

San Clemente Island Training and Testing



Environmental Impact Statement

April 2026

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The Department of the Navy (including both the U.S. Navy and U.S. Marine Corps) is preparing an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) to evaluate the potential environmental impacts of continued and expanded military readiness activities at San Clemente Island. Military readiness activities include training; research, development, testing, and evaluation (collectively referred to as “testing”); and range improvement and maintenance.

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.

Testing activities are also critical for maintaining readiness. The Department of War 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.

Virtual Scoping Presentation

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



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Military Activities on San Clemente Island

San Clemente Island, located 68 nautical miles northwest of San Diego, is an island under federal jurisdiction operated by the Navy. The island is approximately 21 miles long and 4 miles at its widest point, with an area of more than 36,000 acres. The island's rugged terrain, isolated environment, and proximity to the largest concentration of naval forces in the United States make it an ideal location for training Sailors and Marines and testing new technologies. The island provides unique range capabilities critical to maintaining the readiness of the U.S. Pacific Fleet, U.S. Marine Forces Pacific, and units from other military services. While a small portion of the island is used for live-fire and other military readiness activities, the remaining land is actively managed as a safety and conservation buffer, which is essential to the overall military mission on the island.

Proposed Action

The Proposed Action is the continuation of ongoing land-based military readiness activities, new proposed military readiness activities, range improvements and maintenance, and the implementation of a new Wildland Fire Management Plan. The Proposed Action is needed because the number and type of military readiness activities currently conducted at San Clemente Island are inadequate to meet the Navy's statutory responsibility to organize, train, and equip combat-ready naval forces. The Proposed Action would enhance existing training resources and prepare service members for operations in a real-world environment.

Proposed activities would occur on land ranges and over-the-beach training areas of the San Clemente Island Range Complex (Figure 1). The Study Area for the EIS is made up of the land area of San Clemente Island and the airspace above it. The Navy would continue to implement measures intended to avoid, minimize, or mitigate potential effects on natural and cultural resources and historic properties. The Proposed Action does not include at-sea activities; those activities are analyzed in the Hawaii-California Training and Testing EIS/Overseas EIS (OEIS) (found at www.nepa.navy.mil/hctteis).

The Navy and Marine Corps must train and test new technologies in realistic environments to be prepared to defend the United States, its territories, allies, and interests.

In 2008, the Navy completed the Southern California Range Complex EIS/OEIS and signed a Record of Decision in January 2009. In addition to analyzing the impacts of naval activities in the surface and subsurface operating areas of the Pacific Ocean off the coast of Southern California, the Navy analyzed training and testing activities on the land ranges and over-the-beach training areas of San Clemente Island. Since 2008, the Navy has prepared follow-on analyses under NEPA of at-sea activities in the Southern California Range Complex. However, these at-sea analyses did not include land-based activities at San Clemente Island. Due to proposed changes in the Navy's activities to support critical military readiness requirements at San Clemente Island, it is now appropriate to prepare an EIS as an update to the 2008 evaluation of land-based activities.



Alternatives to be Analyzed

The Navy will analyze the reasonably foreseeable impacts of the Proposed Action on four environmental resource areas:

- Biological resources (birds, mammals, reptiles, vegetation, habitats, and other protected species)
- Cultural resources
- Geological and water resources (erosion and runoff)
- Air quality

Two action alternatives will be carried forward for analysis in the EIS. The public has an opportunity during the scoping period to identify additional alternatives and environmental resources for Navy consideration.

Alternative 1 is designed to meet current and near-term military readiness requirements. Under Alternative 1, the Navy proposes to:

- Continue current training and testing activities (baseline).
- Increase the annual number of some training and testing activities.
- Conduct new training activities, such as activities for the high-mobility artillery rocket system and the lightweight water purification system.
- Improve and maintain range capabilities, such as for the phase 2 development of the aerial target launch site, improvements to the four existing assault vehicle maneuver areas, and maintenance of ranges and support facilities.
- Implement a new Wildland Fire Management Plan.

Alternative 2 is designed to meet current, near-term, and long-range military readiness requirements. Alternative 2 includes all elements of Alternative 1, including improving and maintaining range capabilities and implementing a new Wildland Fire Management Plan. Alternative 2 includes the following additional actions:

- Conduct up to two battalion (700-900 personnel) landings per year.
- Expand off-road maneuver training in 13 new assault vehicle maneuver areas.
- Increase the frequency of two activities (ground launch of air warfare targets, special operations in urban complex).

A **No Action Alternative** will be included for the purpose of establishing a baseline for the environmental impact analysis to compare the potential environmental effects of the Proposed Action with existing conditions within the Study Area. Under the No Action Alternative, military readiness activities would continue at current levels, San Clemente Island would not accommodate an increase in activities, and the Navy would continue operating with the existing Wildland Fire Management Plan.

The Navy would continue to implement measures intended to avoid, minimize, or mitigate potential effects on natural and cultural resources and historic properties.

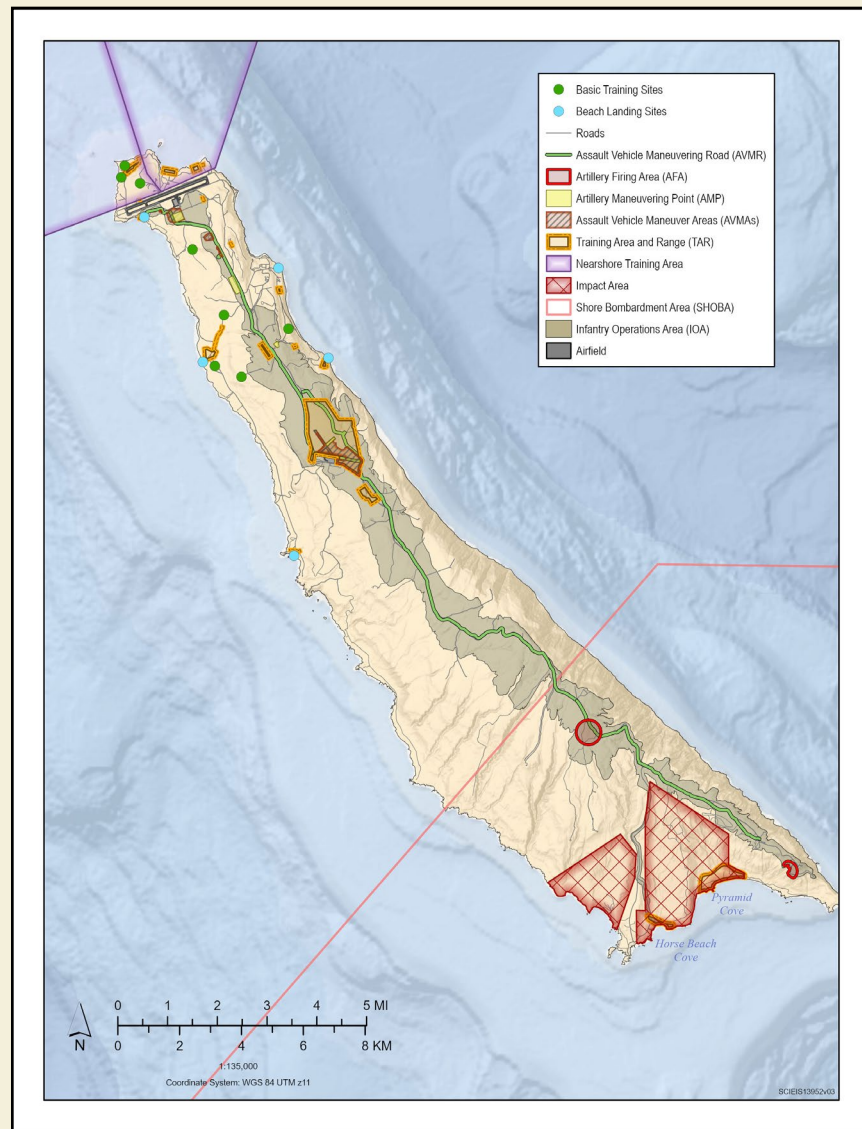


Figure 1: Current Training Areas and Ranges on San Clemente Island

Wildland Fire Management Plan

As part of the Proposed Action, the Navy would develop and implement a new Wildland Fire Management Plan. Unmanaged wildland fire is a threat to wildlife, vegetation communities, and endangered and threatened plant species on the island. Unmanaged wildland fire can significantly alter the composition of plant communities; promote invasive species; reduce native plant cover, especially in sensitive habitats; and increase the risk for loss of training facilities, equipment, and personnel. Implementation of the plan would increase the resilience of the landscape, aid in ecosystem restoration, reduce potential fuels, and prioritize safety.



Cultural and Natural Resources Protection

San Clemente Island has a rich and deep archaeological record, with evidence of indigenous human activity dating back 10,000 years. Consultations with federally recognized tribes identified that San Clemente Island, in its entirety, is considered a significant landscape of traditional religious and cultural importance to the consulting tribes. The Navy manages the island with a focus on protecting cultural resources and archaeological sites and works collaboratively with federally recognized tribes for their continued protection while meeting military readiness requirements.



The Navy is proud of its strong record of stewardship on San Clemente Island, working alongside experts from partner organizations, government agencies, academia, and tribes to meet the common goal of a healthy, diverse, and functioning ecosystem.

The successful recovery of endangered or threatened species illustrates that environmental protection and stewardship can be achieved alongside military readiness activities.

San Clemente Island larkspur
Delphinium variegatum subspecies Kinkiense



San Clemente Island bush-mallow
Malacothamnus clementinus



Photo Credit:
Nicole Desnoyers,
U.S. Navy

San Clemente Bell's sparrow
(formerly known as the
San Clemente sage sparrow)
Artemisospiza belli clementeae



San Clemente Island lotus
Acmispon dendroideus variety traskiae



San Clemente Island paintbrush
Castilleja grisea

Military Stewardship Partnerships

The Navy and Marine Corps value the culture, history, and heritage of San Clemente Island and consider how their activities may affect resources of religious and cultural significance to tribes. The Navy and Marine Corps work closely with government agencies, tribes, and other interested parties to ensure cultural resources and archaeological sites are avoided and protected.

The Navy has developed strong partnerships with government agencies, academia, and organizations to protect biological resources and restore habitat on San Clemente Island. Navy scientists and partners – including archaeologists, biologists, and botanists – work diligently to identify and avoid culturally significant sites and artifacts, remove invasive species, restore sensitive habitats, and recover endangered and threatened species present on the island. Some plants and animals are endemic (native or unique) to San Clemente Island, such as the San Clemente loggerhead shrike, the San Clemente Island fox, and the San Clemente Bell's sparrow.

As a result of decades of conservation efforts by the Navy and its partners, including the Institute for Wildlife Studies, San Diego Zoo, and San Diego State University, five species once on the threatened or endangered species list have recovered. In January 2023, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service announced the full recovery of four threatened or endangered plants and one threatened bird, resulting in their removal from the endangered or threatened species list. This achievement is the largest removal of listed species in the 50-year history of the Endangered Species Act. The Navy's successful conservation programs illustrate that a balance between maintaining military readiness and protecting natural and cultural resources can be achieved.



National Historic Preservation Act

The NHPA is a U.S. law that requires federal agencies to identify and consider potential effects of undertakings on historic properties and seek ways to avoid, minimize, or mitigate any adverse effects. By definition, historic properties may include archaeological sites, sacred and religious sites, historic resources, traditional cultural places, or historic buildings, structures, or objects.

In compliance with Section 106 of the NHPA, the Navy will consult with the California State Historic Preservation Officer and federally recognized tribes; coordinate with the public; and engage other stakeholders regarding potential effects on historic properties that may result from the Proposed Action, referred to as the *undertaking*. If it is determined that the undertaking would result in adverse effects on historic properties, the Navy will consult with the State Historic Preservation Officer and other consulting parties, as applicable, to seek resolution of the adverse effect through the development of a Section 106 agreement document. The Navy will also provide the Advisory Council on Historic Preservation with an opportunity to comment on the undertaking. Resolution may include measures to avoid, minimize, or mitigate any adverse effects.

The participation of the public, stakeholders, and tribes is an important part of the NHPA Section 106 process. The Navy encourages all to help identify historic properties on San Clemente Island and share information regarding the identification of, or potential effects on, historic properties by providing a written comment during the 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).

Environmental Compliance

In addition to complying with NEPA and NHPA, the Navy will complete consultations and coordinate in compliance with the Endangered Species Act, Coastal Zone Management Act, Clean Air Act, and other applicable laws and regulations. As part of this process, the Navy will seek the issuance of a water permit to support military readiness activities using a lightweight water purification system.

Federally recognized tribes will be invited to government-to-government consultation with the Navy.





Public Involvement

Public involvement is a fundamental aspect of the NEPA and NHPA Section 106 processes. The Navy welcomes, values, and appreciates your input, which allows decision makers to consider community concerns and benefit from local knowledge. Substantive comments are considered in the development of the EIS, and all comments will become part of the public record.

Submitting Comments

The Navy invites comments on the scope of the EIS, including identifying potential alternatives or issues that should be addressed in the NEPA analysis, relaying environmental concerns, identifying historic properties, and providing information or analyses relevant to the Proposed Action or the project's potential to affect historic properties. The Navy is accepting comments during a 30-day scoping period from **April 24 to May 24, 2026**.

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

Naval Facilities Engineering Systems Command Southwest
Attention: SCITT EIS Project Manager
750 Pacific Highway, Floor 12
San Diego, CA 92132-0058

Scoping comments must be postmarked or received online no later than **May 24, 2026**, for consideration in the EIS.



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