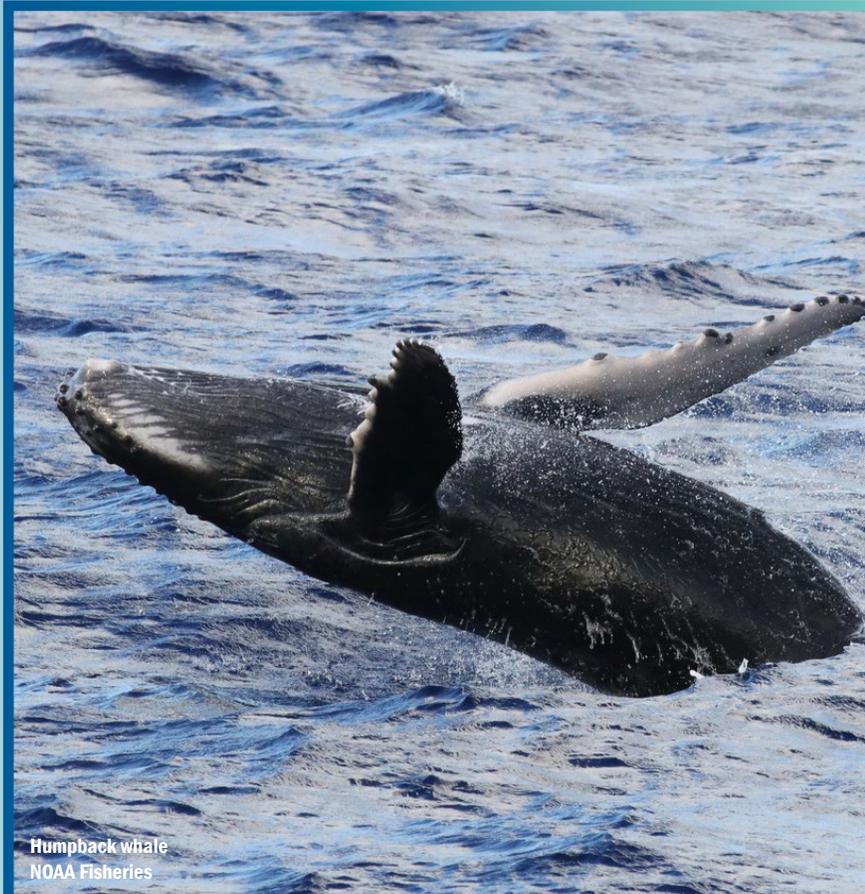


The Action Proponents would continue to implement measures intended to avoid, minimize, or mitigate potential environmental effects during military readiness activities.

The effects analysis is based on “stressors,” which are introduced into the environment by military readiness activities and vary in intensity, frequency, duration, and location. Stressors include:

- Acoustics – or sound-producing activities, such as the use of active sonar;
- Explosives;
- Physical disturbance and strike;
- Energy;
- Entanglement;
- Ingestion;
- Secondary, such as habitat or prey availability; or
- A combination of all stressors.

The Draft SEIS/OEIS also includes an analysis of measures intended to avoid, minimize, or mitigate environmental effects potentially resulting from military readiness activities. For more information about the potential impacts on environmental resource areas, please review the Draft SEIS/OEIS, available for download at www.nepa.navy.mil/mitteis. Please also see the Glossary of Regulatory Terms on page 7 for helpful definitions.



Humpback whale
NOAA Fisheries



Shipwreck off Rota

Sediments and water quality: No reasonably foreseeable effects are expected from proposed military readiness activities.

Air resources: Criteria pollutants from military readiness activities would not result in a violation or contribute to an ongoing violation of the National Air Quality Standards. Emissions from activities are not expected to increase risk to human health.

Marine habitats: If an activity includes the use of explosives, the related material would detonate at or near the water surface. Seafloor detonations would be infrequent and impacts on soft-bottom habitat would be temporary to short-term. Most seafloor devices are typically placed in areas that would result in minor and temporary effects on the bottom substrate.

Marine mammals: Predicted effects from sonar can vary depending on the species of mammal and stock. Although the Action Proponents implement mitigation measures when using sonar, effects are predicted. Most effects would be temporary changes in behavior, such as interruptions in communication, foraging, or breeding (Figure 2). A small portion of effects may include auditory injury, temporary hearing loss, masking (when an animal's ability to detect or recognize a sound is degraded by the presence of another sound), or stress. Individuals or groups of marine mammals may avoid areas around sound-producing activities and be temporarily displaced from a preferred habitat for a period. Sensitive species, such as beaked whales, may avoid an area at farther distances and for longer durations. However, no long-term consequences to any population or stock are predicted from sound-producing activities.

The use of explosives during military readiness activities may result in temporary effects on individual marine mammals, such as changes in behavior, masking, stress, or temporary hearing loss, or permanent effects, such as non-auditory or auditory injury. Activities using explosives would be relatively brief and occur over small areas relative to the ranges of most marine mammals. Effects from explosives are not expected to interfere with feeding, reproduction, or other biologically important functions that would threaten the viability of the population, nor are mortalities predicted.

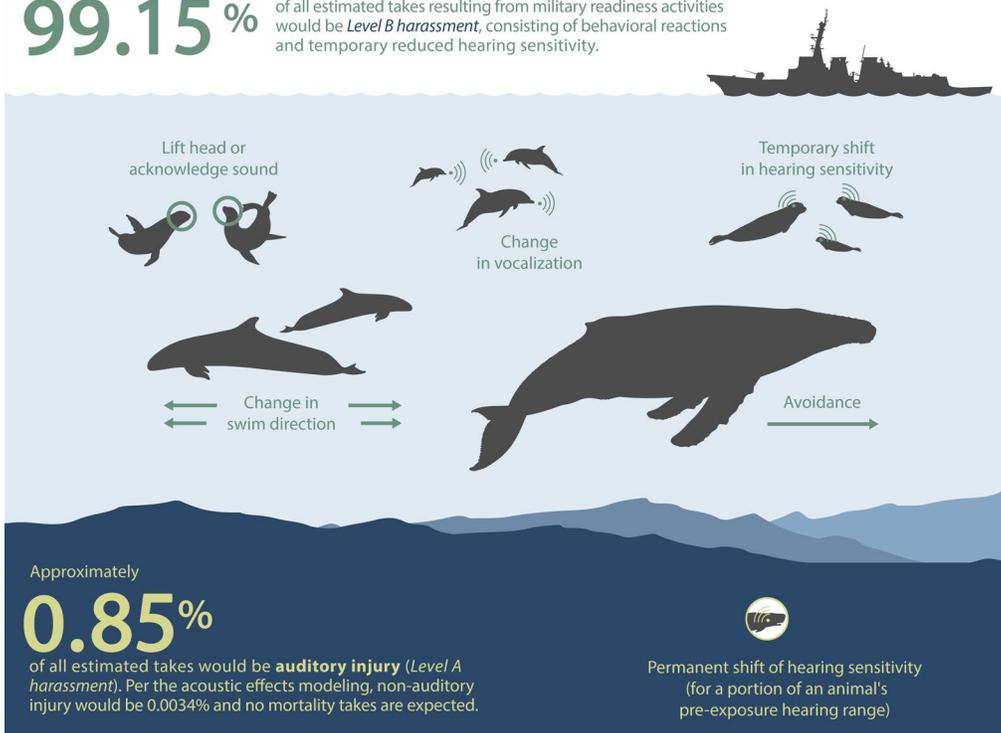
Long-term effects on individual marine mammals and marine mammal populations from physical disturbance, entanglement in, or ingestion of military expended materials, such as wires, cables, or parachutes, are not expected. There have been no reported strikes of marine mammals by Navy or Coast Guard vessels in the Study Area. Since vessel use would remain similar to current activities, the potential for striking a marine mammal would be similarly low.

Military Readiness Activities Estimated Marine Mammal Annual Takes

Approximately

99.15%

of all estimated takes resulting from military readiness activities would be **Level B harassment**, consisting of behavioral reactions and temporary reduced hearing sensitivity.



*Illustrations are representative of potential behavioral or physiological responses.

Figure 2 The Action Proponents assessed the potential effects of military readiness activities on the marine environment using the most current data and analysis methods. The analysis indicates that 99.15% of effects on marine mammals would be behavioral reactions and temporary hearing effects.

The analysis indicates proposed military readiness activities may affect certain marine mammal species but are not expected to decrease the overall health or survival of any population. Most of the predicted effects are non-injurious, such as behavioral responses.



Navy Acoustics Effects Model

The Navy's acoustic effects model, or NAEMO, is an advanced acoustic modeling and simulation tool that allows for estimation of potential effects on marine mammals and sea turtles from underwater sound associated with military readiness activities.

Summary of Environmental Impact Analysis (continued)

Sea turtles: Sea turtles could be affected by a limited number of sound-producing activities where frequencies overlap with sea turtles' lower frequency hearing. While exposure to sound from military readiness activities can present risks to sea turtles, the Navy's acoustic effects model predicted no sonar-related effects. If a sea turtle were to be present near an explosion, there is risk of injury or mortality. The Navy's acoustic effects model predicted four auditory and one non-auditory injuries to sea turtles per year from the use of explosives. Mortalities are not predicted to occur. Potential population-level effects on sea turtles from physical disturbance (strike or collision) are unlikely, and entanglement or ingestion of military expended materials is not expected.

Sea birds: Responses by sea birds to sound-producing activities would likely be limited to short-term behavioral responses. Some birds may be temporarily displaced and there may be temporary increases in stress levels. Although individual birds may be affected, population-level effects are not expected. The proposed use of explosives, whether in-air or underwater, may cause a startle reaction but the exposure would be brief, and any reactions are expected to be short-term. Although a few individual birds may experience long-term effects, injury, or potential mortality, population-level effects are not expected.

Marine vegetation: Proposed military readiness activities could affect vegetation near the activity but would not result in persistent or large-scale effects on vegetation growth, survival, distribution, or structure, primarily due to the avoidance of sensitive habitats and recovery of small areas of disturbed vegetation.

Marine invertebrates: Marine invertebrates, such as zooplankton, squid, and jellyfish, are prevalent mostly inshore at the surface and at night when military readiness activities using explosives do not typically occur. Most military expended materials are too large to be ingested by invertebrates; therefore, ingestion would be infrequent. The number of individual invertebrates potentially affected by military readiness activities would be small relative to population numbers. Therefore, population-level effects are unlikely.

Fishes: Behavioral responses from most sound-producing activities are expected to be temporary, infrequent, and minor. Most fishes are mobile and have sensory capabilities that enable them to detect and avoid vessels, in-water devices, and entanglement in military expended materials; therefore, behavioral and stress responses from these stressors would be temporary. Although some individuals may be injured or killed during activities involving sonar or explosives, population-level effects are not expected.

Terrestrial species and habitats: Effects of explosives and noise generated during military readiness activities on FDM would continue to be introduced into terrestrial habitats on the island. However, the long-term use of FDM by seabirds, ESA-listed megapodes, and fruit bats, and their stable populations on the island, suggest that current military targeting restrictions, including limiting explosive impacts to designated impact zones, allow for species' continued use of habitats. The Action Proponents have proposed to reduce the amount of explosive munitions used on FDM.

Cultural resources: The Action Proponents implement standard operating procedures and avoidance measures to minimize potential effects and avoid known historic (e.g., shipwrecks) and submerged cultural resources while conducting military readiness activities at sea. For example, seafloor devices would be placed to avoid submerged cultural resources. Therefore, submerged cultural resources are not expected to be impacted by proposed activities and there would be no adverse effect on historic properties.

Socioeconomic resources: Proposed military readiness activities are not expected to affect commercial transportation and shipping; commercial, recreational, and subsistence fishing; or tourism because inaccessibility to areas of co-use would be temporary and of short duration.

Public health and safety: With the implementation of standard operating procedures, there would be no reasonably foreseeable effects from the Proposed Action.



Sperm whale
Joseph Mobley, HDR, Inc.
(NOAA permit no. 642-1536-03)

Glossary of Regulatory Terms

Take: To harass, hunt, capture, or kill, or attempt to harass, hunt, capture, or kill any marine mammal. A take does not necessarily mean the animal is hurt or injured.

Incidental take: An unintentional, but not unexpected, take.

Hearing threshold: The lowest sound pressure (similar to volume) at which an animal can hear a particular frequency.

Level B harassment: An act that disturbs or is likely to disturb a marine mammal's natural behavioral patterns, such as migration, surfacing, nursing, breeding, feeding, or sheltering, to a point where patterns are abandoned or significantly altered.

- *Behavioral response:* A disruption of natural behavior patterns.
- *Temporary threshold shift:* A reversible shift in an animal's hearing sensitivity.

Level A harassment: An act that injures or has the significant potential to injure a marine mammal or marine mammal stock in the wild.

- *Auditory injury:* Permanent hearing loss or damage to cells in the auditory system.
- *Injury:* Direct harm or damage to tissues or organs.

Mortality: When an animal is killed or is subjected to a serious injury that is more likely than not to result in death.

Sources: Marine Mammal Protection Act; National Marine Fisheries Service



Marine Resource Protection

Protecting coastal and marine environments and cultural resources are important goals for the Action Proponents.

At-Sea Mitigation Measures

The Action Proponents are committed to avoiding, minimizing, or mitigating effects on the marine environment from at-sea activities and for more than 20 years have mitigated impacts from their activities on environmental and cultural resources throughout the Study Area.

Mitigation measures are established and adhered to with the aim of reducing effects on resources. Requirements for military readiness activities at sea include, but are not limited to:

- Posting trained lookouts to help ensure a safe distance between vessels and marine species.
- Establishing activity-based mitigation zones.
- Implementing geographic mitigation areas with seasonal, monthly, or year-round restrictions on the use of sonar and explosives.
- Requiring cultural awareness training for range users.

The Navy also uses the Protective Measures Assessment Protocol (a web-based Geographic Information System [GIS]-based mapping tool that serves as the Navy's comprehensive data source for at-sea mitigation) before training and testing to comply with mitigation requirements and protect marine resources.

At-Sea Environmental Protection

The Navy implements and improves processes to reduce a vessel's environmental footprint while at sea by:

- Consolidating plastic waste into melted disks and preparing them for proper disposal ashore.
- Maximizing energy resilience by using energy efficient best practices and technologies.
- Inspecting hulls routinely to prevent the introduction of non-native species.
- Managing, reusing, and recycling hazardous materials.



Marine Species Population Monitoring

The Navy continues to be a world leader in marine species research and monitoring, having funded marine research programs, surveys, and data collection efforts since 1992. Throughout the Mariana Islands, the Navy has supported and funded marine species research and monitoring projects, such as studies on humpback whales, beaked whales, and sea turtles. Monitoring allows Navy scientists to develop a better understanding of species distribution, movement patterns, habitat use, population structure, and abundance.

Data and reports from scientific research and monitoring help environmental regulators, scientists, the public, and the Navy to:

- Build a better understanding of the abundance, distribution, foraging, reproduction, hearing, sound production, and behavior of marine species, which is necessary to assess effects from military readiness activities.
- Refine methods used to detect and monitor marine species before, during, and after military readiness activities.
- Advance the understanding of the effects of underwater sound on marine species.
- Improve models used to estimate potential effects of underwater sound on marine species.
- Use adaptive management strategies to refine mitigation guidelines to better protect marine species.

Visit www.navymarinespeciesmonitoring.us for more information on the Navy's Marine Species Monitoring Program and to access public reports.



Marine mammal survey
HDR, Inc.

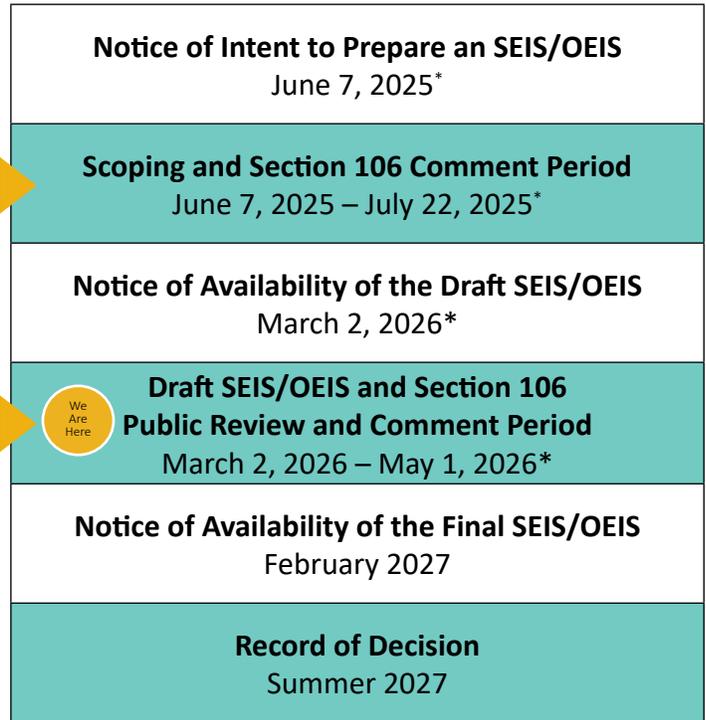


Green sea turtle monitoring
Dr. T. Todd Jones, NOAA Fisheries
(permit no. 17022 and 15661)

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. Public involvement is a fundamental aspect of the NEPA process, and there are opportunities for the public and stakeholders to participate in the development of the SEIS/OEIS (Figure 3). The Action Proponents welcome, value, and appreciate your input, which allows decision makers to consider community concerns and benefit from local knowledge. The public and stakeholders can participate 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:** Review the Final SEIS/OEIS and the Action Proponents' 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.



*Chamorro Standard Time

▶ Opportunity for public review and comment under NEPA and Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act

Figure 3 National Environmental Policy Act Process



Changes in the National Environmental Policy Act

The SEIS/OEIS is much more concise than previous analyses of military readiness activities in the Mariana Islands. In 2023, the U.S. Congress amended NEPA and required the streamlining of NEPA documents by setting time and page limits, with the goals of promoting public understanding, reducing lengthy reviews, and maintaining comprehensive and thorough analyses. Under the law, EISs must be completed within two years and are limited to 150 pages, or 300 pages for complex projects, excluding appendices and citations. (Environmental Assessments must be completed within one year and are limited to 75 pages.) The Action Proponents have complied with the 150-page requirement in the SEIS/OEIS.

National Historic Preservation Act Section 106

The NHPA is a U.S. 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 (Figure 4). By definition, historic properties may include archaeological sites, sacred and religious sites, submerged historic resources, traditional cultural places, or historic buildings, structures, or objects.

As the lead agency for the SEIS/OEIS, the Navy has initiated consultation in accordance with Section 106 of the NHPA and will comply with the 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 [CNMI] 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 signatories to those agreements.

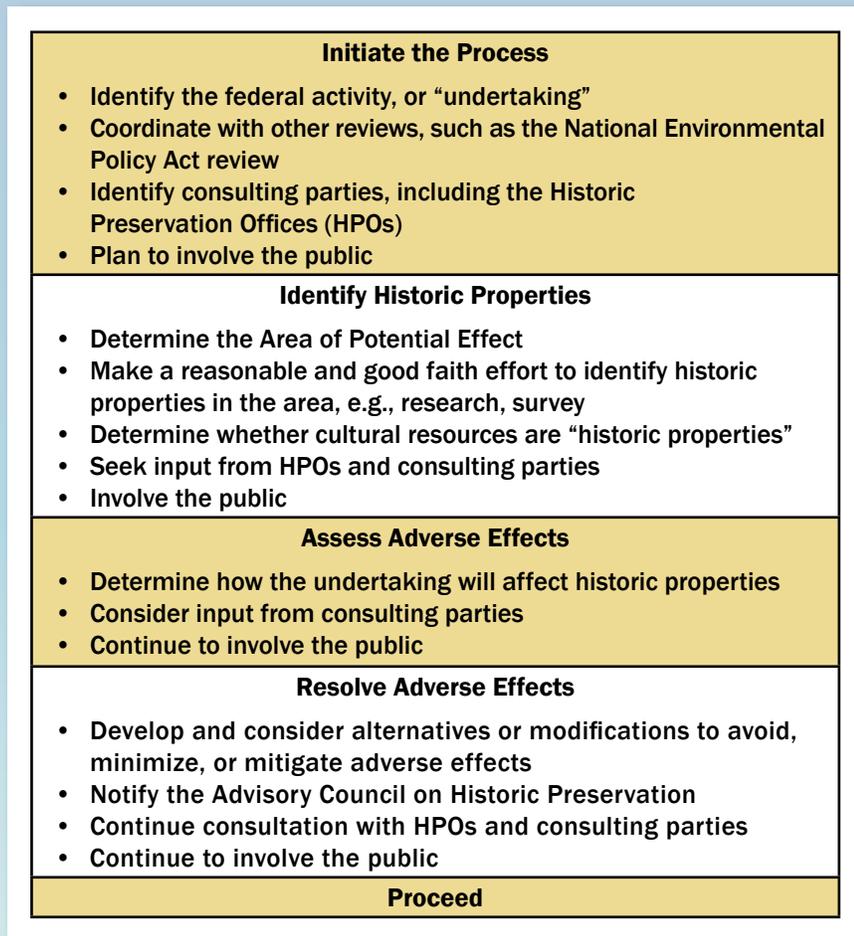


Figure 4 National Historic Preservation Act Process

The Draft SEIS/OEIS public review and comment period supports consultation under Section 106 of the NHPA and its implementing regulations, as members of the public and stakeholders are invited to provide comments about potential effects on historic properties or seek to participate as a consulting party.

The participation of the public and stakeholders is an important part of the NHPA Section 106 process. The Action Proponents encourage all 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 comment period. Individuals, organizations, or agencies may submit a comment at the public meetings, electronically via the project website, or by mail (see Submitting Comments section on following page).

Parties with demonstrated interest in the undertaking and its effects on historic properties may request to become a consulting party in the Section 106 process. Please visit www.nepa.navy.mil/mitteis and click on “National Historic Preservation Act Section 106” to request more information on the consultation process.



Public Involvement

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 participation.

The Action Proponents are committed to meaningful public involvement.

Public Meetings

In support of NEPA and NHPA Section 106 guidelines and regulations (Figure 3), the Action Proponents are holding two public meetings during the public review and comment period from March 2 to May 1, 2026. Meetings will include informational poster stations staffed by project representatives who can answer questions about the Proposed Action and environmental analysis. The Action Proponents will give a brief presentation followed by a public oral comment session. Comments will also be accepted in writing at the public meetings. Interpreters for CHamoru (Guam meeting) and Chamorro and Carolinian (Saipan meeting) will be available.

5:00 to 8:00 p.m. ChST Open House

6:00 p.m. ChST Presentation/Comment Session

Guam

Wednesday, March 18, 2026
Dededo Senior Center
319 Iglesias Circle
Dededo

Saipan

Thursday, March 19, 2026
Crowne Plaza Resort
Coral Tree Ave.
Garapan

Submitting Comments

The public is invited to review the Draft SEIS/OEIS and provide substantive comments on the Proposed Action, the environmental analysis, and the project's potential to affect historic properties in line with Section 106 of the NHPA. Comments must be postmarked or received by **11:59 p.m. ChST on May 1, 2026**, for consideration in the preparation of the Final SEIS/OEIS. The public review and comment period includes an additional 15 days (from the typical 45 days to 60 days) to allow the public more time to review the document. Comments may be submitted at the public meetings, on 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

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