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5 STANDARD OPERATING PROCEDURES, MITIGATION, AND MONITORING

This chapter describes the United States (U.S.) Department of the Navy (Navy) standard operating procedures (SOPs), mitigation measures, and marine species monitoring and reporting efforts. SOPs are essential to maintaining safety and mission success, and in many cases have the added benefit of reducing potential environmental impacts. Mitigation measures are designed to reduce or avoid potential impacts on marine resources. Marine species monitoring efforts are designed to track compliance with take authorizations, evaluate the effectiveness of mitigation measures, and improve understanding of the impacts of training activities on marine resources within the Gulf of Alaska (GOA) Temporary Maritime Activities Area (TMAA) Study Area (Study Area).

Consistent with the cooperating agency agreement with the National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS), mitigation and monitoring measures presented in the Final Environmental Impact Statement (EIS)/Overseas EIS (OEIS) focused on the requirements for protection and management of marine resources. A well-designed monitoring program can provide important feedback for validating assumptions made in analyses and allow for adaptive management of marine resources. Since completion of the 2011 GOA Final EIS/OEIS, on-going cooperation with NMFS and new modeling protocols have resulted in changes to mitigation, standard operating procedures, and monitoring procedures. As a result, this chapter presents the most up-to-date mitigation measures, standard operating procedures, and monitoring procedures that the Navy implements rather than a supplement to the information presented in Chapter 5 of the 2011 GOA Final EIS/OEIS.

5.1 STANDARD OPERATING PROCEDURES

Effective training (hereafter referred to as the Proposed Action) requires participants to utilize their sensors and weapon systems to their optimum capabilities as required by the activity objectives. The Navy currently employs standard practices to provide for the safety of personnel and equipment, including vessels and aircraft, as well as the success of the training activities. For the purpose of this document, standard practices are referred to as SOPs. Because of their importance for maintaining safety and mission success, SOPs have been considered as part of the Proposed Action and therefore are included in the Chapter 3 (Affected Environment and Environmental Consequences) environmental analyses for resources that are being re-analyzed.

Navy SOPs have been developed and refined over years of experience, and are broadcast via numerous naval instructions and manuals, including the following sources:

- Ship, Submarine and Aircraft Safety Manuals
- Ship, Submarine and Aircraft Standard Operating Manuals
- Fleet Area Control and Surveillance Facility Range Operating Instructions
- Fleet Exercise Publications and Instructions
- Naval Gunfire Safety Instructions
- Navy Planned Maintenance System Instructions and Requirements
- Federal Aviation Administration Regulations

In many cases there are incidental environmental, socioeconomic, and cultural benefits resulting from SOPs. SOPs serve the primary purpose of providing for safety and mission success, and are implemented regardless of their secondary benefits. This is what distinguishes SOPs, which are a component of the Proposed Action, from mitigation measures, which are designed entirely for the purpose of reducing

environmental impacts resulting from the Proposed Action. Because SOPs are crucial to safety and mission success, the Navy will not modify them as a way to further reduce impacts on environmental resources. Rather, mitigation measures will be used as the tool for avoiding and reducing potential environmental impacts. SOPs are internal documents that are under the cognizance of the individual commands. SOPs that are recognized as providing a potential secondary benefit are provided below.

5.1.1 GENERAL SAFETY

In the development of SOPs and measures to protect the safety of its people, the Navy follows the guidance set forth in the Chief of Naval Operations Instructions (OPNAVINST) 5100.19 (Navy Safety and Occupational Health Program Manual for Forces Afloat) and 5100.23 (Navy Safety and Occupational Health Program Manual). These instructions provide minimum requirements under which organizations may develop procedures that delineate additional organizational specific requirements. These two instructions include policies for public safety; laser procedures; weapons firing procedures; and unmanned aircraft, surface, and underwater vehicle activities.

5.1.2 VESSEL SAFETY

For the purposes of this chapter, the term “ship” is inclusive of surface ships and surfaced submarines. The term “vessel” is inclusive of ships and small boats (e.g., rigid-hull inflatable boats).

Ships operated by or for the Navy have personnel assigned to stand watch at all times, day and night, when moving through the water (underway). Watch personnel undertake extensive training in accordance with the U.S. Navy Lookout Training Handbook or civilian equivalent, including on-the-job instruction and a formal Personnel Qualification Standard Program (or equivalent program for supporting contractors or civilians), to certify that they have demonstrated all necessary skills (such as detection and reporting of floating or partially submerged objects). Watch personnel are composed of officers, enlisted men and women, and civilian equivalents. Their duties may be performed in conjunction with other job responsibilities, such as navigating the ship or supervising other personnel. While on watch, personnel employ visual search techniques, including the use of binoculars, using a scanning method in accordance with the U.S. Navy Lookout Training Handbook or civilian equivalent. After sunset and prior to sunrise, watch personnel employ night visual search techniques, which could include the use of night vision devices.

A primary duty of watch personnel is to detect and report all objects and disturbances sighted in the water that may be indicative of a threat to the ship and its crew, such as debris, a periscope, surfaced submarine, or surface disturbance. Per safety requirements, watch personnel also report any marine mammals sighted that have the potential to be in the direct path of the ship as a standard collision avoidance procedure. Because watch personnel are primarily posted for safety of navigation, range clearance, and man-overboard precautions, they are not normally posted while ships are moored to a pier. When anchored or moored to a buoy, a watch team is still maintained but with fewer personnel than when underway. When moored or at anchor, watch personnel may maintain security and safety of the ship by scanning the water for any indications of a threat (as described above).

While underway, Navy ships (with the exception of submarines) greater than 65 feet (ft.) (20 meters [m]) in length have at least two personnel standing watch; Navy ships less than 65 ft. (20 m) in length, submarines, and contractor vessels have at least one person standing watch. While underway, personnel standing watch are alert at all times and have access to binoculars. Due to limited manning and space limitations, small boats do not have dedicated personnel standing watch, and the boat crew is responsible for maintaining the safety of the boat and surrounding environment.

All vessels use appropriate caution and proceed at a “safe speed” so they can take proper and effective action to avoid a collision with any sighted object or disturbance, and can be stopped within a distance appropriate to the prevailing circumstances and conditions.

5.1.3 AIRCRAFT SAFETY

Pilots of Navy aircraft make every attempt to avoid large flocks of birds in order to reduce the safety risk involved with a potential bird strike. The Department of Defense (DoD) continually implements and improves aviation safety programs in an effort to provide the safest flying conditions possible. One of these programs is the Bird/Wildlife Aircraft Strike Hazard prevention program. Throughout the military, air operations, aviation safety, and natural resources personnel work together to reduce the risk of bird and wildlife strikes through the Operational Risk Management process.

5.1.4 LASER PROCEDURES

Only low-energy lasers, some of which could be hazardous to human eyes, are proposed for use. The following procedures are applicable to lasers of sufficient intensity to cause human eye damage.

5.1.4.1 Laser Operators

Only properly trained and authorized personnel operate lasers.

5.1.4.2 Laser Activity Clearance

Prior to commencing activities involving lasers, the operator ensures that the area is clear of unprotected or unauthorized personnel in the laser impact area by performing a visual inspection or a flyover. The operator also ensures that any personnel within the area are aware of laser activities and are properly protected.

5.1.5 WEAPONS FIRING PROCEDURES

When the Navy conducts any potentially hazardous training activity, such as weapons firing, personnel are assigned to fulfill critical safety functions. A Range Safety Officer is responsible for the safe conduct of all activities on the range on which activities are being conducted. For activities conducted off of designated ranges, an officer (or civilian equivalent) on a ship or aircraft engaged in the activity or within visual range of the activity may function as the Range Safety Officer. Either the Officer Conducting the Exercise or the Range Safety Officer assigned to the event can terminate activities if unsafe conditions exist.

5.1.5.1 Notice to Mariners

A Notice to Mariners (NTM) is issued in advance of hazardous activities or activities in which navigational hazards are present, such as missile firing, gunnery exercises, and air-to-surface bombing. More information on NTMs is found in the 2011 GOA Final EIS/OEIS Chapter 3, Section 3.14 (Public Safety).

5.1.5.2 Weapons Firing Range Clearance

The weapons firing hazard range must be clear of non-participating vessels and aircraft before firing activities will commence. The size of the firing hazard range is based on the farthest firing range capability of the weapon being used. All missile and rocket firing activities are carefully planned in advance and conducted under strict procedures that place the ultimate responsibility for range safety on the officer conducting the exercise or civilian equivalent. When planning for ordnance use, exercise planners and participants do consider and avoid high traffic areas due to the standoff requirements and

the need to obtain and maintain a clear range for the duration of the training event. All weapons firing is secured when cease fire orders are received from the Range Safety Officer or when the line of fire is endangering any object other than the designated target.

Pilots of Navy aircraft are not authorized to expend ordnance, fire missiles, or drop other airborne devices through any cloud cover where visual clearance of the air and surface area is not possible. The two exceptions to this requirement are: (1) when operating in the open ocean, air, and surface clearance through visual means or radar surveillance is acceptable; and (2) when the officer conducting the exercise accepts responsibility for the safeguarding of airborne and surface traffic.

During activities that involve recoverable targets (e.g., aerial drones), the Navy recovers the target and any associated parachutes to the maximum extent practical consistent with operational requirements and personnel safety.

5.1.6 UNMANNED AERIAL VEHICLE PROCEDURES

For activities involving unmanned aerial vehicles, the Navy evaluates the need to publish a Notice to Airmen or NTM based on the scale, location, and timing of the activity. Unmanned aerial vehicles are operated in accordance with Federal Aviation Administration air traffic organization policy as issued in Office of the OPNAVINST 3710, 3750, and 4790.

5.1.7 UNMANNED SURFACE VEHICLE AND UNMANNED UNDERWATER VEHICLE PROCEDURES

Standard safety requirements and operational restrictions apply for all types of unmanned underwater vehicles during training activities including, but not limited to, torpedoes, mobile anti-submarine warfare (ASW) targets, inert mines, and research and development vehicles.

5.1.8 TOWED IN-WATER DEVICE PROCEDURES

Prior to deploying a towed device from a manned platform, there is a SOP to search the intended path of the device for any floating debris (e.g., driftwood) or other potential obstructions (e.g., animals), as they have the potential to cause damage to the device.

5.1.9 BEST MANAGEMENT PRACTICES

Best management practices include measures that regulate operations to ensure compliance with pollution emission requirements and general resource conservation goals. In the development of best management practices, the Navy will utilize and implement all applicable sections of OPNAV M-5090.1 (Environmental Readiness Program Manual). This instruction provides minimum requirements, under which organizations may develop procedures that delineate additional organizational-specific requirements. Some SOPs also provide best management practices value.

In Chapter 3 (Affected Environment and Environmental Consequences) of this Supplemental EIS/OEIS, the Navy analyzed environmental resources for potential impacts resulting from the Navy's Proposed Action. All of the Navy's best management practices provide protection to environmental resources. For example, Navy policies and procedures identified in Navy instructions such as the Environmental Readiness Program Manual include directives regarding waste management, pollution prevention, and recycling, all of which benefit sediments and water quality in the ocean. Any procedures or practices that benefit ocean sediments and water quality in turn benefit all marine life in the ocean, from plants and invertebrates, to fish and marine mammals.

Some examples of SOPs that also contribute to best management practices are pollution control programs. The Navy's compliance with the Clean Air Act and its implementing regulations has resulted in comprehensive air quality management programs that help to ensure minimum impacts to air quality.

Many of the Navy's SOPs are directed at enhancing safety, both for the Sailors involved in the activities as well as non-participant members of the public. One program initially focused on safety has the added benefit of reducing bird injuries and fatalities: the Navy's Bird/Animal Aircraft Strike Hazard Program. This program has resulted in reduced incidents of aircraft striking birds.

These examples illustrate common Navy procedures and practices that can often reduce impacts to environmental resources. The following section will describe procedures implemented specifically to mitigate environmental impacts.

5.2 INTRODUCTION TO MITIGATION

The Navy recognizes that the Proposed Action has the potential to impact the environment. Mitigation measures are modifications to the Proposed Action that are implemented for the sole purpose of reducing a specific potential environmental impact on a particular resource. The procedures discussed in this chapter, most of which are currently or were previously implemented as a result of past environmental compliance documents, Endangered Species Act (ESA) biological opinions, Marine Mammal Protection Act (MMPA) Letters of Authorization, or other formal or informal consultations with regulatory agencies, are being coordinated with NMFS and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) through the consultation and permitting process.

In order to make the findings necessary to issue an MMPA letter of authorization, it may be necessary for NMFS to require additional mitigation measures or monitoring beyond those contained in this Supplemental EIS/OEIS. These could include measures considered, but eliminated in this Supplemental EIS/OEIS, or as yet undeveloped measures. The public will have an opportunity to provide information to NMFS through the MMPA process, both during the comment period following NMFS' notice of receipt of the application for a letter of authorization, and during the comment period following publication of the proposed rule. NMFS may propose additional mitigation measures or monitoring in the proposed rule.

Additionally, the Navy is engaging in consultation processes under the ESA with regard to listed species that may be affected by the Proposed Action described in this Supplemental EIS/OEIS. For the purposes of the ESA section 7 consultation, the mitigation measures proposed here may be considered by NMFS or USFWS as beneficial actions taken by the Federal agency or applicant (50 Code of Federal Regulations [C.F.R.] 402.14(g)(8)). If required to satisfy requirements of the ESA, NMFS or USFWS may develop an additional set of measures contained in terms and conditions, reasonable and prudent measures, or conservation recommendations in any biological opinion issued for the Proposed Action. In a similar process, the Navy has adopted applicable conservation recommendations provided by NMFS during consultation related to Essential Fish Habitat in the TMAA pursuant to the Magnuson-Stevens Fisheries Conservation and Management Act. This process, assessment of Essential Fish Habitat, and review of NMFS' recommendations, was provided in the 2011 GOA Final EIS/OEIS Appendix C and Chapter 3.6 (Fish) in that document. Adopted recommendations include: (1) the Navy will not conduct Sinking Exercises (SINKEs) within Habitats of Particular Concern, and (2) the Navy will coordinate with NOAA's Office of Marine and Aviation Operations and fisheries researchers so the exercises do not to displace or affect known research activities taking place in the TMAA.

The Navy also considered public comments and government-to-government negotiations on proposed mitigation measures described in the Draft Supplemental EIS/OEIS. Many public comments addressed issues already explained in the Draft Supplemental EIS/OEIS, often those described in Section 5.3.3 (Mitigation Measures Considered but Eliminated). A number of comments also questioned the mitigation zones used by the Navy (see Section 5.3.2, Mitigation Zone Procedural Measures). Each of these comments has been responded to in Appendix C (Public Participation). Several comments led the Navy to make improvements in the description or explanation of the measures.

5.2.1 REGULATORY REQUIREMENTS FOR MITIGATION

An EIS must analyze the affected environment, discuss the environmental impacts of the Proposed Action and each alternative, and assess the significance of the impacts on the environment. Mitigation measures are designed to help reduce the severity or intensity of impacts of the Proposed Action and can occur early in the planning process. An agency may choose not to take the action or to move the location of the action. Mitigation measure development also occurs throughout the analysis process whenever an impact is minimized by limiting the degree or magnitude of the action or its implementation. Mitigation measures can also include actions that repair, rehabilitate, or restore the affected environment or reduce impacts over time through constant monitoring and corrective adjustments.

In accordance with the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) requirement, the environmental benefit of all Navy recommended proposed mitigation measures will apply to the Proposed Action analyzed in this Supplemental EIS, and according to Navy policy, will also apply to the Supplemental OEIS where applicable and appropriate. Additionally, the White House Council on Environmental Quality (CEQ) issued guidance for mitigation and monitoring on 14 January 2011. This guidance affirms that federal agencies, including the Navy, should:

- commit to mitigation in decision documents when they have based environmental analysis upon such mitigation (by including appropriate conditions on grants, permits, or other agency approvals, and making funding or approvals for implementing the Proposed Action contingent on implementation of the mitigation commitments);
- monitor the implementation and effectiveness of mitigation commitments;
- make information on mitigation and monitoring available to the public, preferably through agency web sites; and
- remedy ineffective mitigation when the federal action is not yet complete.

The CEQ guidance encourages federal agencies to develop internal processes for post-decision monitoring to ensure the implementation and effectiveness of the mitigation. It also states that federal agencies may use adaptive management as part of an agency's action. Adaptive management, when included in the NEPA analysis, allows for the agency to take alternate mitigation actions if mitigation commitments originally made in the planning and decision documents fail to achieve projected environmental outcomes. Adaptive management generally involves four phases: plan, act, monitor, and evaluate. This process allows the use of the results to update knowledge and adjust future management actions accordingly. Through implementing mitigation measures from the Navy's previous planning, consultations, permits, and monitoring of those efforts, the Navy has collected data to further refine proposed mitigation measures.

Through the planning, consultation, and permitting processes, federal regulatory agencies may also suggest that the Navy analyze additional mitigation measures for inclusion in this Final Supplemental

EIS/OEIS and associated consultation and permitting documents. Any proposals for additional mitigation measures should be based on the federal agency's assessment of the likelihood that such measures will contribute to a notable reduction of the environmental impact. If additional measures are identified, the Navy will apply the effectiveness and operational assessment protocol discussed in Section 5.3 (Mitigation Assessment) to determine whether the additional measure will be proposed for implementation. This additional analysis will be presented in this Final Supplemental EIS/OEIS, and, the final suite of mitigation measures resulting from the ongoing planning, consultation, and permitting processes will be documented in the Record of Decision (ROD).

5.2.2 OVERVIEW OF MITIGATION APPROACH

This section describes the approach that the Navy took to develop its recommended mitigation measures. The Navy's overall approach to assessing potential mitigation measures was based on two principles: (1) mitigation measures will be effective at reducing potential impacts on the resource; and (2) from a military perspective, the mitigations are practical to implement, executable, and personnel safety and readiness will not be impacted. The assessment process involved using information directly from Chapter 3 (Affected Environment and Environmental Consequences) and assessing all existing mitigation and proposals for new or modified mitigation in order to determine if recommending a mitigation measure for implementation would be appropriate.

5.2.2.1 Lessons Learned from Previous Environmental Impact Statements/Overseas Environmental Impact Statements

In an effort to improve upon past processes, the Navy considered all mitigation measures previously implemented and adapted its mitigation assessment approach based on lessons learned from previous EISs, ESA biological opinions, MMPA Letters of Authorization, and other formal or informal consultations with regulatory agencies. For example, during the development of the 2011 GOA EIS/OEIS, the Navy determined that relocation of activities to another range was not possible due to a number of factors. The Navy considered reduction or elimination of training in the GOA, but determined that a reduction would not fulfill its Title 10 training requirements or meet joint training requirements.

Navy planners, scientists, and the operational community assessed the effectiveness of a full suite of potential mitigation measures (a portion of which were specific mitigation areas) on a case-by-case basis, using information and lessons learned from the Navy's internal adaptive management process. The resulting assemblage of recommended measures is comprised of currently implemented measures, modifications of currently implemented measures, and newly proposed measures. Details on the assessment methods are provided in Section 5.2.3 (Assessment Method). The rationale for recommending, modifying, adding, or discontinuing each measure is provided in Section 5.3 (Mitigation Assessment).

5.2.2.2 Protective Measures Assessment Protocol

The Protective Measures Assessment Protocol (PMAP) is a decision support and situational awareness software tool that the Navy uses to facilitate compliance with mitigation measures during the conduct of certain training activities at sea. The Navy runs the PMAP program during the event planning process to ensure that personnel involved in the activity are aware of the mitigation requirements and to help ensure that all mitigation measures are implemented appropriately. In addition to providing notification of the required mitigation, the tool also provides a visual display of the exercise area, unit's position in relation to the target area, and any relevant environmental data. The final suite of mitigation measures contained in the ROD will be integrated into the PMAP.

Section 5.3.1.1.1.1 (United States Navy Afloat Environmental Compliance Training Series) contains information about the newly developed PMAP training module.

5.2.3 ASSESSMENT METHOD

As shown in Figure 5-1, the Navy undertook an effectiveness assessment and operational assessment for each potential mitigation measure to ensure its compatibility with Section 5.2.2 (Overview of Mitigation Approach). The Navy used information from published and readily available sources, as well as Navy after-action and monitoring reports. When available, these data were used when they represented the best available science and if they were generally accepted by the scientific community to ensure that they were applicable and contributed to the analysis.

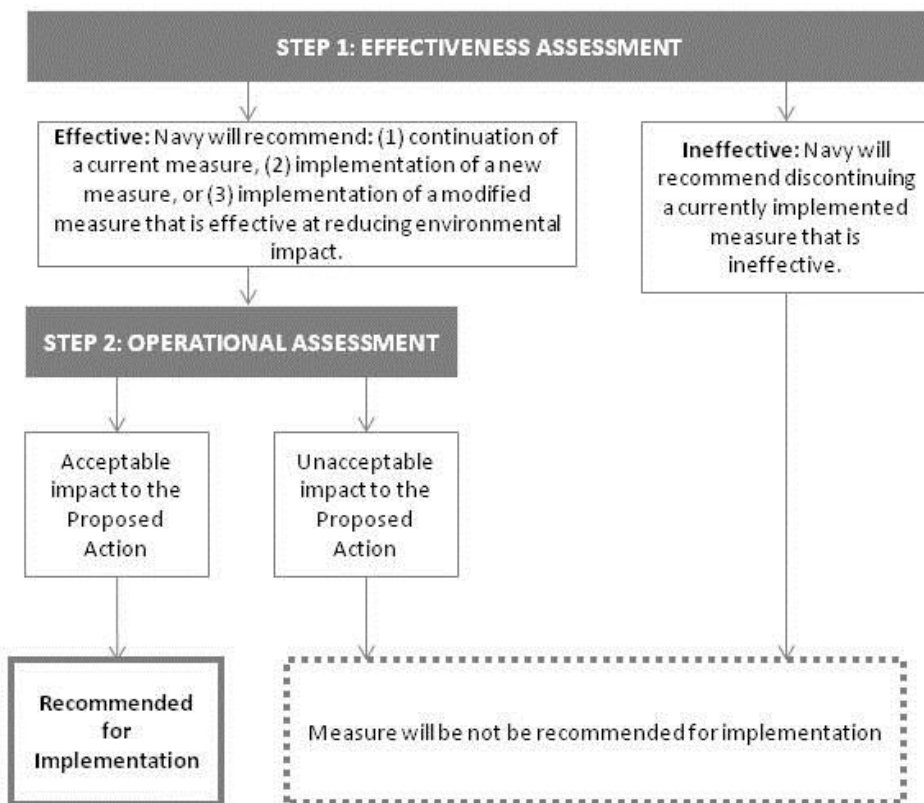


Figure 5-1: Flowchart of Process for Determining Recommended Mitigation Measures

5.2.3.1 Effectiveness Assessment

5.2.3.1.1 Procedural Measures

Procedural measures could involve employing techniques or technology to modify an activity in order to avoid or reduce a potential impact on a particular resource. For the purposes of organization, procedural measures are discussed within two subcategories: Lookouts and mitigation zones.

A proposed procedural measure was deemed effective if implementing the measure was likely to result in avoidance or reduction of an impact on a resource. The level of avoidance or reduction of the impact gained from implementing a procedural measure was weighed against the potential for a shift in impacts resulting from the activity modification. For example, if predictive modeling results indicate that the use of underwater explosives could cause unacceptable impacts on a particular resource; those

impacts could possibly be reduced by substituting non-explosive activities for explosive activities. However, if the increased use of non-explosive activities would consequently produce an unacceptable impact on habitats due to an associated physical disturbance or strike risk from military expended materials, the measure would not necessarily be justifiable.

A proposed procedural measure was deemed ineffective if its implementation would not result in avoidance or reduction of an impact on a resource, or if an unacceptable impact will simply be shifted from one resource to another. For ineffective procedural measures that are currently being implemented, the rationale for terminating, modifying, or continuing to carry out the measure is included in the discussion.

5.2.3.1.2 Proposed Mitigation Areas

In order to avoid or reduce a potential impact on a particular resource, the Navy would either limit the time of day or duration in which a particular activity could take place, or move or relocate a particular activity outside of a specific geographic area, yet still within the Study Area. Within mitigation areas, the measures would only apply to the specific activity that resulted in the requirement for mitigation, and would not prevent or restrict other activities from occurring during that time or in that area.

A proposed mitigation area was deemed effective if implementing the measure would likely result in avoidance or reduction of the impact on the resource. The specific season, time of day, or geographic area must be important to the resource. In determining importance, special consideration was given to time periods or geographic areas having characteristics such as especially high overall density or percent population use, seasonal bottlenecks for a migration corridor, and identifiable key foraging and reproduction areas.

Avoidance or reduction of the impact in the specific time period or geographic area was weighed against the potential for causing new impacts in alternative time periods or geographic areas. For example, if the proposed training event predicted to cause unacceptable impacts on a particular resource in a known foraging location, those impacts could possibly be reduced by relocating those activities to a new location. However, if the proposed training event at the new location would consequently produce an unacceptable impact on the same or a different resource at the new location, the measure would not necessarily be justifiable.

A proposed mitigation area was deemed ineffective if implementing the measure would not result in avoidance or reduction of an impact on a resource, or if an unacceptable impact would simply be shifted from one time period or location to another. For ineffective mitigation areas that are currently being implemented, the rationale for terminating, modifying, or continuing to carry out the measure is included in the discussion.

5.2.3.2 Operational Assessment

The Navy conducted the operational assessment for procedural measures and proposed mitigation areas using the criteria described below. The Navy deemed procedural and mitigation area measures to have acceptable operational impacts on a particular proposed activity if the following four conclusions were reached:

1. Implementation of the measure will not increase safety risks to Navy personnel and equipment.
2. Implementation of the measure is practical. Practicality was defined by the following factors:

- The measure does not result in an unacceptable increase in resource requirements (e.g., wear and tear on equipment, additional fuel, additional personnel, increased training requirements, or additional reporting requirements).
 - The measure does not result in an unacceptable increase in time away from homeport for Navy personnel.
 - The measure does not result in national security concerns. Should national security require conducting more than the designated number of activities, or a change in how the Navy conducts those activities, the Navy reserves the right to provide the regulatory federal agency with prior notification and include the information in any associated exercise or monitoring reports.
 - The measure is consistent with Navy policy. Navy policy requires that mitigation measures are developed through consultation with regulatory agencies (e.g., the MMPA and ESA processes), would likely result in avoidance or reduction of an impact on a resource as determined by the effectiveness assessment, and would not negatively impact training fidelity. This policy applies to the full suite of potential mitigation measures that the Navy assessed, including measures that were considered but eliminated, and, as appropriate, to currently implemented measures that the Navy is no longer recommending to implement.
3. Implementation of the measure will not result in an unacceptable impact on readiness. A primary factor that was considered for all mitigation measures is that the measure must not modify the activity in a way that no longer allows the activity to meet the intended objectives, and ultimately must not interfere with the Navy meeting all of its military readiness requirements. Specifically, for mitigation area measures, the following additional factors were considered:
- The activity is not dependent on a specific range or range support structure within the mitigation area, and there are alternate areas with the necessary environmental conditions (e.g., oceanographic conditions).
 - The mitigation area does not hold any current or foreseeable future readiness value. This assessment will be revisited if Navy operations or national security interests conclude that training needs to occur within the mitigation area.
 - Implementation of the measure will not prohibit conducting shipboard maintenance, repair, and testing pierside prior to at-sea operations.
4. The Navy has legal authority to implement the measure.

If all four of the above conditions were not able to be reached, the Navy deemed the procedural or proposed mitigation area measure to have unacceptable impacts on the Proposed Action, and did not recommend those unacceptable measures for implementation.

5.3 MITIGATION ASSESSMENT

The effectiveness and operational assessments resulted in potential mitigation measures being organized into the following four sections:

- Section 5.3.1 (Lookout Procedural Measures) includes recommended measures specific to the use of Lookouts or trained marine species observers.
- Section 5.3.2 (Mitigation Zone Procedural Measures) includes recommended measures specific to visual observations with a mitigation zone.
- Section 5.3.3 (Mitigation Measures Considered but Eliminated) includes measures that the Navy does not recommend for implementation due to the measure being ineffective at reducing

environmental impacts, having an unacceptable operational impact, or being incompatible with Section 5.2.2 (Overview of Mitigation Approach).

A summary of the Navy recommended measures is provided in Table 5.4-1.

5.3.1 LOOKOUT PROCEDURAL MEASURES

As described in Section 5.1 (Standard Operating Procedures), ships have personnel assigned to stand watch at all times while underway. Standard watch personnel may perform watch duties in conjunction with job responsibilities that extend beyond looking at the water or air (such as supervision of other personnel). This section will introduce Lookouts, who perform similar duties to standard personnel standing watch and whose duties satisfy safety of navigation and mitigation requirements.

The Navy will have two types of Lookouts for the purposes of conducting visual observations: those positioned on ships; and those positioned ashore, in aircraft, or on small boats. Lookouts positioned on ships will diligently observe the air and surface of the water. They will have multiple observation objectives, which include but are not limited to detecting the presence of biological resources and recreational or fishing boats, observing the mitigation zones described in Section 5.3.1.2 (Lookouts), and monitoring for vessel and personnel safety concerns.

Due to manning and space restrictions on aircraft, small boats, and some Navy Ships, Lookouts for these platforms may be supplemented by the aircraft crew or pilot, boat crew, range site personnel, or shore-side personnel. Lookouts positioned in minimally manned platforms may be responsible for tasks in addition to observing the air or surface of the water (e.g., navigation of a helicopter or small boat). However, all Lookouts will, considering personnel safety, practicality of implementation, and impact on the effectiveness of the activity, comply with the observation objectives described above for Lookouts positioned on ships.

The procedural measures described below primarily consist of having Lookouts during specific training activities.

5.3.1.1 Specialized Training

5.3.1.1.1 Training for Navy Personnel and Civilian Equivalents

5.3.1.1.1.1 United States Navy Afloat Environmental Compliance Training Series

Recommended Mitigation and Comparison to Current Mitigation

The Navy is proposing to continue implementing the Marine Species Awareness Training for watch personnel and Lookouts, and as further described below, to add the requirement for additional Navy personnel and civilian equivalents to complete one or more environmental training modules.

The Navy has developed the U.S. Navy Afloat Environmental Compliance Training Series to help ensure Navy-wide compliance with environmental requirements, and to help Navy personnel gain a better understanding of their personal roles and responsibilities. The training series contains four interactive multimedia training modules. Personnel will be required to complete all modules identified in their career path training plan.

The first module is the Introduction to the U.S. Navy Afloat Environmental Compliance Training Series. The introduction module provides information on environmental laws (e.g., ESA and MMPA) and responsibilities relevant to Navy training and testing activities. The material is put into context of why

environmental compliance is important to the Navy, from the most junior sailor to Commanding Officers.

The second module is the U.S. Navy Marine Species Awareness Training. Consistent with current requirements, all personnel standing watch on the bridge, Commanding Officers, Executive Officers, maritime patrol aircraft aircrews, anti-submarine warfare helicopter crews, civilian equivalents, and Lookouts will successfully complete the Marine Species Awareness Training prior to standing watch or serving as a Lookout. The module contained within the U.S. Navy Environmental Compliance Training Series is an update to the current Marine Species Awareness Training version 3.1. The updated training is designed to improve the effectiveness of visual observations for marine resources, including marine mammals and sea turtles. The Marine Species Awareness Training provides information on sighting cues, visual observation tools and techniques, and sighting notification procedures.

The third module is the U.S. Navy PMAP. PMAP is a decision support and situational awareness software tool that the Navy uses to facilitate compliance with worldwide mitigation measures during the conduct of training and testing activities at sea. The module provides instruction for generating and reviewing PMAP reports. Section 5.2.2.2 (Protective Measures Assessment Protocol) contains additional information on the benefits of the software tool.

The fourth module is the U.S. Navy Sonar Positional Reporting System and marine mammal incident reporting. The Navy developed the Sonar Positional Reporting System as its official record of underwater sound sources used under its MMPA permits. Marine mammal incidents include vessel strikes and animal strandings. The module provides instruction on the reporting requirements and procedures.

Effectiveness and Operational Assessment

Navy personnel undergo extensive training in order to stand watch on the bridge. Standard training includes on-the-job instruction under the supervision of experienced personnel, followed by completion of the Personnel Qualification Standard program. The Personnel Qualification Standard program certifies that personnel have demonstrated the skills needed to stand watch, such as detecting and reporting floating or partially submerged objects.

The U.S. Navy Afloat Environmental Compliance Training Series, including the updated Marine Species Awareness Training, is a specialized multimedia training program designed to help Navy operational and test communities best avoid potentially harmful interactions with marine species. The program provides training on how to sight marine species, focusing on marine mammals. The training also includes instruction for visually identifying sea turtles, concentrations of floating vegetation (kelp paddies), jellyfish aggregations, and flocks of seabirds, which are often indicators of marine mammal or sea turtle presence. The Marine Species Awareness Training also addresses the role that watchstanders and Lookouts play in helping the Navy maintain compliance with environmental protection requirements, as well as supporting Navy stewardship commitments.

In summary, the Navy believes that the U.S. Navy Afloat Environmental Compliance Training Series, including the updated Marine Species Awareness Training, is the best and most appropriate forum for teaching watch personnel and Lookouts about their responsibilities for helping reduce impacts on the marine environment. The Marine Species Awareness Training provides the Navy with invaluable training for a relatively large number of personnel. Constantly shifting personnel assignments presents a real challenge; however, the format and structure of the U.S. Navy Afloat Environmental Compliance Training Series will help the Navy reduce costs during fiscally constrained periods and provide constant

access to training. Overall, the Marine Species Awareness Training is an effective tool for improving the potential for Lookouts to detect marine species while on duty.

Implementation of the Marine Species Awareness Training is considered to be an acceptable program with regard to personnel safety, practicality of implementation, impact on effectiveness of the military readiness activity, and Navy policy.

5.3.1.2 Lookouts

The Navy proposes to use one or more Lookouts during the training activities described below, which are organized by stressor category. A comparison of the currently implemented mitigation measures and recommended mitigation measures are provided where applicable. The effectiveness and operational assessments are discussed for all Lookout measures collectively in Section 5.3.1.2.4 (Effectiveness Assessment for Lookouts) and Section 5.3.1.2.5 (Operational Assessment for Lookouts).

5.3.1.2.1 Acoustic Stressors – Non-Impulsive Sound

5.3.1.2.1.1 Hull-Mounted Mid-Frequency Active Sonar

The Navy's current Lookout mitigation measures during training activities involving hull-mounted mid-frequency active sonar include requirements such as the number of personnel on watch and the manner in which personnel are to visually search the area in the vicinity of the ongoing activity.

The Navy is proposing to modify the number of Lookouts currently implemented for ships using hull-mounted mid-frequency active sonar. Ships using hull-mounted mid-frequency active sonar sources associated with ASW activities at sea (with the exception of ships less than 65 ft. [20 m] in length, which are minimally manned) will have two Lookouts at the forward position.

While using hull-mounted mid-frequency active sonar sources underway, vessels less than 65 ft. (20 m) in length, and ships that are minimally manned will have one Lookout at the forward position due to space and manning restrictions.

5.3.1.2.1.2 High-Frequency and Non-Hull Mounted Mid-Frequency Active Sonar

The Navy currently conducts high-frequency and non-hull-mounted mid-frequency active sonar training in the Study Area. Non-hull mounted mid-frequency active sonar training activities include the use of aircraft deployed sonobuoys and helicopter dipping sonar. During those activities, the Navy employs the following mitigation measure regarding Lookout procedures:

- Navy aircraft participating in exercises at sea shall conduct and maintain, when operationally feasible and safe, surveillance for marine species of concern as long as it does not violate safety constraints or interfere with the accomplishment of primary operational duties.
- Helicopters shall observe/survey the vicinity of an ASW training event for 10 minutes before the first deployment of active (dipping) sonar in the water.

The Navy is proposing to continue using the number of Lookouts currently implemented for aircraft conducting non-hull mounted mid-frequency active sonar activities.

Mitigation measures do not currently exist for other high-frequency active sonar activities associated with ASW, or for new platforms; therefore, the Navy is proposing to add a new Lookout and other measures for these activities and on these platforms when conducted in the Study Area. The recommended measure is provided below.

The Navy will have one Lookout on ships conducting high-frequency or non-hull mounted mid-frequency active sonar activities associated with ASW activities at sea.

5.3.1.2.2 Acoustic Stressors – Explosives and Impulsive Sound

5.3.1.2.2.1 Improved Extended Echo Ranging Sonobuoys

The Navy's Proposed Action does not include the use of Improved Extended Echo Ranging sonobuoys during training activities in the TMAA.

5.3.1.2.2.2 Explosive Signal Underwater Sound Buoys Using >0.5–2.5 Pound Net Explosive Weight

Lookout measures do not currently exist for explosive Signal Underwater Sound (SUS) buoy activities using > 0.5–2.5 pound(s) (lb.) net explosive weight (NEW).

The Navy is proposing to add this measure. Aircraft conducting explosive sonobuoy activities using > 0.5–2.5 lb. NEW will have one Lookout.

5.3.1.2.2.3 Gunnery Exercises – Small-, Medium-, and Large-Caliber Using a Surface Target

Currently, the Navy employs the following Lookout procedures during gunnery exercises:

- From the intended firing position, trained Lookouts shall survey the mitigation zone for marine mammals prior to commencement and during the exercise as long as practicable.
- If applicable, target towing vessels shall maintain a Lookout. If a marine mammal is sighted in the vicinity of the exercise, the tow vessel shall immediately notify the firing vessel in order to secure gunnery firing until the area is clear.

The Navy is proposing to continue using the Lookout procedures currently implemented for this activity. The Navy will have one Lookout on the vessel or aircraft conducting small-, medium-, or large-caliber gunnery exercises against a surface target. Towing vessels, if applicable, shall also maintain one Lookout.

5.3.1.2.2.4 Missile Exercises Using a Surface Target

Currently, the Navy employs the following Lookout procedures during missile exercises:

- Aircraft shall visually survey the target area for marine mammals. Visual inspection of the target area shall be made by flying at 1,500 ft. (457 m) or lower, if safe to do so, and at slowest safe speed.
- Firing or range clearance aircraft must be able to actually see ordnance impact areas.

The Navy is proposing to continue using the Lookout procedures currently implemented for this activity. When aircraft are conducting missile exercises against a surface target, the Navy will have one Lookout positioned in an aircraft.

5.3.1.2.2.5 Bombing Exercises

Currently, the Navy employs the following Lookout procedures during bombing exercises:

- If surface vessels are involved, Lookouts shall survey for floating kelp and marine mammals.
- Aircraft shall visually survey the target and buffer zone for marine mammals prior to and during the exercise. The survey of the impact area shall be made by flying at 1,500 ft. (457 m) or lower,

if safe to do so, and at the slowest safe speed. Release of ordnance through cloud cover is prohibited: aircraft must be able to actually see ordnance impact areas. Survey aircraft should employ most effective search tactics and capabilities.

The Navy is proposing to (1) continue implementing the current measures for bombing exercises, and (2) clarify the number of Lookouts currently implemented for this activity. The Navy will have one Lookout positioned in an aircraft conducting bombing exercises, and trained Lookouts in any surface vessels involved.

5.3.1.2.2.6 Weapons Firing Noise During Gunnery Exercises

The Navy is proposing to continue using the number of Lookouts currently implemented for gunnery exercises. The Navy will have one Lookout on the ship conducting explosive and non-explosive gunnery exercises. This may be the same Lookout described in Section 5.3.1.2.2.3 (Gunnery Exercises – Small-, Medium-, and Large-Caliber Using a Surface Target) when that activity is conducted from a ship against a surface target.

5.3.1.2.2.7 Sinking Exercises

The Navy is proposing to continue using the number of Lookouts currently implemented for this activity. During SINKEXs, the Navy will have two Lookouts (one positioned in an aircraft and one on a surface vessel). The Navy will not conduct SINKEXs within Habitats of Particular Concern in the TMAA.

5.3.1.2.3 Physical Disturbance and Strike

5.3.1.2.3.1 Vessels

Currently, the Navy employs the following Lookout procedures to avoid physical disturbance and strike of marine mammals during at-sea training:

- While underway, surface vessels shall have at least two Lookouts with binoculars; surfaced submarines shall have at least one Lookout with binoculars. Lookouts already posted for safety of navigation and man-overboard precautions may be used to fill this requirement. As part of their regular duties, Lookouts will watch for and report to the Officer of the Deck the presence of marine mammals.
- On surface vessels equipped with a mid-frequency active sonar, pedestal-mounted “Big Eye” (20x110) binoculars shall be properly installed and in good working order to assist in the detection of marine mammals in the vicinity of the vessel.
- Personnel on Lookout shall employ visual search procedures employing a scanning methodology in accordance with the Lookout Training Handbook (NAVEDTRA 12968-D).
- After sunset and prior to sunrise, Lookouts shall employ Night Lookout Techniques in accordance with the Lookout Training Handbook. (NAVEDTRA 12968-D).

The Navy is proposing to revise the mitigation measures for this activity as follows: while underway, vessels will have a minimum of one Lookout.

5.3.1.2.3.2 Towed In-Water Devices

The Navy is proposing to clarify the number of Lookouts currently implemented for activities using towed in-water devices. The Navy will have one Lookout during activities using towed in-water devices when towed from a manned platform.

5.3.1.2.4 Non-Explosive Practice Munitions

5.3.1.2.4.1 Small-, Medium-, and Large-Caliber Gunnery Exercises Using a Surface Target

Currently, the Navy employs the same mitigation measures for non-explosive practice munitions—small-, medium-, and large-caliber gunnery exercises using a surface target as described above in 5.3.1.2.2.3 (Gunnery Exercises – Small-, Medium-, and Large-Caliber Using a Surface Target).

The Navy is proposing to continue using the number of Lookouts currently implemented for these activities. The Navy will have one Lookout during activities involving non-explosive practice munitions (e.g., small-, medium-, and large-caliber gunnery exercises) against a surface target.

5.3.1.2.4.2 Bombing Exercises

Currently, the Navy employs the same mitigation measures for non-explosive bombing exercises (i.e., bomb dummy units) as described above in 5.3.1.2.2.5 (Bombing Exercises).

The Navy is proposing to continue using the same Lookout procedures currently implemented for these activities. The Navy will have one Lookout positioned in an aircraft during non-explosive bombing exercises, and trained Lookouts in any surface vessels involved.

5.3.1.2.4.3 Missile Exercises (Including Rockets) Using a Surface Target

Currently, the Navy employs the same mitigation measures for non-explosive missile exercises (including rockets) using a surface target as described above in 5.3.1.2.2.4 (Missile Exercises Using a Surface Target).

The Navy is proposing to continue using the number of Lookouts currently implemented for these activities. When aircraft are conducting non-explosive missile exercises (including exercises using rockets) against a surface target, the Navy will have one Lookout positioned in an aircraft.

5.3.1.2.5 Effectiveness Assessment for Lookouts

Personnel standing watch in accordance with Navy standard operating procedures have multiple job responsibilities. While on duty, these standard watch personnel often conduct marine species observation in addition to their primary job duties (e.g., aiding in the navigation of the vessel). By having one or more Lookouts observing the air and surface of the water during certain training activities, the Navy increases the likelihood that marine species will be detected. It is also important to note that a number of training activities involve multiple vessels and aircraft, thereby increasing the cumulative number of Lookouts or watch personnel that could potentially be present during a given activity.

Although using Lookouts is expected to increase the likelihood that marine species will be detected at the surface of the water, it is unlikely that using Lookouts will be able to help avoid impacts to all species entirely due to the inherent limitations of visually detecting marine mammals. The probability of visually detecting a marine animal is dependent upon two things. An animal must be present in an area to be seen (known as the availability bias), and an animal that is present in the area of observation must be positioned or behaving in a way that will allow for a visual detection. For example, an animal may not be visually detectable if it is swimming entirely under the water at a relatively far distance from a boat. Second, the observer must perceive the animal when the animal is in a position to be detected (Marsh and Sinclair 1989).

In cooperation with NMFS, the Navy has undertaken monitoring efforts to track compliance with take authorizations, help evaluate the effectiveness of implemented mitigation measures, and gain a better

understanding of the impacts of the Navy activities on marine resources. In 2010, the Navy initiated a study designed to evaluate the effectiveness of the Navy Lookout team. The University of St. Andrews, Scotland, under contract to the U.S. Navy, developed an initial data collection protocol for use during the study. Between 2010 and 2012, trained Navy marine mammal observers collected data during nine field trials as part of a "proof of concept" phase. The goal of the proof of concept phase was to develop a statistically valid protocol for quantitatively analyzing the effectiveness of Lookouts during Navy training exercises. Field trials were conducted in the Hawaii Range Complex, Southern California Range Complex, and Jacksonville Range Complex onboard one frigate, one cruiser, and seven destroyers. After final assessment of the proof of concept and necessary revisions to the methodology were completed, the data collection phase began in 2012. Eight embarks have been conducted from 2012 through March 2015. Data collection is ongoing, and analysis will be conducted when the data set is large enough to produce statistically significant results. The Navy plans to conduct four embarks per year until the data set is sufficient, which is currently estimated to require 4–8 more years of effort.¹

5.3.1.2.5.1 Detection Probabilities of Marine Mammals in the Study Area

Until the results of the Navy's Lookout effectiveness study are available, the Navy must rely on the best available science to determine detection probabilities of marine mammals by Navy Lookouts. To do so, the Navy has compiled the results of available literature on line-transect analyses, which are typically used to estimate cetacean abundance. In line-transect analyses, the factors affecting the detection of an animal or group of animals directly on the transect line may be probabilistically quantified as $g(0)$. As a reference, a $g(0)$ value of 1 indicates that animals on the transect line are always detected. Table 5.3-1 provides detection probabilities for cetacean species based largely on $g(0)$ values derived from shipboard and aerial surveys in the Study Area, which vary widely based on $g(0)$ derivation factors (e.g., species, sighting platforms, group size, and sea state conditions). Refer to Section 3.8.3.1.8 (Implementing Mitigation to Reduce Sound Exposures) for additional background on $g(0)$ and a discussion of how the Navy used $g(0)$ to quantitatively assess the effectiveness of Lookouts during sound-producing activities.

Several variables that play into how easily a marine mammal may be detected by a dedicated observer are directly related to the animal, including its external appearance and size; surface, diving and social behavior; and life history. The following is a generalized discussion of the behavior and external appearance of the marine mammals with the potential to occur in the Study Area as these characters relate to the detectability of each species. The species are grouped loosely based on either taxonomic relatedness or commonalities in size and behavior, and include large whales, cryptic species, delphinids, and pinnipeds. Not all statements may hold true for all species in a grouping and exceptions are mentioned where applicable. The information presented in this section may be found in Jefferson et al. (2008) and sources within unless otherwise noted.

Table 5.3-1: Sightability Based on $g(0)$ Values for Marine Mammal Species in the Study Area

| Species/Stocks | Family | Vessel Sightability | Aircraft Sightability |
|----------------------------------|------------------------|---------------------|-----------------------|
| Baird's Beaked Whale | <i>Ziphiidae</i> | 0.96 | 0.18 |
| Blue Whale, Fin Whale, Sei Whale | <i>Balaenopteridae</i> | 0.921 | 0.407 |

¹ Collection of a large enough data set to be statistical significant will partially be a function of the number of marine mammals in a given area available for sighting at the time of any embark. Therefore, the length of time needed to complete this study cannot be more precisely determined.

Table 5.3-1: Sightability Based on g(0) Values for Marine Mammal Species in the Study Area (continued)

| Species/Stocks | Family | Vessel Sightability | Aircraft Sightability |
|--|---------------------------------------|---------------------|-----------------------|
| California Sea Lion, Northern Fur Seal, Steller Sea Lion | <i>Zalophus, Otariidae, Otariidae</i> | 0.299 | 0.299 |
| Cuvier's Beaked Whale | <i>Ziphiidae</i> | 0.23 | 0.074 |
| Dall's Porpoise | <i>Phocoenidae</i> | 0.822 | 0.221 |
| Gray Whale | <i>Eschichtiidae</i> | 0.921 | 0.482 |
| Harbor Porpoise | <i>Phocoenidae</i> | 0.769 | 0.292 |
| Harbor Seal, Ribbon Seal | <i>Phoca vitulina, Phocidae</i> | 0.281 | 0.281 |
| Humpback Whale | <i>Balaenopteridae</i> | 0.921 | 0.495 |
| Killer Whale | <i>Delphinidae</i> | 0.921 | 0.95 |
| Minke Whale | <i>Balaenopteridae</i> | 0.856 | 0.386 |
| North Pacific Right Whale | <i>Eubalaena</i> | 0.645 | 0.41 |
| Northern Elephant Seal | <i>Mirounga</i> | 0.105 | 0.105 |
| Pacific White-Sided Dolphin | <i>Delphinidae</i> | 0.856 | 0.67 |
| Sperm Whale | <i>Physeteridae</i> | 0.87 | 0.32 |
| Stejneger's Beaked Whale | <i>Mesoplodon</i> | 0.23 | 0.074 |

Notes: When there was no value available for vessels, the g(0) for aircraft was used as a conservative underestimate of sightability following the assumption that the availability bias from a slower moving vessel should result in a higher g(0). The g(0) for Cuvier's beaked whale was used for Stejneger's beaked whale given there is no data available for Stejneger's. The published California Sea Lion aircraft g(0) is used for Steller Sea Lion and Northern Fur Seal because all are in the otariidae family and there is no g(0) data for these other species. The published Harbor Seal aircraft g(0) is used for Ribbon Seal because they are in the phocid family and there is no g(0) data for ribbon seal. North Atlantic right whale data (Palka 2005) has been used for North Pacific right whale.

Sources: Barlow 2006; Barlow et al. 2006; Barlow and Forney 2007; Carretta et al. 2000; Forney and Barlow 1998; Laake et al. 1997; Palka 2005

Large Whales

Species of large whales found in the Study Area include all the baleen whales and the sperm whale. Baleen whales are generally large, with adults ranging in size from 30 to 89 ft. (9 to 27 m), often making them immediately detectable. Many species of baleen whales have a prominent blow ranging from 10 ft. (3 m) to as much as 39 ft. (12 m) above the surface. However, there are at least two species (Bryde's whale and common minke whale) often have no visible blow. Baleen whales tend to travel singly or in small groups ranging from pairs to groups of five. The exception to this is the fin whale, which is known to travel in pods of seven or more individuals. All species of baleen whales are known to form larger-scale aggregations in areas of high localized productivity or on breeding grounds. Baleen whales may or may not fluke at the surface before they dive; some species fluke regularly (e.g., the humpback whale), some fluke variably (e.g., the blue whale and fin whale) and some rarely fluke (e.g., the sei whale and common minke whale). Baleen whales may remain at the surface for extended periods of time as they forage or socialize. Humpback whales are known to corral prey at the surface. Dive behavior varies amongst species, as well. Many species will dive and remain at depth for as long as 30 minutes. Some will adjust their diving behavior according to the presence of vessels (e.g., the humpback whale and fin whale). Sei whales are known to sink just below the surface and remain there between breaths.

Adult gray whales, included among the large whales, range in size from 38 to 46 ft. (11 to 14 m). When viewed in windless conditions, their blow is heart-shaped, up to 15 ft. (5 m) in height. They typically

breathe 3–5 times in a row, about 10–20 seconds apart, then dive for 3–7 minutes. Gray whales occur within a narrow coastal band, and their populations are generally assessed using focused (single-species) count data made from shore stations; g(0) values from vessels are not available for this species and thus estimates from other large baleen whales were used.

Sperm whales are also considered large whales, with adult males reaching as much as 50 ft. (18 m) in total length. Sperm whales at the surface would likely be easy to detect. They have a prominent, 16 ft. (5 m) blow, and may remain at the surface for long periods of time. They are known to raft (i.e., loll at the surface) and to form surface-active groups when socializing. Sperm whales may travel or congregate in large groups of as many as 50 individuals. Although sperm whales engage in conspicuous surface behavior such as fluking, breaching and tail-slapping, they are long, deep divers and may remain submerged for over 1 hour.

Cryptic Species

Cryptic and deep-diving species are those that do not surface for long periods of time and are often difficult to see when they surface, which ultimately limits the ability of Lookouts to detect them even in good sighting conditions (Barlow et al. 2006). Cryptic species include beaked whales (family Ziphiidae), dwarf and pygmy sperm whales (*Kogia* species), and harbor porpoises, although dwarf and pygmy sperm whales are not in the Study Area. Beaked whales are notoriously difficult to detect at sea. In the Study Area, there is currently no reliable abundance estimate for the Alaska stock of Cuvier's beaked whale (Allen and Angliss 2013). Beaked whale diving behavior in general consists of long, deep dives that may last for nearly 90 minutes followed by a series of shallower dives and intermittent surfacings (Tyack et al. 2006, Baird et al. 2008). Some individuals remain at the surface for an extended period of time (perhaps 1 hour or more) or make shorter dives (MacLeod and D'Amico, 2006). Detection of beaked whales is further complicated because beaked whales often dive and surface in a synchronous pattern and they travel below the surface of the water (MacLeod and D'Amico 2006).

Harbor porpoises are difficult to detect in all but the best of conditions (i.e., no swell, no whitecaps). Harbor porpoises travel singly or in small groups of less than six individuals, but may aggregate into groups of several hundred. They are inconspicuous at the surface, rarely lifting their heads above the surface and often lying motionless. They are small and may actively avoid vessels.

Delphinids

Delphinids are some of the most likely species to be detected at sea by observers. Many species of delphinids engage in very conspicuous surface behavior, including leaping, spinning, bow riding, and traveling along the surface in large groups. Delphinid group sizes may range from 10 to 10,000 individuals, depending upon the species and the geographic region. Species such as pilot whales, rough-toothed dolphins, white-beaked dolphins, white-sided dolphins, bottlenose dolphins, stenellid dolphins, common dolphins, and Fraser's dolphins are known to either actively approach and investigate vessels, or bow ride along moving vessels. Common dolphins form huge groups that travel quickly along the surface, churning up the water and making them visible from a great distance. Delphinids may dive for as little as 1 minute to more than 30 minutes, depending upon the species.

Pinnipeds

Pinnipeds (seals and sea lions) are more difficult to detect at sea than cetaceans. Pinnipeds are much smaller, often solitary and generally do not engage in conspicuous surface behavior. There is not a lot of information regarding pinniped behavior at sea. Pinnipeds have a low profile, no dorsal appendage and small body size in comparison with most cetaceans, which limits accurate visual detection to sea states

of less than 2 on the Beaufort scale (Carretta et al. 2000) at sea. Some species, such as harbor seals, are known to approach and observe human activities on land or on stationary vessels.

5.3.1.2.5.2 Summary of Lookout Effectiveness

Due to the various detection probabilities, levels of experience and dependence on sighting conditions, Lookouts will not always be effective at avoiding impacts on all species. However, Lookouts are expected to increase the overall likelihood that certain marine mammal species will be detected at the surface of the water, when compared to the likelihood that these same species would be detected if Lookouts are not used. The Navy believes the continued use of Lookouts contributes to helping reduce potential impacts to these marine mammal species from training activities.

5.3.1.2.6 Operational Assessment for Lookouts

As written, implementation of the mitigation measures recommended in Section 5.3.1.2 (Lookouts) is considered an acceptable program with regard to personnel safety, practicality of implementation, impact on effectiveness of the military readiness activities, and Navy policy. The number of Lookouts recommended for each measure often represents the maximum Lookout capacity based on limited resources (e.g., space and manning restrictions).

5.3.2 MITIGATION ZONE PROCEDURAL MEASURES

Safety zones described in Section 5.1 (Standard Operating Procedures) are zones designed for human safety, whereas this section will introduce mitigation zones. A mitigation zone is designed solely for the purpose of reducing potential impacts on marine species from training activities. Mitigation zones are measured as the radius from a source. Unique to each activity category, each radius represents a distance that the Navy will visually observe to help reduce injury to marine species. Visual detections of applicable marine species will be communicated immediately to the appropriate watch station for information dissemination and appropriate action. If the presence of marine mammals is detected acoustically, Lookouts posted in aircraft and on surface vessels will increase the vigilance of their visual surveillance. As a reference, aerial surveys are typically made by flying at 1,500 ft. (457 m) altitude or lower at the slowest safe speed.

Many of the proposed activities have mitigation measures that are currently being implemented, as required by previous environmental documents or consultations. Most of the current 2011 EIS/OEIS mitigation zones for activities that involve the use of impulsive and non-impulsive sources were originally designed to reduce the potential for onset of temporary threshold shift (TTS). For this Supplemental EIS/OEIS, the Navy updated the acoustic propagation modeling to incorporate updated hearing threshold metrics (i.e., upper and lower frequency limits), updated density data for marine mammals, and factors such as an animal's likely presence at various depths. An explanation of the acoustic propagation modeling process can be found in the *Determination of Acoustic Effects on Marine Mammals and Sea Turtles for the Gulf of Alaska Training Activities Supplemental Environmental Impact Statement/Overseas Environmental Impact Statement* technical report (Marine Species Modeling Team 2015).

As a result of the updates to the acoustic propagation modeling, in some cases the ranges to onset of TTS effects are much larger than those output by previous Phase I models. Due to the ineffectiveness and unacceptable operational impacts associated with mitigating these large areas, the Navy is unable to mitigate for onset of TTS for every activity. In this GOA analysis, the Navy developed each recommended mitigation zone to avoid or reduce the potential for onset of the lowest level of injury, permanent threshold shift (PTS), out to the predicted maximum range. In some cases where the ranges

to effects are smaller than previous models estimated, the mitigation zones were adjusted accordingly to provide consistency across the measures. Mitigating to the predicted maximum range to PTS consequently also mitigates to the predicted maximum range to onset mortality (1 percent mortality), onset slight lung injury, and onset slight gastrointestinal tract injury, since the maximum range to effects for these criteria are shorter than for PTS. Furthermore, in most cases, the predicted maximum range to PTS also consequently covers the predicted average range to TTS. Table 5.3-2 summarizes the predicted average range to TTS, average range to PTS, maximum range to PTS, and recommended mitigation zone for each activity category, based on the Navy's acoustic propagation modeling results. The predicted ranges are based on local environmental conditions and are unique to the GOA Study Area.

The activity-specific mitigation zones are based on the longest range for all the functional hearing groups (based on the hearing threshold metrics described in Section 3.8, Marine Mammals). The mitigation zone for a majority of activities is driven by either the high-frequency cetaceans or the sea turtles functional hearing groups. Therefore, the mitigation zones are even more protective for the remaining functional hearing groups (i.e., low-frequency cetaceans, mid-frequency cetaceans, and pinnipeds), and likely cover a larger portion of the potential range to onset of TTS.

In some instances, the Navy recommends mitigation zones that are larger or smaller than the predicted maximum range to PTS based on the effectiveness and operational assessments. The recommended mitigation zones and their associated assessments are provided throughout the remainder of this section. The recommended measures are either currently implemented, modifications of current measures, or new measures.

For some activities specified throughout the remainder of this section, Lookouts may be required to observe for concentrations of detached floating vegetation (kelp paddies), which are indicators of potential marine mammal and sea turtle presence, within the mitigation zone. Those specified activities will not commence if the floating vegetation (kelp paddies) is observed within the mitigation zone prior to the initial start of the activity. If floating vegetation is observed prior to the initial start of the activity, the activity will be relocated to an area where no floating vegetation is observed. Training will not cease as a result of indicators entering the mitigation zone after activities have commenced. This measure is intended only for floating vegetation detached from the seafloor.

Table 5.3-2: Predicted Range to Effects and Recommended Mitigation Zones

| Activity Category | Representative Source (Bin) ¹ | Predicted (Longest) Average Range to TTS | Predicted (Longest) Average Range to PTS | Predicted Maximum Range to PTS | Recommended Mitigation Zone |
|--|--|--|--|--------------------------------|---|
| Non-Impulsive Sound | | | | | |
| Hull-Mounted Mid-Frequency Active Sonar | SQS-53 ASW hull-mounted sonar (MF1) | 3,821 yd. (3.5 km) for one ping | 100 yd. (91 m) for one ping | Not Applicable | 6 dB power down at 1,000 yd. (914 m); 4 dB power down at 500 yd. (457 m); and shutdown at 200 yd. (183 m) |
| High-Frequency and Non-Hull Mounted Mid-Frequency Active Sonar | AQS-22 ASW dipping sonar (MF4) | 230 yd. (210 m) for one ping | 20 yd. (18 m) for one ping | Not applicable | 200 yd. (183 m) |

Table 5.3-2: Predicted Range to Effects and Recommended Mitigation Zones (continued)

| Activity Category | Representative Source (Bin) ¹ | Predicted (Longest) Average Range to TTS | Predicted (Longest) Average Range to PTS | Predicted Maximum Range to PTS | Recommended Mitigation Zone |
|--|---|--|--|--------------------------------|---------------------------------|
| Explosive and Impulsive Sound | | | | | |
| Signal Underwater Sound (SUS) buoys using > 0.5–2.5 lb. NEW | Explosive sonobuoy (E3) | 290 yd. (265 m) | 113 yd. (103 m) | 309 yd. (283 m) | 350 yd. (320 m) |
| Gunnery Exercises – Small- and Medium-Caliber (Surface Target) | 40 mm projectile (E2) | 190 yd. (174 m) | 83 yd. (76 m) | 182 yd. (167 m) | 200 yd. (183 m) |
| Gunnery Exercises – Large-Caliber (Surface Target) | 5 in. projectiles (E5 at the surface ³) | 453 yd. (414 m) | 186 yd. (170 m) | 526 yd. (481 m) | 600 yd. (549 m) |
| Missile Exercises (Including Rockets) up to 250 lb. NEW Using a Surface Target | Maverick missile (E9) | 949 yd. (868 m) | 398 yd. (364 m) | 699 yd. (639 m) | 900 yd. (823 m) |
| Missile Exercises up to 500 lb. NEW (Surface Target) | Harpoon missile (E10) | 1,832 yd. (1.7 km) | 731 yd. (668 m) | 1,883 yd. (1.7 km) | 2,000 yd. (1.8 km) |
| Bombing Exercises | MK-84 2,000 lb. bomb (E12) | 2,513 yd. (2.3 km) | 991 yd. (906 m) | 2,474 yd. (2.3 km) | 2,500 yd. (2.3 km) ² |
| Sinking Exercises | Various up to MK-84 2,000 lb. bomb (E12) | 2,513 yd. (2.3 km) | 991 yd. (906 m) | 2,474 yd. (2.3 km) | 2.5 nm ² |

¹ This table does not provide an inclusive list of source bins; bins presented here represent the source bin with the largest range to effects within the given activity category.

² Recommended mitigation zones are larger than the modeled injury zones to account for multiple types of sources or charges being used.

³ The representative source bin E5 has different range to effects depending on the depth of activity occurrence (at the surface or at various depths).

Notes: ASW = Anti-submarine Warfare, dB = decibels, km = Kilometers, lb. = Pounds, m = Meters, mm = millimeters, NEW = Net Explosive Weight, PTS = Permanent Threshold Shift, TTS = Temporary Threshold Shift, yd. = yards

5.3.2.1 Acoustic Stressors

5.3.2.1.1 Non-Impulsive Sound

5.3.2.1.1.1 Hull-Mounted Mid-Frequency Active Sonar

Recommended Mitigation and Comparison to Current Mitigation

The Navy is proposing to (1) continue implementing the current measures for mid-frequency active sonar, and (2) clarify the conditions needed to recommence an activity after a sighting.

Activities that involve the use of hull-mounted mid-frequency active sonar will use Lookouts for visual observation from a ship immediately before and during the exercise. Mitigation zones for these activities involve powering down the sonar by six decibels (dB) when a marine mammal is sighted within 1,000 yards (yd.) (914 m) of the sonar dome, and by an additional 4 dB when sighted within 500 yd. (457 m) from the source, for a total reduction of 10 dB. Active transmissions will cease if a marine mammal or sea turtle is sighted within 200 yd. (183 m). Active transmission will recommence if any one of the following conditions is met: (1) the animal is observed exiting the mitigation zone, (2) the animal is thought to have exited the mitigation zone based on its course and speed, (3) the mitigation zone has been clear from any additional sightings for a period of 30 minutes, (4) the ship has transited more than

2,000 yd. (1.8 kilometer [km]) beyond the location of the last sighting, or (5) the ship concludes that dolphins are deliberately closing in on the ship to ride the ship's bow wave (and there are no other marine mammal sightings within the mitigation zone). Active transmission may resume when dolphins are bow riding because they are out of the main transmission axis of the active sonar while in the shallow-wave area of the ship bow.

Effectiveness and Operational Assessments

See the introduction of Section 5.3.2 (Mitigation Zone Procedural Measures) for a general discussion of mitigation zones, how they are implemented, and the potential effects they are designed to reduce. As shown in Table 5.3-2, the predicted maximum range to onset of PTS for hull-mounted mid-frequency active sonar sources is approximately 100 yd. (91 m) for one ping. This range was determined by the high-frequency cetacean functional hearing group. The distance for all other marine mammal functional hearing groups is less than 80 yd. (73 m) for one ping, so the mitigation zone will provide further protection from injury (PTS) for these species. Therefore, implementation of the 200 yd. (183 m) shutdown zone will reduce the potential for exposure to higher levels of energy that would result in injury (PTS) and large threshold shifts that are recoverable (i.e., TTS) when individuals are sighted. Implementation of the 500 yd. (457 m) and 1,000 yd. (914 m) sonar power reductions will further reduce the potential for injury (PTS) and larger threshold shifts that would result in recovery (i.e., TTS) to occur when individual marine mammals are sighted within these zones, especially in cases where the ship and animal are approaching each other.

The mitigation zones the Navy has developed are within a range for which Lookouts can reasonably be expected to maintain situational awareness and visually observe during most conditions. Since the average range to onset of TTS is 3,821 yd. (3.5 km), the entire range to TTS is not reasonably observable. By establishing mitigation zones that can be realistically maintained from ships, Lookouts will be more effective at sighting individual animals. By keeping Lookouts focused within the ranges where exposure to higher levels of energy is possible, the effectiveness at reducing potential impacts to marine mammals and sea turtles will increase. As discussed in Section 5.3.1.2.4 (Effectiveness Assessment for Lookouts), the likelihood of sighting individual animals, particularly sea turtles and some species of small or cryptic marine mammals, decreases at long distances.

The post-sighting wait period is designed to give any animals that are sighted an opportunity to leave the area before the exercise recommences but will only be employed if one of the other conditions has not already been met. A 30-minute wait period more than covers the average dive times of most marine mammal species but may not be sufficient for some deep-diving marine mammal species or for sea turtles. However, the analysis in Section 3.8.3.3.1 (Impacts from Sonar and Other Active Acoustic Sources) shows that injury to deep-diving marine mammals (e.g., sperm whales and beaked whales) is not expected to occur. Furthermore, any wait period greater than 30 minutes would result in an unacceptable operational impact on readiness. Observation for indicators of marine mammal and sea turtle presence (e.g., concentrations of floating vegetation [kelp paddies]) will further help avoid impacts to marine mammals and sea turtles.

The Navy proposes implementing the recommended measure described above because: (1) it is likely to result in avoidance or reduction of exposure to high levels of energy to marine mammals and sea turtles; and (2) implementation has been analyzed as acceptable with regard to personnel safety, practicality of implementation, impact on effectiveness of the military readiness activity, and Navy policy.

5.3.2.1.1.2 High-Frequency and Non-Hull Mounted Mid-Frequency Active Sonar Recommended Mitigation and Comparison to Current Mitigation

Non-hull-mounted mid-frequency active sonar training activities include the use of aircraft deployed sonobuoys and helicopter dipping sonar. The Navy is proposing to: (1) continue implementing the current mitigation measures for activities currently being executed, such as dipping sonar activities; (2) extend the implementation of its current mitigation to all other activities in this category; and (3) clarify the conditions needed to recommence an activity after a sighting. The recommended measures are provided below.

Mitigation will include visual observation from a vessel or aircraft (with the exception of platforms operating at high altitudes) immediately before and during active transmission within a mitigation zone of 200 yd. (183 m) from the active sonar source. For activities involving helicopter deployed dipping sonar, visual observation will commence 10 minutes before the first deployment of active dipping sonar. If the source can be turned off during the activity, active transmission will cease if a marine mammal is sighted within the mitigation zone. Active transmission will recommence if any one of the following conditions is met: (1) the animal is observed exiting the mitigation zone, (2) the animal is thought to have exited the mitigation zone based on its course and speed, (3) the mitigation zone has been clear from any additional sightings for a period of 10 minutes for an aircraft-deployed source, (4) the mitigation zone has been clear from any additional sightings for a period of 30 minutes for a vessel-deployed source, (5) the vessel or aircraft has repositioned itself more than 400 yd. (370 m) away from the location of the last sighting, or (6) the vessel concludes that dolphins are deliberately closing in to ride the vessel's bow wave (and there are no other marine mammal sightings within the mitigation zone).

Effectiveness and Operational Assessments

See the introduction of Section 5.3.2 (Mitigation Zone Procedural Measures) for a general discussion of mitigation zones, how they are implemented, and the potential effects they are designed to reduce. As shown in Table 5.3-2, the predicted average range to onset of PTS for high-frequency and non-hull mounted mid-frequency active sonar sources is 20 yd. (18 m) for one ping. This range was determined by the high-frequency cetacean functional hearing group. The predicted average range to onset of TTS across all functional hearing groups is 230 yd. (210 m) for one ping. Implementation of the 200 yd. (183 m) mitigation zone will reduce the potential for exposure to higher levels of energy that would result in injury (PTS) and larger threshold shifts that would result in recovery (i.e., TTS) when individuals are sighted. Lookouts often visually observe either close aboard a vessel or from directly above the source by aircraft (i.e., helicopters). Exceptions include when sonobuoys are deployed and when sources are deployed from high altitude aircraft. When sonobuoys are used, the sonobuoy field may be dispersed over a large distance. As discussed in Section 5.3.1.2.4 (Effectiveness Assessment for Lookouts), the likelihood of sighting individual animals, particularly small or cryptic marine mammals, decreases at long distances. This measure should be effective at reducing risks to all marine mammals that are available to be observed within the mitigation zone.

The post-sighting wait periods are designed to give any animals that are sighted an opportunity to leave the area before the exercise recommences but will only be employed if one of the other conditions has not already been met. The 30-minute wait period for vessel-deployed sources more than covers the average dive times of most marine mammal species but may not be sufficient for some deep-diving species. However, the analysis in Section 3.8.3.3.1 (Impacts from Sonar and Other Active Acoustic Sources) shows that injury to deep-diving marine mammals (e.g., sperm whales and beaked whales) is not expected to occur, with the exception of *Kogia* species (which are not found in the Study Area).

Furthermore, any wait period greater than 30 minutes for vessel-deployed sources would result in an unacceptable operational impact on readiness. Any wait period greater than 10 minutes for an aircraft-deployed source would result in an unacceptable operational impact on readiness and safety of personnel. The 10-minute wait period covers a portion of the average marine mammal dive times but may not be sufficient to cover the average dive times of all species. Observation for indicators of marine mammal and sea turtle presence (e.g., concentrations of floating vegetation [kelp paddies]) will further help avoid impacts to marine mammals and sea turtles.

The Navy proposes implementing the recommended measure described above because: (1) it is likely to result in avoidance or reduction of exposure to high levels of energy to marine mammals; and (2) implementation has been analyzed as acceptable with regard to personnel safety, practicality of implementation, impact on effectiveness of the military readiness activity, and Navy policy.

5.3.2.1.2 Explosives and Impulsive Sound

5.3.2.1.2.1 Explosive Signal Underwater Sound Buoys Using > 0.5–2.5 Pound Net Explosive Weight

Recommended Mitigation and Comparison to Current Mitigation

Mitigation measures do not currently exist for activities using SUS buoys.

The Navy is proposing to add the following recommended measures. Mitigation will include pre-exercise aerial monitoring during deployment within a mitigation zone of 350 yd. (320 m) around an explosive sonobuoy. Explosive SUS buoys will not be deployed if concentrations of floating vegetation (kelp paddies) are observed in the mitigation zone (around the intended deployment location). SUS deployment will cease if a marine mammal or sea turtle is sighted within the mitigation zone. Detonations will recommence if any one of the following conditions is met: (1) the animal is observed exiting the mitigation zone, (2) the animal is thought to have exited the mitigation zone based on a determination of its course and speed, or (3) the mitigation zone has been clear from any additional sightings for a period of 10 minutes.

Passive acoustic monitoring will also be conducted with Navy assets, such as sonobuoys, already participating in the activity. These assets would only detect vocalizing marine mammals within the frequency bands monitored by Navy personnel. Passive acoustic detections would not provide range or bearing to detected animals, and therefore cannot provide locations of these animals. Passive acoustic detections would be reported to Lookouts posted in aircraft in order to increase vigilance of their visual surveillance.

Effectiveness and Operational Assessments

See the introduction of Section 5.3.2 (Mitigation Zone Procedural Measures) for a general discussion of mitigation zones, how they are implemented, and the potential effects they are designed to reduce. As shown in Table 5.3-2, the predicted maximum range to onset of PTS for explosive sonobuoys using > 0.5–2.5 lb. NEW is approximately 309 yd. (283 m). This range was determined by the high-frequency cetacean functional hearing group. The remaining functional hearing groups had a shorter predicted range to onset of PTS, so the mitigation zone will provide further protection for these species. The predicted average range to onset of TTS across all functional hearing groups is 290 yd. (265 m). Implementation of the 350 yd. (320 m) mitigation zone will reduce the potential for exposure to higher levels of energy that would result in injury and large threshold shifts that are recoverable (i.e., TTS) when individuals are sighted. As discussed in Section 5.3.1.2.4 (Effectiveness Assessment for Lookouts),

the likelihood of sighting individual animals, particularly sea turtles and some species of small or cryptic marine mammals, decreases at long distances.

The post-sighting wait period is designed to give any animals that are sighted an opportunity to leave the area before the exercise recommences but will only be employed if one of the other conditions has not already been met. The 10-minute wait period for this activity, which involves aircraft-deployed sources, is based on fuel restrictions. Any wait period greater than 10 minutes for an aircraft-deployed source would result in an unacceptable operational impact on readiness and safety of personnel. The 10-minute wait period covers a portion of the average marine mammal and sea turtle dive times but may not be sufficient to cover the average dive times of all species. Observation for indicators of marine mammal and sea turtle presence (e.g., concentrations of floating vegetation [kelp paddies]) will further help avoid impacts to marine mammals and sea turtles.

The Navy proposes implementing the recommended measure described above because (1) it is likely to result in avoidance or reduction of exposure to high levels of energy to marine mammals and sea turtles; and (2) implementation has been analyzed as acceptable with regard to personnel safety, practicality of implementation, impact on effectiveness of the military readiness activity, and Navy policy.

5.3.2.1.2.2 Gunnery Exercises – Small- and Medium-Caliber and All Non-Explosive Gunnery Exercise Ordnance Using a Surface Target

Recommended Mitigation and Comparison to Current Mitigation

The Navy is proposing to (1) continue implementing the current mitigation measures for this activity, (2) clarify the conditions needed to recommence an activity after a sighting, and (3) add a requirement to visually observe for kelp paddies.

Mitigation will include visual observation from a vessel or aircraft immediately before and during the exercise within a mitigation zone of 200 yd. (183 m) around the intended impact location. Vessels will observe the mitigation zone from the firing position. When aircraft are firing, the aircrew will maintain visual watch of the mitigation zone during the activity. The exercise will not commence if concentrations of floating vegetation (kelp paddies) are observed in the mitigation zone. Firing will cease if a marine mammal or sea turtle is sighted within the mitigation zone. Firing will recommence if any one of the following conditions is met: (1) the animal is observed exiting the mitigation zone, (2) the animal is thought to have exited the mitigation zone based on its course and speed, (3) the mitigation zone has been clear from any additional sightings for a period of 10 minutes for a firing aircraft, (4) the mitigation zone has been clear from any additional sightings for a period of 30 minutes for a firing ship, or (5) the intended target location has been repositioned more than 400 yd. (370 m) away from the location of the last sighting.

Effectiveness and Operational Assessments

See the introduction of Section 5.3.2 (Mitigation Zone Procedural Measures) for a general discussion of mitigation zones, how they are implemented, and the potential effects they are designed to reduce. As shown in Table 5.3-2, the predicted maximum range to onset of PTS for small and medium caliber gunnery is approximately 182 yd. (167 m). This range was determined by the high-frequency cetacean functional hearing group. The remaining functional hearing groups had a shorter range to onset of PTS, so the mitigation zone will provide further protection for these species. The average range to onset of TTS across all functional hearing groups is 190 yd. (174 m). Implementation of the 200 yd. (183 m) mitigation zone will reduce the potential for exposure to higher levels of energy that would result in injury and larger threshold shifts that would result in recovery (i.e., TTS) when individuals are sighted.

Small- and medium-caliber, and all Non-Explosive gunnery exercises involve the participating vessel or aircraft firing munitions at a target location that may be up to 4,000 yd. (3.7 km) away, although typically much closer than this. Therefore, it is necessary for the Lookout to be able to visually observe the mitigation zone from this distance. Large vessel or aircraft platforms would provide a more effective observation platform for Lookouts than small boats. However, as discussed in Section 5.3.1.2.4 (Effectiveness Assessment for Lookouts), it is highly unlikely that anything but a whale blow or large pod of dolphins will be seen at distances closer to 4,000 yd. (3.7 km). However, this measure is likely effective at reducing the risk of injury to marine mammals that may be observed from the typical target distances. This measure may be ineffective at reducing the risk of injury to sea turtles at large target distances; however, it does reduce the risk for those individuals that may be observed at closer distances. In addition, it is more likely that sea turtles will be observed when exercises involve aircraft versus vessels.

The post-sighting wait period is designed to give any animals that are sighted an opportunity to leave the area before the exercise recommences but will only be employed if one of the other conditions has not already been met. A 30-minute wait period more than covers the average dive times of most marine mammal species but may not be sufficient for some deep-diving marine mammal species or for sea turtles. However, the analysis in Section 3.8.3.3.3 (Impacts from Explosives) shows that injury to deep-diving marine mammals (e.g., sperm whales and beaked whales) is not expected to occur. Furthermore, any wait period greater than 30 minutes when vessels are firing would result in an unacceptable operational impact on readiness. The 10-minute wait period when aircraft are firing is based on fuel restrictions. Any wait period greater than 10 minutes when aircraft are firing would result in an unacceptable operational impact on readiness and safety of personnel. The 10-minute wait period covers a portion of the average marine mammal dive times but may not be sufficient to cover the average dive times of all species. Observation for indicators of marine mammal and sea turtle presence (e.g., concentrations of floating vegetation [kelp paddies]) will further help avoid impacts to marine mammals and sea turtles.

The Navy proposes implementing the recommended measure described above because: (1) it is likely to result in avoidance or reduction of exposure to high levels of energy to some marine mammal species; and (2) implementation has been analyzed as acceptable with regard to personnel safety, practicality of implementation, impact on effectiveness of the military readiness activity, and Navy policy.

5.3.2.1.2.3 Gunnery Exercises – Large-Caliber Using a Surface Target Recommended Mitigation and Comparison to Current Mitigation

The Navy is proposing to (1) continue using the currently implemented mitigation zone for this activity, (2) clarify the conditions needed to recommence an activity after a sighting, and (3) add a requirement to visually observe for kelp paddies. The recommended measures are provided below.

Mitigation will include visual observation from a ship immediately before and during the exercise within a mitigation zone of 600 yd. (549 m) around the intended impact location. Ships will observe the mitigation zone from the firing position. The exercise will not commence if concentrations of floating vegetation (kelp paddies) are observed in the mitigation zone. Firing will cease if a marine mammal, bird, or sea turtle is sighted within the mitigation zone. Firing will recommence if any one of the following conditions is met: (1) the animal is observed exiting the mitigation zone, (2) the animal is thought to have exited the mitigation zone based on its course and speed, or (3) the mitigation zone has been clear from any additional sightings for a period of 30 minutes.

Effectiveness and Operational Assessments

See the introduction of Section 5.3.2 (Mitigation Zone Procedural Measures) for a general discussion of mitigation zones, how they are implemented, and the potential effects they are designed to reduce. As shown in Table 5.3-2, the predicted maximum range to onset of PTS for large caliber gunnery is 526 yd. (481 m). This range was determined by the high-frequency cetacean functional hearing group. The remaining functional hearing groups had a shorter predicted range to onset of PTS, so the mitigation zone will provide further protection for these species. The average predicted range to onset of TTS across all functional hearing groups is 453 yd. (414 m). Implementation of the 600 yd. (549 m) mitigation zone will reduce the potential for exposure to higher levels of energy that would result in injury and larger threshold shifts that would result in recovery (i.e., TTS) when individuals are sighted. Per the Navy's current reporting requirements, any injured or dead marine mammals or sea turtles will be reported as appropriate.

Large caliber gunnery exercises involve the participating ship firing munitions at a target location from ranges up to 6 nautical miles (nm) away. Therefore it is necessary for the Lookout to be able to visually observe the mitigation zone from this distance. Although the Lookout will observe for all marine mammals or sea turtles in the area, as discussed in Section 5.3.1.2.4 (Effectiveness Assessment for Lookouts), it is highly unlikely that anything but a whale blow or large pod of dolphins will be seen. Although this measure is likely ineffective at reducing the risk of injury to sea turtles and some species of marine mammals, it does reduce the risk for those individuals that may be observed. Observation for indicators of marine mammal and sea turtle presence (e.g., concentrations of floating vegetation [kelp paddies]) will further help avoid impacts to marine mammals and sea turtles.

The post-sighting wait period is designed to give any animals that are sighted an opportunity to leave the area before the exercise recommences but will only be employed if one of the other conditions has not already been met. A 30-minute wait period more than covers the average dive times of most marine mammal species but may not be sufficient for some deep-diving marine mammal species or for sea turtles. However, the analysis in Section 3.8.3.3.3 (Impacts from Explosives) shows that injury to deep-diving marine mammals (e.g., sperm whales and beaked whales) is not expected to occur. Requiring additional delay beyond 30 minutes would modify the activity in a way that it would no longer meet its intended objective. Any additional delay would reduce the gun crews' abilities to engage surface targets and practice defensive marksmanship as would be required in a real world combat situation, and would therefore have an unacceptable impact on the realism and effectiveness of the exercise.

The Navy proposes implementing the recommended measure described above because: (1) it is likely to result in avoidance or reduction of exposure to high levels of energy to some marine mammal species; and (2) implementation has been analyzed as acceptable with regard to personnel safety, practicality of implementation, impact on effectiveness of the military readiness activity, and Navy policy.

5.3.2.1.2.4 Missile Exercises (Including Rockets) up to 250 Pound Net Explosive Weight Using a Surface Target

Recommended Mitigation and Comparison to Current Mitigation

Currently, the Navy employs a mitigation zone of 1,800 yd. (1.6 km) for all missile exercises. Because missiles have a wide range of warhead strength, the Navy recommends two mitigation zones: one for missiles with warheads 250 lb. NEW and less (Bin E9), and a larger mitigation zone for missiles with larger warheads. The Navy is proposing to (1) modify the mitigation measures currently implemented for missile exercises involving missiles with 250 lb. NEW and smaller warheads by reducing the

mitigation zone from 1,800 yd. (1.6 km) to 900 yd. (823 m), (2) clarify the conditions needed to recommence an activity after a sighting, and (3) adopt the marine mammal and sea turtle mitigation zone size for floating vegetation for ease of implementation. The recommended measures are provided below. It should be noted that with the exception of a SINKEX, all missile exercises involving a surface target occurring in the TMAA will be simulated (no weapon actually released).

When aircraft are involved in the missile firing, mitigation will include visual observation by the aircrew or supporting aircraft prior to commencement of the activity within a mitigation zone of 900 yd. (823 m) around the deployed target. The exercise will not commence if concentrations of floating vegetation (kelp paddies) are observed in the mitigation zone. Firing will cease if a marine mammal or sea turtle is sighted within the mitigation zone. Firing will recommence if any one of the following conditions is met: (1) the animal is observed exiting the mitigation zone, (2) the animal is thought to have exited the mitigation zone based on its course and speed, or (3) the mitigation zone has been clear from any additional sightings for a period of 10 minutes or 30 minutes (depending on aircraft type).

Effectiveness and Operational Assessments

See the introduction of Section 5.3.2 (Mitigation Zone Procedural Measures) for a general discussion of mitigation zones, how they are implemented, and the potential effects they are designed to reduce. As shown in Table 5.3-2, the predicted maximum range to onset of PTS for a missile exercise (including rockets) up to 250 lb. NEW (Bin E9) is 699 yd. (639 m). This range was determined by the sea turtle functional hearing group. The marine mammal functional hearing groups had a shorter predicted range to onset of PTS, so the mitigation zone will provide further protection for these species. The average predicted range to onset of TTS across all functional hearing groups is 949 yd. (868 m). Implementation of the 900 yd. (823 m) mitigation zone will reduce the potential for exposure to higher levels of energy that would result in injury and larger threshold shifts that would result in recovery (i.e., TTS) when individuals are sighted. The decrease in mitigation zone size will result in no mitigation for exposure to lower levels of potential onset of TTS; however, it will allow for a more focused survey effort over a smaller survey distance, and will consequently increase the likelihood of avoidance of injury and larger threshold shifts that would result in recovery (i.e., TTS) to marine mammals and sea turtles.

Missile exercises involve the participating aircraft firing munitions at a target location typically up to 15 nm away and infrequently include ranges up to 75 nm away. When an aircraft is firing, the aircraft can travel close to the intended impact area so that it can be visually observed. There is a chance that animals could enter the impact area after the visual observations have been completed and the activity has commenced. Therefore, this measure is not effective at reducing the risk of injury to animals once the firing activity has begun; but it does reduce the risk for those individuals that may be observed prior to commencement of the activity when aircraft are firing. Observation for indicators of marine mammal and sea turtle presence (e.g., concentrations of floating vegetation [kelp paddies]) will further help avoid impacts on marine mammals and sea turtles.

The post-sighting wait period is designed to give any animals that are sighted an opportunity to leave the area before the exercise recommences but will only be employed if one of the other conditions has not already been met. The 10-minute wait period is for aircraft that have fuel restrictions (e.g., helicopters). Any wait period greater than 10 minutes for these types of aircraft would result in an unacceptable operational impact on readiness and safety of personnel. The 10-minute wait period covers a portion of the average marine mammal dive times but may not be sufficient to cover the average dive times of all species. The 30-minute wait period is for aircraft that are less restricted by fuel capacities (e.g., maritime patrol aircraft). The 30-minute wait period more than covers the average dive

times of most marine mammal species but may not be sufficient for some deep-diving marine mammal species or for sea turtles. Any wait period greater than 30 minutes would result in an unacceptable operational impact on readiness for this type of aircraft.

The Navy proposes implementing the recommended measure described above because: (1) it is likely to result in avoidance or reduction of exposure to high levels of energy to marine mammals and sea turtles; and (2) implementation has been analyzed as acceptable with regard to personnel safety, practicality of implementation, impact on effectiveness of the military readiness activity, and Navy policy.

5.3.2.1.2.5 Missile Exercises 251–500 Pound Net Explosive Weight Using a Surface Target Recommended Mitigation and Comparison to Current Mitigation

Current mitigation measures apply to all missile exercises, regardless of the warhead size. The Navy proposes to add a mitigation zone that applies only to missiles with a 251–500 lb. NEW (Bin E10). The recommended measures are provided below. It should be noted that with the exception of a SINKEX, all missile exercises involving a surface target occurring in the TMAA will be simulated (no weapon actually released).

When aircraft are involved in the missile firing, mitigation will include visual observation by the aircrew prior to commencement of the activity within a mitigation zone of 2,000 yd. (1.8 km) around the intended impact location. The exercise will not commence if concentrations of floating vegetation (kelp paddies) are observed in the mitigation zone. Firing will cease if a marine mammal or sea turtle is sighted within the mitigation zone. Firing will recommence if any one of the following conditions is met: (1) the animal is observed exiting the mitigation zone, (2) the animal is thought to have exited the mitigation zone based on its course and speed, or (3) the mitigation zone has been clear from any additional sightings for a period of 10 minutes or 30 minutes (depending on aircraft type).

Effectiveness and Operational Assessments

See the introduction of Section 5.3.2 (Mitigation Zone Procedural Measures) for a general discussion of mitigation zones, how they are implemented, and the potential effects they are designed to reduce. As shown in Table 5.3-2, the predicted maximum range to onset of PTS for a missile exercise (up to 500 lb. NEW [Bin E10]) is 1,883 yd. (1.7 km). This range was determined by the sea turtle functional hearing group. The marine mammal functional hearing groups had a shorter predicted range to onset of PTS, so the mitigation zone will provide further protection for these species. The predicted average range to onset of TTS across all functional hearing groups is 1,832 yd. (1.7 km). Implementation of the 2,000 yd. (1.8 km) mitigation zone will reduce the potential for exposure to higher levels of energy that would result in injury and larger threshold shifts that would result in recovery (i.e., TTS) when individuals are sighted.

Missile exercises involve the aircraft firing munitions at a target location typically up to 15 nm away and infrequently include ranges up to 75 nm away. When an aircraft is firing, the aircraft can travel close to the intended impact area so that it can be visually observed. There is a chance that animals could enter the impact area after the visual observations have been completed and the activity has commenced. Therefore, this measure is not effective at reducing the risk of injury to animals once the activity has begun; however, it does reduce the risk for those individuals that may be observed prior to commencement of the activity when aircraft are firing. Observation for indicators of marine mammal and sea turtle presence (e.g., concentrations of floating vegetation [kelp paddies]) will further help avoid impacts on marine mammals and sea turtles.

The post-sighting wait period is designed to give any animals that are sighted an opportunity to leave the area before the exercise recommences but will only be employed if one of the other conditions has not already been met. The 10-minute wait period is for aircraft that have fuel restrictions (e.g., helicopters). Any wait period greater than 10 minutes for these types of aircraft would result in an unacceptable operational impact on readiness and safety of personnel. The 10-minute wait period covers a portion of the average marine mammal dive times but may not be sufficient to cover the average dive times of all species. The 30-minute wait period is for aircraft that are less restricted by fuel capacities (e.g., maritime patrol aircraft). The 30-minute wait period more than covers the average dive times of most marine mammal species but may not be sufficient for some deep-diving marine mammal species or for sea turtles. Any wait period greater than 30 minutes would result in an unacceptable operational impact on readiness for this type of aircraft.

The Navy proposes implementing the recommended measure described above because (1) it is likely to result in avoidance or reduction of exposure to high levels of energy to marine mammals and sea turtles; and (2) implementation has been analyzed as acceptable with regard to personnel safety, practicality of implementation, impact on effectiveness of the military readiness activity, and Navy policy.

5.3.2.1.2.6 Bombing Exercises

Recommended Mitigation and Comparison to Current Mitigation

Currently, the Navy employs the following mitigation zone procedures during bombing exercises:

- Ordnance shall not be targeted to impact within 1,000 yd. (914 m) of known or observed floating kelp or marine mammals.
- A 1,000 yd. (914 m) radius mitigation zone shall be established around the intended target.
- The exercise will be conducted only if marine mammals are not visible within the mitigation zone.

The Navy is proposing to (1) maintain the existing mitigation zone to be used for non-explosive bombing activities, (2) revise the mitigation zone procedures to account for predicted ranges to impacts to marine species when high explosive bombs (e.g., MK-82/83/84) are used, (3) clarify the conditions needed to recommence an activity after a sighting, and (4) add a requirement to visually observe for kelp paddies.

Mitigation will include visual observation from the aircraft immediately before the exercise and during target approach within a mitigation zone of 2,500 yd. (2.3 km) around the intended impact location for explosive bombs and 1,000 yd. (914 m) for non-explosive bombs. The exercise will not commence if concentrations of floating vegetation (kelp paddies) are observed in the mitigation zone. Bombing will cease if a marine mammal or sea turtle is sighted within the mitigation zone. Bombing will recommence if any one of the following conditions is met: (1) the animal is observed exiting the mitigation zone, (2) the animal is thought to have exited the mitigation zone based on its course and speed, or (3) the mitigation zone has been clear from any additional sightings for a period of 10 minutes.

Effectiveness and Operational Assessments

See the introduction of Section 5.3.2 (Mitigation Zone Procedural Measures) for a general discussion of mitigation zones, how they are implemented, and the potential effects they are designed to reduce. As shown in Table 5.3-2, the predicted maximum range to onset of PTS for bombing exercises is 2,474 yd. (2.3 km). This range was determined by the sea turtle functional hearing group. The marine mammal functional hearing groups had a shorter predicted range to onset of PTS, so the mitigation zone will provide further protection for these species. For example, the predicted maximum range to onset of PTS to mid-frequency of cetaceans is less than 500 yd. (457 m). The predicted average range to onset of TTS

across all functional hearing groups is 2,513 yd. (2.3 km). Implementation of the 2,500 yd. (2.3 km) mitigation zone will reduce the potential for exposure to higher levels of energy that would result in injury and larger threshold shifts that would result in recovery (i.e., TTS) when individuals are sighted.

The predicted maximum range to effects on mortality across all functional hearing groups is less than 250 yd. (229 m). Therefore, this measure will be effective at reducing potential mortality to all marine mammals and sea turtles when individuals are sighted. As discussed in Section 5.3.1.2.4 (Effectiveness Assessment for Lookouts), it is highly unlikely that anything but a whale blow or large pod of dolphins will be seen at distances closer to 2,500 yd. (2.3 km) near the perimeter of the mitigation zone. However, this measure is likely effective at reducing the risk of injury to marine mammals and sea turtles that may be observed from the smaller distances within the mitigation zone. Observation for indicators of marine mammal and sea turtle presence (e.g., concentrations of floating vegetation [kelp paddies]) will further help avoid impacts to marine mammals and sea turtles.

As described in Section 5.3.1 (Lookout Procedural Measures), Lookouts positioned in aircraft or vessels may be responsible for tasks in addition to observing the air or surface of the water. For example, a Lookout for this activity may also be responsible for navigation of the aircraft. Having a Lookout observe a mitigation zone that is too large could potentially increase the safety risk due to an increased level of distraction from normal job duties. Similarly, Lookouts posted in aircraft during bombing activities will, by necessity, focus their attention on the water surface below and surrounding the location of bomb deployment. Due to the nature of this activity (e.g., aircraft maintaining a relatively steady altitude of approximately 1,500 ft. [457 m] and approaching the intended impact location), Lookouts will be able to observe a larger area during bombing activities than other proposed activities that involve the use of Lookouts positioned in aircraft (e.g., Improved Extended Echo Ranging sonobuoy activities). However, observation of an area beyond what the Navy is proposing to implement for bombing activities is not practicable and would not likely result in avoidance or reduction of injury to marine mammals or sea turtles because the effort spent observing those more distant areas would inevitably be minimal.

The decrease in mitigation zone size will result in no mitigation for exposures to lower levels of potential onset of TTS; however, it will allow for a more focused survey effort over a smaller survey distance, and will likely consequently increase the likelihood of avoidance of injury and larger threshold shifts that would result in recovery (i.e., TTS) to marine mammals and sea turtles.

The post-sighting wait period is designed to give any animals that are sighted an opportunity to leave the area before the exercise recommences but will only be employed if one of the other conditions has not already been met. The 10-minute wait period for this activity, which involves aircraft-deployed sources, is based on fuel restrictions. Any wait period greater than 10 minutes for an aircraft-deployed source would result in an unacceptable operational impact on readiness and safety of personnel. The 10-minute wait period covers a portion of the average marine mammal and sea turtle dive times but may not be sufficient to cover the average dive times of all species.

The Navy proposes implementing the recommended measure described above because: (1) it is likely to result in avoidance or reduction of exposure to high levels of energy to marine mammals and sea turtles; and (2) implementation has been analyzed as acceptable with regard to personnel safety, practicality of implementation, impact on effectiveness of the military readiness activity, and Navy policy.

5.3.2.1.2.7 Sinking Exercises

Recommended Mitigation and Comparison to Current Mitigation

As presented in detail in the 2011 GOA Final EIS/OEIS, through pre-consultation discussions with NMFS' office regarding Essential Fish Habitat, the Navy agreed not to conduct SINKEXs within Habitat Areas of Particular Concern within the TMAA. The Navy is proposing to continue to implement this mitigation measure.

In locations where a SINKEX may occur, the Navy is proposing to (1) modify the mitigation measures currently implemented for this activity by increasing the mitigation zone from 2.0 nm to 2.5 nm, (2) clarify the conditions needed to recommence an activity after a sighting, (3) add a requirement to visually observe for kelp paddies, and (4) adopt the marine mammal and sea turtle mitigation zone size for concentrations of floating vegetation and aggregation of jellyfish for ease of implementation. The recommended measures are provided below.

Mitigation will include visual observation within a mitigation zone of 2.5 nm around the target ship hulk. SINKEXs will include aerial observation beginning 90 minutes before the first firing, visual observations from vessels throughout the duration of the exercise, and both aerial and vessel observation immediately after any planned or unplanned breaks in weapons firing of longer than 2 hours. Prior to conducting the exercise, the Navy will review remotely sensed sea surface temperature and sea surface height maps to aid in deciding where to release the target ship hulk.

The Navy will also monitor using passive acoustics during the exercise. Passive acoustic monitoring would be conducted with Navy assets, such as passive ships sonar systems or sonobuoys, already participating in the activity. These assets would only detect vocalizing marine mammals within the frequency bands monitored by Navy personnel. Passive acoustic detections would not provide range or bearing to detected animals, and therefore cannot provide locations of these animals. Passive acoustic detections would be reported to Lookouts posted in aircraft and on vessels in order to increase vigilance of their visual surveillance. Lookouts will also increase observation vigilance before the use of torpedoes or unguided ordnance with a NEW of 500 lb. or greater, or if the Beaufort sea state is a 4 or above.

The exercise will not commence if concentrations of floating vegetation (kelp paddies) are observed in the mitigation zone. The exercise will cease if a marine mammal, sea turtle, or aggregation of jellyfish is sighted within the mitigation zone. The exercise will recommence if any one of the following conditions is met: (1) the animal is observed exiting the mitigation zone, (2) the animal is thought to have exited the mitigation zone based on a determination of its course and speed, or (3) the mitigation zone has been clear from any additional sightings for a period of 30 minutes. Upon sinking the vessel, the Navy will conduct post-exercise visual surveillance of the mitigation zone for 2 hours (or until sunset, whichever comes first).

Effectiveness and Operational Assessments

See the introduction of Section 5.3.2 (Mitigation Zone Procedural Measures) for a general discussion of mitigation zones, their implementation, and the potential effects they are designed to reduce. During a SINKEX, multiple weapons sources may be used (e.g., projectiles, missiles, bombs, torpedoes), the largest of which is the 2,000 lb. bomb. The recommended mitigation zone is significantly greater than the predicted maximum range to onset of PTS of the largest weapon source, and is designed to account for multiple detonations during the activity. As shown in Table 5.3-2, the predicted maximum range to onset of PTS for a bombing exercise is 2,474 yd. (2.3 km). This range was determined by the sea turtle functional hearing group. The marine mammal functional hearing groups had a shorter predicted range

to onset of PTS, so the mitigation zone will provide further protection for these species. For example, the predicted maximum range to onset of PTS for mid-frequency cetaceans is less than 500 yd. (457 m). The predicted average range to onset of TTS across all functional hearing groups is 2,513 yd. (2.3 km). Implementation of the 2.5 nm mitigation zone will reduce the potential for exposure to higher levels of energy that would result in injury and larger threshold shifts that would result in recovery (i.e., TTS) when individuals are sighted.

The predicted maximum range to onset mortality across all functional hearing groups is less than 250 yd. (229 m). Therefore, this measure will be effective at reducing potential mortality to all marine mammals when individuals are sighted. As discussed in Section 5.3.1.2.4 (Effectiveness Assessment for Lookouts), it is highly unlikely that anything but a whale blow or large pod of dolphins will be seen at distances closer to 2,100 yd. (1.9 km) near the perimeter of the mitigation zone. However, this measure is likely effective at reducing the risk of injury to marine mammals and sea turtles that may be observed from the smaller distances within the mitigation zone. Observation for indicators of marine mammal and sea turtle presence (e.g., concentrations of floating vegetation [kelp paddies]) will further help avoid impacts to marine mammals and sea turtles.

As described in Section 5.3.1 (Lookout Procedural Measures), Lookouts positioned in aircraft or vessels may be responsible for tasks in addition to observing the air or the surface of the water. For example, a Lookout for this activity may also be responsible for navigation of the aircraft. Having a Lookout observe a mitigation zone that is too large could potentially increase the safety risk due to an increased level of distraction from normal job duties. Observation of an area beyond what the Navy is proposing to implement for SINKEXs is not practicable and would not likely result in avoidance or reduction of injury to marine mammals because the effort spent observing those more distant areas would inevitably be minimal. The decrease in mitigation zone size will result in no mitigation for exposure to lower levels of potential onset of TTS; however, it will allow for a more focused survey effort over a smaller survey distance, and will consequently increase the likelihood of avoidance of injury and larger threshold shifts that would result in recovery (i.e., TTS) to marine mammals. The amount of time it takes for an aircraft to conduct line transects around a detonation point within the currently implemented 4.5 nm mitigation zone could result in animals entering the mitigation zone at one end while the aircraft completes the survey at the other end of the mitigation zone. Observation for indicators of marine mammal presence (e.g., jellyfish aggregations) will further help avoid impacts to marine mammals and sea turtles.

The post-sighting wait period is designed to give any animals that are sighted an opportunity to leave the area before the exercise recommences but will only be employed if one of the other conditions has not already been met. A 30-minute wait period more than covers the average dive times of most marine mammal species but may not be sufficient for some deep-diving marine mammal species or for sea turtles. However, the analysis in Section 3.8.3.1.1 (Non-Impulsive and Impulsive Sound Sources) shows that injury to deep-diving marine mammals (e.g., sperm whales and beaked whales) is not expected to occur. Requiring additional delay beyond 30 minutes would modify the activity in a way that it would no longer meet its intended objective. Any additional delay would reduce the ship and aircrews' abilities to coordinate attack tactics on a seaborne target as would be required in a real world combat situation, and would therefore have an unacceptable impact on the realism and effectiveness of the exercise. Although activities involving certain types of aircraft (e.g., helicopters) typically employ a 10-minute wait period due to fuel restrictions, the Navy is able to make an exception for this particular activity due to the large variation and rotation of assets that could participate in this type of exercise.

The Navy proposes implementing the recommended measure described above because (1) it is likely to result in avoidance or reduction of exposure to high levels of energy to marine mammals and sea turtles; and (2) implementation has been analyzed as acceptable with regard to personnel safety, practicality of implementation, impact on effectiveness of the military readiness activity, and Navy policy.

5.3.2.1.2.8 Weapons Firing Noise During Gunnery Exercises – Large-Caliber Recommended Mitigation and Comparison to Current Mitigation

The Navy currently has no mitigation zone procedures for this activity in the Study Area.

The Navy is proposing to adopt measures currently used during Navy gunnery exercises in other ranges outside of the Study Area. For all explosive and non-explosive large-caliber gunnery exercises conducted from a ship, mitigation will include visual observation immediately before and during the exercise within a mitigation zone of 70 yd. (64 m) within 30 degrees on either side of the gun target line on the firing side. The exercise will not commence if concentrations of floating vegetation (kelp paddies) are observed in the mitigation zone. Firing will cease if a marine mammal or sea turtle is sighted within the mitigation zone. Firing will recommence if any one of the following conditions is met: (1) the animal is observed exiting the mitigation zone, (2) the animal is thought to have exited the mitigation zone based on its course and speed, (3) the mitigation zone has been clear from any additional sightings for a period of 30 minutes, or (4) the ship has repositioned itself more than 140 yd. (128 m) away from the location of the last sighting.

Effectiveness Assessment

The mitigation zone is designed to reduce the potential for injury from weapons firing noise during large-caliber gunnery exercises conducted from a ship. The majority of the energy that an animal could be exposed to would occur on the firing side of the vessel and would follow in the direction of fire. It is not operationally feasible to have Lookouts stationed on all sides of the vessel to visually observe for marine mammals and sea turtles due to limited resources (e.g., manning restrictions). Since the Lookout is positioned aboard the firing ship and is visually observing nearby the ship (70 yd. [64 m]), this measure should be effective at reducing the risk to all marine mammals and sea turtles that are available to be observed.

The post-sighting wait period is designed to give any animals that are sighted an opportunity to leave the area before the exercise recommences but will only be employed if one of the other conditions has not already been met. A 30-minute wait period more than covers the average dive times of most marine mammal species but may not be sufficient for some deep-diving marine mammal species or sea turtles. However, the analysis in Section 3.8.3.3.3 (Impacts from Explosives) shows that injury to deep-diving marine mammals (e.g., sperm whales and beaked whales) is not expected to occur. Furthermore, any wait period greater than 30 minutes would result in an unacceptable operational impact on readiness.

The Navy proposes implementing the recommended measure described above because (1) it is likely to result in avoidance or reduction of exposure to high levels of energy to marine mammals and sea turtles; and (2) implementation has been analyzed as acceptable with regard to personnel safety, practicality of implementation, impact on effectiveness of the military readiness activity, and Navy policy.

5.3.2.2 Physical Disturbance and Strike

5.3.2.2.1 Vessels and In-Water Devices

5.3.2.2.1.1 Vessels

Recommended Mitigation and Comparison to Current Mitigation

The Navy's current measures to mitigate potential impacts to marine mammals from vessel and in-water device strikes during training activities are provided below:

- Naval vessels shall maneuver to keep at least 500 yd. (457 m) away from any observed whale in the vessel's path and avoid approaching whales head-on. These requirements do not apply if a vessel's safety is threatened, such as when change of course will create an imminent and serious threat to a person, vessel, or aircraft, and to the extent vessels are restricted in their ability to maneuver. Restricted maneuverability includes, but is not limited to, situations when vessels are engaged in dredging, submerged activities, launching and recovering aircraft or landing craft, minesweeping activities, replenishment while underway and towing activities that severely restrict a vessel's ability to deviate course.
- Vessels will take reasonable steps to alert other vessels in the vicinity of the whale. Given rapid swimming speeds and maneuverability of many dolphin species, naval vessels would maintain normal course and speed on sighting dolphins unless some condition indicated a need for the vessel to maneuver.

The Navy is proposing to continue to use the 500 yd. (457 m) mitigation zone currently established for whales, and to implement a 200 yd. (183 m) mitigation zone for all other marine mammals. Vessels will avoid approaching marine mammals head on and will maneuver to maintain a mitigation zone of 500 yd. (457 m) around observed whales and 200 yd. (183 m) around all other marine mammals (except bow-riding dolphins), providing it is safe to do so. The Navy is clarifying its existing speed protocol; while in transit, Navy vessels shall be alert at all times, use extreme caution, and proceed at a "safe speed" so that the vessel can take proper and effective action to avoid a collision with any sighted object or disturbance, including any marine mammal or sea turtle, and can be stopped within a distance appropriate to the prevailing circumstances and conditions.

Effectiveness and Operational Assessments

Since the Lookout is visually observing within a reasonable distance of the vessel (within 500 yd. [457 m]), this measure should be effective at reducing the risk to marine mammals that are available to be observed. However, as discussed above in Section 5.3.1.2.4 (Effectiveness Assessment for Lookouts), large whales and pods of dolphins are more likely to be seen than other more cryptic species, such as beaked whales.

The Navy proposes implementing the recommended measure described above because: (1) it is likely to result in avoidance or reduction of injury to marine mammals; and (2) implementation has been analyzed as acceptable with regard to personnel safety, practicality of implementation, impact on the effectiveness of the military readiness activity, and Navy policy.

5.3.2.2.1.2 Towed In-Water Devices

Recommended Mitigation and Comparison to Current Mitigation

The Navy currently has no mitigation zone procedures for this activity in the Study Area.

The Navy is proposing to adopt measures currently used in other ranges outside of the Study Area during activities involving towed in-water devices. The Navy will ensure that towed in-water devices

being towed from manned platforms avoid coming within a mitigation zone of 250 yd. (230 m) around any observed marine mammal, providing it is safe to do so.

Effectiveness and Operational Assessments

Since the Lookout is visually observing within a reasonable distance of the vessel (250 yd. [230 m]), this measure should be effective at reducing the risk to marine mammals that are observable. However, as discussed above in Section 5.3.1.2.4 (Effectiveness Assessment for Lookouts), large whales and pods of dolphins are more likely to be seen than other more cryptic species such as beaked whales.

The Navy proposes implementing the recommended measure described above because: (1) it is likely to result in avoidance or reduction of injury to marine mammals; and (2) implementation has been analyzed as acceptable with regard to personnel safety, practicality of implementation, impact on effectiveness of the military readiness activity, and Navy policy.

5.3.2.2.2 Non-Explosive Practice Munitions

5.3.2.2.2.1 Gunnery Exercises – Small-, Medium-, and Large-Caliber Using a Surface Target Recommended Mitigation and Comparison to Current Mitigation

Currently, the Navy employs the same mitigation measures for non-explosive gunnery exercises as described above in Section 5.3.2.1.2.2 (Gunnery Exercises – Small- and Medium-Caliber and All Non-Explosive Gunnery Exercise Ordnance Using a Surface Target).

The Navy is proposing to (1) continue using the mitigation measures currently implemented for this activity, and (2) clarify the conditions needed to recommence an activity after a sighting. The recommended measures are provided below.

Mitigation will include visual observation by a vessel or aircraft immediately before and during the exercise within a mitigation zone of 200 yd. (183 m) around the intended impact location. The exercise will not commence if concentrations of floating vegetation (kelp paddies) are observed in the mitigation zone. Firing will cease if a marine mammal or sea turtle is sighted within the mitigation zone. Firing will recommence if any one of the following conditions is met: (1) the animal is observed exiting the mitigation zone, (2) the animal is thought to have exited the mitigation zone based on its course and speed, (3) the mitigation zone has been clear from any additional sightings for a period of 10 minutes for a firing aircraft, (4) the mitigation zone has been clear from any additional sightings for a period of 30 minutes for a firing ship, or (5) the intended target location has been repositioned more than 400 yd. (370 m) away from the location of the last sighting.

Effectiveness and Operational Assessments

The mitigation zone is designed to reduce the potential for direct strike from a non-explosive projectile. Large caliber gunnery exercises involve the participating ship or aircraft firing munitions at a target location from ranges up to 6 nm away. Small- and medium-caliber gunnery exercises involve the participating vessel or aircraft firing munitions at a target location from up to 2 nm away, although typically closer. Therefore, it is necessary for the Lookout to be able to visually observe the mitigation zone from these distances. Although the Lookout will observe for all marine mammals or sea turtles in the area, as discussed in Section 5.3.1.2.4 (Effectiveness Assessment for Lookouts), it is highly unlikely that anything but a whale blow or large pod of dolphins will be seen. Although this measure is likely ineffective at reducing the risk of injury to sea turtles and some species of marine mammals, it does reduce the risk for those individuals that may be observed.

The post-sighting wait period is designed to give any animals that are sighted an opportunity to leave the area before the exercise recommences but will only be employed if one of the other conditions has not already been met. A 30-minute wait period more than covers the average dive times of most marine mammal species but may not be sufficient for some deep-diving marine mammal species or for sea turtles. However, the analysis in Section 3.8.3.1.1 (Non-Impulsive and Impulsive Sound Sources) shows that injury to marine mammals and sea turtles is not expected to occur. Furthermore, any wait period greater than 30 minutes would result in an unacceptable operational impact on readiness. The 10-minute wait period when aircraft are firing is based on fuel restrictions. Any wait period greater than 10 minutes when aircraft are firing would result in an unacceptable operational impact on readiness and safety of personnel. The 10-minute wait period covers a portion of the average marine mammal dive times but may not be sufficient to cover the average dive times of all species. Observation for indicators of marine mammal and sea turtle presence (e.g., concentrations of floating vegetation [kelp paddies]) will further help avoid impacts to marine mammals and sea turtles.

The Navy proposes implementing the recommended measure described above because: (1) it is likely to result in avoidance or reduction of injury to some species of marine mammals; and (2) implementation has been analyzed as acceptable with regard to personnel safety, practicality of implementation, impact on effectiveness of the military readiness activity, and Navy policy.

5.3.2.2.2 Bombing Exercise

Recommended Mitigation and Comparison to Current Mitigation

The Navy is proposing to continue using the mitigation measures currently implemented for this activity. The recommended measure includes clarification of a post-sighting activity recommencement criterion.

Mitigation will include visual observation from the aircraft immediately before the exercise and during target approach within a mitigation zone of 1,000 yd. (914 m) around the intended impact location. The exercise will not commence if concentrations of floating vegetation (kelp paddies) are observed in the mitigation zone. Bombing will cease if a marine mammal or sea turtle is sighted within the mitigation zone. Bombing will recommence if any one of the following conditions is met: (1) the animal is observed exiting the mitigation zone, (2) the animal is thought to have exited the mitigation zone based on its course and speed, or (3) the mitigation zone has been clear from any additional sightings for a period of 10 minutes.

Effectiveness and Operational Assessments

The post-sighting wait period is designed to give any animals that are sighted an opportunity to leave the area before the exercise recommences but will only be employed if one of the other conditions has not already been met. The 10-minute wait period for this activity, which involves aircraft-deployed sources, is based on fuel restrictions. Any wait period greater than 10 minutes for an aircraft-deployed source would result in an unacceptable operational impact on readiness and safety of personnel. The 10-minute wait period covers a portion of the average marine mammal and sea turtle dive times but may not be sufficient to cover the average dive times of all species. Observation for indicators of marine mammal and sea turtle presence (e.g., concentrations of floating vegetation [kelp paddies]) will further help avoid impacts to marine mammals and sea turtles.

The mitigation zone is designed to reduce the potential for direct strike from a non-explosive bomb. The Navy proposes implementing the recommended measure described above because: (1) it is likely to result in avoidance or reduction of injury to marine mammals or sea turtles; and (2) implementation has

been analyzed as acceptable with regard to personnel safety, practicality of implementation, impact on effectiveness of the military readiness activity, and Navy policy.

5.3.2.2.3 Missile Exercises (Including Rockets) Using a Surface Target

The Navy is proposing to (1) modify the mitigation measures currently implemented for this activity by reducing the mitigation zone from 1,800 yd. (1.6 km) to 900 yd. (823 m), (2) clarify the conditions needed to recommence an activity after a sighting, (3) adopt the marine mammal and sea turtle mitigation zone size for floating vegetation for ease of implementation, and (4) modify the platform of observation to eliminate the requirement to observe when ships are firing. The recommended measures are provided below.

When aircraft are firing, mitigation will include visual observation by the aircrew or supporting aircraft prior to commencement of the activity within a mitigation zone of 900 yd. (823 m) around the deployed target. The exercise will not commence if concentrations of floating vegetation (kelp paddies) are observed in the mitigation zone. Firing will cease if a marine mammal or sea turtle is sighted within the mitigation zone. Firing will recommence if any one of the following conditions is met: (1) the animal is observed exiting the mitigation zone, (2) the animal is thought to have exited the mitigation zone based on a determination of its course and speed and the relative motion between the animal and the source, or (3) the mitigation zone has been clear from any additional sightings for a period of 10 minutes or 30 minutes (depending on aircraft type).

Effectiveness and Operational Assessments

The mitigation zone is designed to reduce the potential for direct strike from a non-explosive projectile. Activities using non-explosive missiles (including rockets) involve the participating ship or aircraft firing munitions at a target location typically up to 15 nm away and infrequently include ranges up to 75 nm away. When an aircraft is firing, the aircraft can travel close to the intended impact area so that it can be visually observed. Because that type of observation is not possible for a ship, visual observation is not suitable for activities that involve a ship-fired missile. Even with aircraft firing, there is a chance that animals could enter the impact area after the visual observations have been completed and the activity has commenced. Observation for indicators of marine mammal and sea turtle presence (e.g., concentrations of floating vegetation [kelp paddies]) will further help avoid impacts on marine mammals and sea turtles.

The post-sighting wait period is designed to give any animals that are sighted an opportunity to leave the area before the exercise recommences but will only be employed if one of the other conditions has not already been met. A 30-minute wait period more than covers the average dive times of most marine mammal species but may not be sufficient for some deep-diving marine mammal species or for sea turtles. However, the analysis in Section 3.8.3.1.1 (Non-Impulsive and Impulsive Sound Sources) shows that injury to marine mammals and sea turtles is not expected to occur. Furthermore, any wait period greater than 30 minutes would result in an unacceptable operational impact on readiness. The 10-minute wait period when aircraft are firing is based on fuel restrictions. Any wait period greater than 10 minutes when aircraft are firing would result in an unacceptable operational impact on readiness and safety of personnel. The 10-minute wait period covers a portion of the average marine mammal dive times but may not be sufficient to cover the average dive times of all species. Observation for indicators of marine mammal and sea turtle presence (e.g., concentrations of floating vegetation [kelp paddies]) will further help avoid impacts to marine mammals and sea turtles.

The Navy proposes implementing the recommended measure described above because (1) it is likely to result in avoidance or reduction of injury to marine mammals and sea turtles; and (2) implementation has been analyzed as acceptable with regard to personnel safety, practicality of implementation, impact on effectiveness of the military readiness activity, and Navy policy.

5.3.3 MITIGATION MEASURES CONSIDERED BUT ELIMINATED

A number of mitigation measures were suggested during the public comment periods of previous Navy environmental documents. As a result of the assessment process identified in Section 5.2 (Introduction to Mitigation), the Navy determined that some of the suggested measures would likely be ineffective at reducing environmental impacts, have an unacceptable operational impact based on the operational assessment, or be incompatible with Section 5.2.2 (Overview of Mitigation Approach). The measures that the Navy does not recommend for implementation are discussed in Section 5.3.3.1 (Previously Considered but Eliminated) and Section 5.3.3.2 (Previously Accepted but Now Eliminated).

There is a distinction between effective and feasible observation procedures for data collection and measures employed to prevent impacts or otherwise serve as mitigation. The discussion below is in reference to those procedures meant to serve as mitigation measures.

5.3.3.1 Previously Considered But Eliminated

5.3.3.1.1 Reducing Amount of Training Activities

Reducing training for the purpose of mitigation would result in an unacceptable impact on readiness for the following reasons:

The requirements to train are designed to provide the experience needed to ensure Sailors are properly prepared for operational success. These requirements have been developed through many years of iteration and are designed to ensure Sailors achieve the levels of readiness needed to properly respond to the many contingencies that may occur during an actual mission. The Proposed Action does not include training beyond levels required for maintaining satisfactory levels of readiness due to the need to efficiently use limited resources (e.g. fuel, personnel, and time). Therefore, any reduction of training would not allow Sailors to achieve satisfactory levels of readiness needed to accomplish their mission.

5.3.3.1.2 Replacing Training with Simulated Activities

Replacing training activities with simulated activities for the purpose of mitigation would result in an unacceptable impact on readiness for the following reasons:

As described in Chapter 2, Section 2.3.2.4 (Simulated Training) of the 2011 GOA Final EIS/OEIS, the Navy currently uses computer simulation for training whenever possible. Computer simulation can provide familiarity and complement live training; however, it cannot provide the fidelity and level of training necessary to prepare naval forces for deployment.

The Navy is required by law to operationally test major platforms, systems, and components of these platforms and systems in realistic combat conditions before full-scale production can occur. Substituting simulation for live training fails to meet the purpose of and need for the Proposed Action and therefore was eliminated from consideration as a mitigation measure.

5.3.3.1.3 Reducing Sonar Source Levels and Total Number of Hours

Active sonar is only used when required by the mission since it has the potential to alert opposing forces to the sonar platform's presence. Passive sonar and all other sensors are used in concert with active sonar to the maximum extent practicable when available and when required by the mission. Reducing active sonar source levels and the total number of active sonar hours used during training activities for the purpose of mitigation would adversely impact the effectiveness of military readiness activities and increase safety risks to personnel for the following reasons:

Sonar operators need to train as they would operate during real combat situations. Operators of sonar equipment are always cognizant of the environmental variables affecting sound propagation. In this regard, sonar equipment power levels are set consistent with mission requirements. Reducing sonar source levels for the purpose of mitigation precludes sonar operators from learning to operate the sonar systems with their entire range of capabilities throughout the extremely diverse range of environmental conditions they may encounter. Failure to train with the entire range of capabilities will reduce the effectiveness of the sonar operators should their skills be required during real world events. Not only would they not develop the skills necessary to identify and track submarines at the maximum distances of their systems capabilities, they would not learn how to use their systems' capabilities during the entire range of environmental conditions they may encounter. Likewise, they would not develop the knowledge of how to fully integrate multiple ASW capabilities, including other ships and aircraft into an integrated ASW team.

Failure to train with the entire range of capabilities also compromises training by reducing the ability for a sonar operator to detect, track, and hold an enemy target, mine, or other object, and by reducing the realism of other training scenarios (e.g., navigation training). Particularly during a strike group exercise, sonar operators need to learn to handle real world combat situations (e.g., the ability to manage sonar operations during periods of mutual interference, which can occur when more than one sonar system is operating simultaneously). Training with reduced sonar source levels would ultimately condition Sailors to expect conditions that they would not experience in a real world combat situation, thereby resulting in an unacceptable increased risk to personnel safety and the strike group's ability to achieve mission success. Ultimately, reducing sonar source levels would reduce training realism. Reducing the total number of sonar hours used during training would prevent the Navy from meeting its military readiness qualification standards.

5.3.3.1.4 Implementing Active Sonar Ramp-Up Procedures during Training

Implementing active sonar ramp-up procedures (slowly increasing the sound in the water to necessary levels) in an attempt to clear the range prior to conducting activities for the purpose of mitigation during training activities would result in an unacceptable impact on readiness and would not necessarily be effective at reducing potential impacts on marine species for the following reason:

Ramp-up procedures would alert opponents to the participants' presence. This would consequently negatively affect the realism of training because the target submarine could detect the searching unit before the searching unit could detect the target submarine, enabling the target submarine to take evasive measures. This is not representative of a real-world situation and thereby would impact training realism and effectiveness. Training with reduced realism would alter Sailors' abilities to effectively operate in a real world combat situation, thereby resulting in an unacceptable increased risk to personnel safety and the sonar operator's ability to achieve mission success.

5.3.3.1.5 Reducing Vessel Speed

As described in Section 5.1.2 (Vessel Safety), as a SOP, Navy personnel are required to use extreme caution and operate at a safe speed consistent with mission and safety. These SOPs are designed to allow a vessel to take proper and effective action to avoid a collision with any sighted object or disturbance (which may include a marine mammal), and to stop within a distance appropriate to the prevailing circumstances and conditions. Implementing widespread reductions in vessel speed throughout the Study Area for the purpose of mitigation would be impractical with regard to military readiness activities, and result in an unacceptable impact on readiness for the following reasons:

Vessel operators need to be able to react to changing tactical situations and evaluate system capabilities in training as they would in actual combat. Widespread speed restrictions would not allow the Navy to properly test vessel capabilities or train to react to these situations. Speed restrictions during some activities (e.g., flight operations, underway replenishment, etc.) would also add unacceptable risk and decrease safety of personnel and vessels. Training with reduced realism would alter Sailors' abilities to effectively operate in a real world combat situation, thereby resulting in an unacceptable increased risk to personnel safety and the vessel operator's ability to achieve mission success.

5.3.3.1.6 Limiting Access to Training Locations

The Joint Pacific Alaska Range Complex provides a venue in which a large USAF contingent of aircraft can train jointly with and around a complete Navy Carrier Strike Group (CSG), comprised of an aircraft carrier and several other combatant surface ships. When the Navy conducts Joint training with Air Force assets, the training is often limited to Navy and Air Force aircraft conducting air training on Navy or Air Force ranges. In some cases, Air Force aircraft train with CSGs in other Pacific ranges; however, the size and mix of Air Force forces are significantly limited by the availability of local Air Force assets or by the cost of transporting and sustaining the aircraft and crews for the duration of an exercise. More importantly, very few airfields can meet the parking requirements of the large number of Air Force aircraft that are involved in a robust Joint training exercise. However, the Navy's CSGs are mobile and capable of carrying out sustained operations over a long period of time. Having Navy CSGs transit to the TMAA for training not only adds realism, but is economically prudent, as CSGs routinely transit to training areas as part of their normal training and deployment cycles. When operating in the TMAA, Navy CSG aircraft can reach established Air Force and Army instrumented ranges where they conduct air-to-air and air-to-ground training with Air Force and Army assets. Likewise, Alaska-based Air Force aircraft can reach the TMAA without refueling to conduct training with the CSG.

Subsequently, limiting training activities to specific locations for the purpose of mitigation would be impractical with regard to implementation, would adversely impact the effectiveness of military readiness activities, and would increase safety risks to personnel for the following reasons:

The ability to use the diverse and multidimensional capabilities of each range complex and training area results in the Navy's ability to develop and maintain high levels of readiness. Major exercises using integrated warfare components require large areas of the littorals, open ocean, and certain nearshore areas for realistic and safe training. Limiting training (including the use of sonar and other active acoustic sources or explosives) to specific locations (e.g., abyssal waters and surveyed offshore waters) and avoiding areas (e.g., embayments or large areas of the littorals and open ocean) would be impractical to implement with regard to the need to conduct activities in proximity to certain facilities and range complexes. These restrictions would also adversely impact the safety of the training activities by requiring activities to take place in more remote areas where safety support may be limited.

Training activities require continuous access to large areas consisting potentially of thousands of square miles of ocean and air space to provide naval personnel the ability to train with and develop competence and confidence in their capabilities and their entire suite of weapons and sensors. Exercises may change mid-stream based on evaluators' assessments of performance and other conditions including weather or mechanical issues. These may preclude use of a permission scheme for access to water space. Threats to national security are constantly evolving and the Navy requires the ability to adapt training to meet these emerging threats as well as develop and test systems to effectively operate in these environments. Restricting access to limited locations throughout the TMAA would impact the ability of Navy training to evolve as the threat evolves in the exercise scenario. Operational units already incorporate requirements for safety of personnel including air space and shipping routes. Safety restrictions may include limits on distance from military air fields during carrier flight operations and air traffic corridors for safety of military and civilian aviation. These types of limitations shape how exercise planners develop and implement training scenarios including those involving defense of aircraft carriers from submarines.

Therefore, limiting access to training locations would reduce realism of activities by restricting access to important real world combat situations, such as bathymetric features and varying oceanographic features. As described in Section 5.3.3.1.7 (Avoiding Locations Based on Bathymetry and Environmental Conditions), Sailors must be trained to handle bottom bounce, sound passing through changing currents, eddies, or across changes in ocean temperature, pressure, or salinity. Training in a few specific locations would alter Sailors' abilities to effectively operate in varying real world combat situations, thereby resulting in an unacceptable increased risk to personnel safety and the ability to achieve mission success.

5.3.3.1.7 Avoiding Locations Based on Bathymetry and Environmental Conditions

The unique and complex bathymetric and oceanographic environment in the TMAA presents a challenging ASW training opportunity. The complexity of the sea bottom, the input of freshwater into the sea, and the areas of upwelling and ocean currents combine in the TMAA like in no other training area in the Pacific Ocean. Numerous air, surface, and subsurface assets within a Navy CSG gain valuable experience by conducting ASW training in this environment.

Subsequently, avoiding locations for training activities based on bathymetry² and environmental conditions³ for the purpose of mitigation would increase safety risks to personnel and result in an unacceptable impact on readiness for the following reasons:

Areas where training activities are scheduled to occur are carefully chosen to provide a realistic training scenario and to ensure the safety of Navy personnel and the public. The TMAA is intentionally located away from existing commercial air traffic routes and most commercial shipping lanes. The size of the TMAA is essential to create realistic training scenarios that prepare Navy sailors for conducting real-world operations. As discussed in Section 3.8 (Marine Mammals), realistic training requires sufficient space for multiple ships to maneuver within the boundaries of the TMAA and tactical space with adequate ship separation where the training occurs (since no ships or submarines would be expected to

² Examples of comments received suggesting area avoidance based on bathymetry included: restricting Navy training to: "pelagic sea depths"; areas at least 100 miles from the nearest seamount; areas away from the "continental shelf of Alaska or adjacent seamounts"; or areas "anywhere near Kodiak Seamount."

³ Examples of comments received included: restricting Navy training during "springtime, mid-summer"; change the timing of the operations to winter (Nov–March); restrict training between "October and April"; conduct training activities from "April–October."

be outside the TMAA boundaries). Additionally, training operations such as launch and recovery of aircraft or replenishment maneuvers while underway require, for safety reasons, the ship steaming in a straight line course at a fixed speed for a sustained period of time. For example, in calm conditions, and to maintain a safe wind speed over the carrier's deck of 20 knots to support aircraft deck landings, flight operations taking 30 minutes to an hour would require the ship to maintain a straight line distance for approximately 10–20 nm, while remaining within the boundaries of the training area of the TMAA. Furthermore, fixed-wing aircraft landing on an aircraft carrier must be organized into holding patterns (marshalling of incoming and outgoing aircraft between sky and ship similar to at commercial airports). This pattern requires sufficient ship maneuvering space based on the number of aircraft in the holding pattern and could require from 10 to 50 nm of sea space from the carrier. However, the space needed is dependent on several factors, including weather conditions, visibility, number of aircraft waiting to land, and condition of the aircraft (e.g., fuel remaining). Therefore, the size of TMAA allows the necessary 20–50 nm distance for certain training events that utilize aircraft operating to and from aircraft carriers. In short, safe and effective Navy training often requires expansive operating areas due to a number of complex and interrelated factors, as provided in the example above. Additional space requirement considerations may also include a necessary separation between other ongoing training events—for example, an Air-to-Air intercept (keeping those activities away from the marshal area), an Anti-Submarine Warfare exercise (in which ships are locating an unknown submarine), or events involving the expenditure of ordnance (keeping non-participants out of the weapon's safety arc stand-off distance and target area).

These are just some of the reasons why sufficient training space at sea is needed and why the size of the TMAA is reasonable and necessary for realistic training in GOA. Engaging sailors in realistic training scenarios requires operating areas expansive enough to accommodate the ships, submarines, and aircraft that are required to train in coordinated conditions, such as the launch and recovery of aircraft, while maintaining effectiveness and safety.

Limiting training, including the use of sonar and other active acoustic sources or explosives, to avoid steep or complex bathymetric features (e.g., submarine canyons and large seamounts) and oceanographic features (e.g., surface fronts and variations in sea surface temperatures) would reduce the realism of the military readiness activity. Systems must be operated in a variety of bathymetric and environmental conditions to ensure functionality and accuracy in a variety of environments. Sonar operators need to train as they would operate during real world combat situations. Because real world combat situations include diverse bathymetric and environmental conditions, Sailors must be trained to handle bottom bounce, sound passing through changing currents, eddies, or across changes in ocean temperature, pressure, or salinity. Training with reduced realism would alter Sailors' abilities to effectively operate in a real world combat situation, thereby resulting in an unacceptable increased risk to personnel safety and the sonar operator's ability to achieve mission success.

Mitigation measures that propose restricting all training to locations far from seamounts, or the continental shelf or slope, are not supported by any evidence indicating that training is significantly impacting protected resources or habitats associated with those features and therefore warrant the need for mitigations based on the presence of broadly defined bathymetric features. In the case of a SINKEX event, however, and based on a recommendation from NMFS during consultation regarding Essential Fish Habitat, Navy has agreed not to conduct the SINKEX in Habitats of Particular Concern in this case referring to the specifically delineated slope and seamount areas within the TMAA where certain fishing activities (i.e., trawling) have been prohibited. For all other training and as detailed in Section 3.8.3.1.2.6 (Behavioral Reactions), the Navy has been training with sonar and other systems for

decades in locations having seamounts or slope areas, or that are adjacent to continental shelves where, to date, there has been no evidence of any long-term consequences for individuals or populations of marine mammals. This finding is based on years of research and monitoring that show, for example, higher densities and long-term residency by species such as beaked whales in Southern California, where the Navy trains and tests, than in other adjacent areas (Falcone et al. 2009, Falcone and Schorr 2012, 2014; Hildebrand and McDonald 2009). Restricting Navy training to areas away from these bathymetric features would therefore eliminate the ability to train in those complex environments and not be effective as a mitigation measure, given there are no long-term consequences to individuals or populations of marine mammals tied to specific bathymetric features needing to be mitigated.

Mitigation measures that suggest restricting or scheduling the training so it will occur in the winter, provide as rationale that the mitigation is needed to either avoid whales that migrate to Alaska or to avoid impacts to fisheries. Navy training is proposed to occur between April to October for the safety of the exercise participants and due to the severe conditions in the winter months. Due to the high sea states and cloud cover in the TMAA during winter months, training in the TMAA has historically occurred in the summer (June–July). These factors were a consideration in the Alternatives Development of the 2011 GOA Final EIS/OEIS (Chapter 2, Section 2.3). As detailed in Section 3.8 (Marine Mammals), there are marine mammals present year-round in the Gulf of Alaska (e.g., humpback whales, blue whales, fin whales, gray whales, and pinnipeds). Additionally, the majority of the migratory species and many of the species feeding in the area in the summer (e.g., fin whale, humpback whales, gray whales) are typically found in high numbers much closer to shore than in the waters that constitute the majority of the TMAA (see Ferguson et al. 2015b; Rone et al 2014; Witteveen 2014). Generally, Navy training activities are not likely to affect animals in nearshore locations given that the TMAA boundary nearest to land is approximately 25 nm from the Kenai Peninsula and the center of the TMAA is approximately 140 nm offshore. Any effects to whales in Alaska from Navy training are most likely to result from acoustic sources associated with events occurring in the deep water areas and away from the edges of the TMAA boundary. It is also important to note that the available scientific information does not provide evidence that exposure to acoustic stressors from Navy training activities are likely to impact the fitness of individual whales and are not likely to result in adverse population level or species level impacts (National Marine Fisheries Service 2015). For the reasons outlined above, training in the winter would not be practicable or effective in avoiding impacts to marine mammals but would unnecessarily increase risk and threaten the safety of Navy personnel engaged in training.

Mitigation measures suggesting not holding the training during the summer period have also been predicated on avoiding impacts to fisheries during the fishing season and the livelihood of fishermen and fishing communities. As detailed in Section 3.6 (Fish) of the 2011 GOA Final EIS/OEIS, based on the best available science, the continuation of training in the TMAA would not have an impact on populations of fish, the health of the fisheries, or the ability of fishermen to fish. It is also important to note that training has been conducted for many years in the TMAA and there have been no reported impacts to any fish or fishery activities. Therefore, training in the winter would not be practicable and would not be effective in avoiding impacts to fish or fisheries but would unnecessarily increase risk and threaten the safety of the Navy personnel engaged in training.

In summary and for the reasons provided above, suggested mitigation measures such as training in the winter or away from generalized bathymetric features would introduce an unnecessary safety risk to personnel engaged in the training, lessen the value of that training, and have no known or likely significant benefit to any resource. Training in the summer within the historically used TMAA has had no known long-term consequences for marine mammals. There have been no known or reported impacts

to fish, fish resources, or the livelihood of fishermen from any previous training in the TMAA. The best available science does not indicate any such impacts are likely to resources in the TMAA. Therefore, moving training away from complex bathymetry or re-scheduling it to occur in the winter season would be ineffective as a mitigation measure, impact the effectiveness of the training, and introduces an unnecessary safety risk to participants in the training.

While this summary analysis remains valid, after consultations with Alaska Native tribes from the Kodiak and Kenai Peninsula region, the Navy has confirmed that training events in the TMAA would not involve the use of any explosives in one particular and well-defined fishing area known as Portlock Bank⁴ and shown in Figure 5-2.

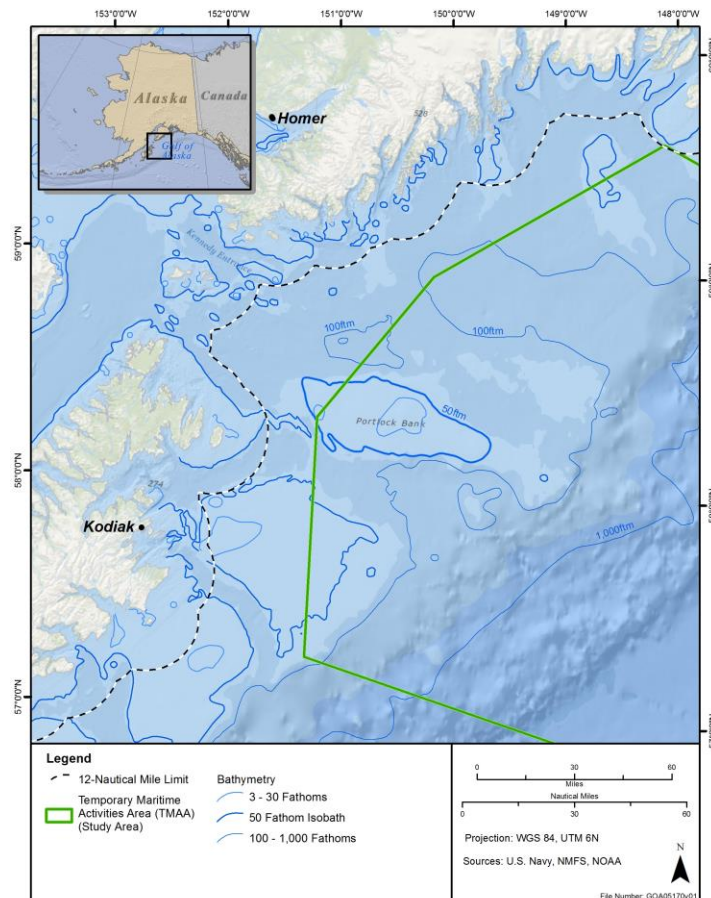


Figure 5-2: Location of Portlock Bank in relationship to the TMAA

The bathymetric feature known as Portlock Bank is located offshore to the east of Kodiak Island and partially overlaps with the far western portion of the TMAA. There is minimal overlap with the majority of training activities in the TMAA since most training events occur farther offshore and away from commercial shipping traffic, other civilian vessels, and air traffic routes. There have been no indications of impacts to fish or fisheries or reported impacts to the activities of fishermen in the Portlock Bank area from any past Navy training in the TMAA. Given, however, the expressed concerns from the Native

⁴ The boundary for Portlock Bank was defined as being the bathymetric area shallower than the 50 fathom curve encompassing the location labeled as "Portlock Bank" as shown on NOAA Chart 16013, titled "Cape St. Elias to Shumagin Islands; Semidi Islands," printed June 1, 2015.

Village of Afognak and the Sun'aq Tribe of Kodiak and other tribes during Government-to-Government consultations, Navy has affirmed that the use of explosives will not occur in Portlock Bank during Navy training events in the TMAA.

5.3.3.1.8 Avoiding or Reducing Active Sonar at Night and During Periods of Low Visibility

It is important to note that in the June–July timeframe, there are approximately 19 hours of daylight per day in the TMAA portion of the Gulf of Alaska. Therefore, there are fewer hours of available nighttime to be used for sonar training. Avoiding or reducing active sonar at night and during periods of low visibility for the purpose of mitigation would result in an unacceptable impact on readiness for the following reasons:

The Navy must train in the same manner as it will fight. ASW can require a significant amount of time to develop the “tactical picture,” or an understanding of the battle space (e.g., area searched or unsearched, identifying false contacts, and understanding the water conditions). Reducing or securing power in low-visibility conditions would affect a commander’s ability to develop this tactical picture and would not provide the needed training realism. Training differently from what would be needed in an actual combat scenario would decrease training effectiveness, reduce the crew’s abilities, and introduce an increased safety risk to personnel.

Mid-frequency active sonar training is required year-round in all environments, including night and low-visibility conditions. Training occurs over many hours or days, which requires large teams of personnel working together in shifts around the clock to work through a scenario. Training at night is vital because environmental differences between day and night affect the detection capabilities of sonar. Temperature layers that move up and down in the water column and ambient noise levels can vary significantly between night and day, which affects sound propagation and could affect how sonar systems are operated. Consequently, personnel must train during all hours of the day to ensure they identify and respond to changing environmental conditions, and not doing so would unacceptably decrease training effectiveness and reduce the crews’ abilities. Therefore, the Navy cannot operate only in daylight hours or wait for the weather to clear before training.

5.3.3.1.9 Avoiding or Reducing Active Sonar during Strong Surface Ducts

Avoiding or reducing active sonar during strong surface ducts for the purpose of mitigation would increase safety risks to personnel, be impractical with regard to implementation of military readiness activities, and result in an unacceptable impact on readiness for the following reasons:

The Navy must train in the same manner as it will fight. ASW can require a significant amount of time to develop the “tactical picture,” or an understanding of the battle space such as area searched or unsearched, identifying false contacts, understanding the water conditions, etc. Surface ducting is a condition when water conditions (e.g., temperature layers, lack of wave action) result in little sound energy penetrating beyond a narrow layer near the surface of the water. Submarines have long been known to exploit the phenomena associated with surface ducting. Therefore, training in surface ducting conditions is a critical component to military readiness because sonar operators need to learn how sonar transmissions are altered due to surface ducting, how submarines may take advantage of them, and how to operate sonar effectively in this environment. Avoiding or reducing active sonar during surface ducting conditions would affect a commander’s ability to develop this tactical picture and would not provide the needed training realism. Diminished realism would reduce a sonar operator’s ability to effectively operate in a real world combat situation, thereby resulting in an unacceptable increased risk to personnel safety and the ability to achieve mission success.

Furthermore, avoiding surface ducting would be impractical to implement because ocean conditions contributing to surface ducting change frequently, and surface ducts can be of varying duration. Surface ducting can also lack uniformity and may or may not extend over a large geographic area, making it difficult to determine where to reduce power and for what periods.

5.3.3.1.10 Avoiding Locations Based on Distances from Isobaths or Shorelines

The littoral waterspace (i.e., 25 nm from 200 m isobaths) is where potential enemies will operate and is also the most challenging area to operate due to a diverse acoustic environment. In real world situations, it is highly likely the Navy would be working in these types of areas. It is not realistic to refrain from training in the areas that are the most challenging and operationally important. Placing coastal restrictions, such as limiting operations in the littoral waterspace, would hamper Navy training. Areas where ASW events are scheduled to occur are carefully chosen to provide for the safety of events and to allow for the realistic development of the training scenario including the ability of the exercise participants to develop, maintain, and demonstrate proficiency in all areas of warfare simultaneously. Limiting the training event to a few areas would have an adverse impact on the effectiveness of the training by limiting the ability to conduct other critical warfare areas including, but not limited to, the ability of the CSG to defend itself from threats on the surface and in the air while carrying out air strikes. Furthermore, training activities using integrated warfare components require large areas of the littorals and open ocean for realistic and safe training.

Subsequently, avoiding locations for training activities within the TMAA based on wide-scale distances from isobaths or the shoreline for the purpose of mitigation would be impractical with regard to implementation of military readiness activities, result in unacceptable impact on readiness, and would not be an effective means of mitigation, and would increase safety risks to personnel for the following reasons:

A measure requiring avoidance of mid-frequency active sonar within 13 nm of the 656 ft. (200 m) isobaths was part of the Rim of the Pacific 2006 exercise authorization by NMFS, but has not been required since 2006. This measure, as well as similar measures of like distances or generic locations farther out to sea, lacks any scientific basis when applied to the context of the TMAA. There's no scientific analysis indicating this measure is protective or a known basis for these specific metrics. The Rim of the Pacific 2006 exercise mitigation measure precluded active anti-submarine training in the littoral region, which significantly impacted realism and training effectiveness (e.g., protecting ships from submarine threats during amphibious landings). This mitigation procedure had no observable effect on the protection of marine mammals during Rim of the Pacific 2006 exercises, and its value was unclear in that specific regard; however, its adverse effect on realistic training, as with all arbitrary distance from land restrictions, is significant.

Only a small portion of the TMAA includes relatively shallow water over the continental shelf. Training in shallower water is an essential component to maintaining military readiness. Sound propagates differently in shallower water and operators must learn to train in this environment. Additionally, submarines have become quieter through the use of improved technology and have learned to hide in the higher ambient noise levels of the shallow waters of coastal environments. In real world events, it is highly likely Sailors would be working in, and therefore must train in, these types of areas.

Areas where training activities are scheduled to occur are carefully chosen to provide safety and allow realism of events. The proximity to facilities and range complexes is essential to the training realism and effectiveness required to train and certify naval forces ready for combat operations. For safety, activities

involving aircraft require access to emergency divert landing areas within proximity to the training area; this factor precludes having training areas located farther offshore than the previously used training areas. Limiting access to nearshore areas would restrict access to certain training locations and would increase transit time for these activities, which would result in an increased risk to personnel safety, particularly for platforms with fuel restrictions (e.g., aircraft) or for certain activities.

The ability to use the diverse and multi-dimensional capabilities of each range complex and training area results in the Navy's ability to develop and maintain high levels of readiness. For example, operating in shallow water is essential in order to provide realistic training in real world combat conditions with regard to shallow water sound propagation. Otherwise limiting training (including the use of sonar and other active acoustic sources or explosives) to avoid the continental shelf and slope, or otherwise restrict training to areas located far offshore, would adversely impact the effectiveness of the training. This includes measures suggested in comments such as restricting training activities to "pelagic sea depths"; "areas far offshore"; "offshore in the central Pacific"; "area east of 142 W longitude"; areas "east of 143 W longitude"; "away from the continental shelf and slope, where most marine mammals are found"; "areas away from the nearshore and islands where the least amount of marine species live"; "tropical waters and the Great Lakes"; "West Africa"; areas not in Prince William Sound; or areas not in the Gulf of Alaska. These measures do not have any known scientific basis for the metrics provided, and there are no specific scientifically demonstrated impacts that such measures are designed to address. Additionally, the Navy has been training both nearshore and on the continental shelf and slope in various areas of the ocean for decades. There are no indications of population-level effects to marine species from this long history of training; this finding is supported by the Navy's monitoring program results from 2006 to date. Therefore, restricting training to areas located away from the continental shelf or otherwise far offshore would be ineffective at providing any mitigation benefit and would impact the Navy's ability to train in such areas when the need arises.

5.3.3.1.11 Avoiding Marine Species Habitats and Biologically Important Areas

In general, the Navy considered mitigation measures for marine species habitats and identified areas of biological importance on a case-by-case basis through consultation with NMFS and the USFWS. The Navy deems avoidance of an area potentially effective mitigation and practicable only if (1) the area has been well documented as important habitat for particular species based on the best available science, (2) the potential impacts of Navy activities spatially and temporally overlap with the areas to be avoided, (3) that overlap is likely to have biologically meaningful effects in the identified area, and (4) avoidance of the area would not result in unacceptable impacts on military readiness.

As described in Section 5.3.3.1.6 (Limiting Access to Training Locations) and Section 5.3.3.1.7 (Avoiding Locations Based on Bathymetry and Environmental Conditions), the Navy carefully identified areas where proposed training activities would occur by evaluating the extent to which these areas provide for personnel safety and replicate real-world conditions, including varying environmental conditions, to maximize training realism. The location (TMAA) in which the Navy is proposing to continue training activities has been used for many decades, and the same types of training events have occurred in the TMAA over the years. The TMAA continues to be used because it provides unique environmental training conditions that replicate real-world environments, allows the Navy to avoid interaction with established commercial air traffic routes and commercial vessel shipping lanes, is in proximity to aircraft emergency divert landing fields, and is in proximity to homeports and home bases to minimize both fuel use and the time personnel are away from home.

Locations in which Navy training activities would occur inevitably overlap with a wide array of marine species' habitats, including foraging habitats, reproductive areas, and migration corridors. Limiting activities to avoid all of these habitats would adversely impact the effectiveness of the training activity, create a risk to non-participating aircraft and vessels, result in an unacceptable increased risk to personnel safety, and result in greater fuel expenditure as a result of transiting to locations at greater distances from homeports and home bases, thereby impacting the ability to achieve mission success.

As described in Section 3.8 (Marine Mammals), in 2011 NOAA convened a working group to map cetacean density and distribution within U.S. waters. The specific objective of the Cetacean Density and Distribution Mapping Working Group (CetMap) was to create comprehensive and easily accessible regional cetacean density and distribution maps that are time and species specific. Separately, to augment this more quantitative density and distribution mapping and provide additional context for marine mammal impact analyses, CetMap also identified (through literature search, current science compilation, and expert elicitation) areas of importance for cetaceans, such as reproductive areas, feeding areas, migratory corridors, and areas in which small or resident populations are concentrated. Areas identified through this process have been termed biologically important areas (Aquatic Mammals 2015, Ferguson 2015, Van Parijs 2015). Through the Cetacean Density and Distribution Mapping (CetMap) process, NMFS identified specific areas where certain marine mammal species tend to be found concentrated at particular times of the year while engaging in important behavioral activities (Aquatic Mammals 2015; Calambokidis et al. 2015; Ferguson et al. 2015a, 2015b; Van Parijs 2015). The areas currently identified are not intended to reflect a complete list of areas of biological importance, are not equivalent to habitat or range, and likely represent only a fraction of a species' overall range (Ferguson et al. 2015a). Additionally, the delineation of a mapped boundary does not reflect the day-to-day dynamic nature of marine mammal distributions or of the ocean environment, both of which are subject to perturbation (changes from what is normal due to any outside influence such as climate change, storm events, etc.) along with other key variables such as prey availability and other environmental factors (e.g., sea surface temperature). Therefore, the Navy has determined that it is most effective to implement mitigation measures whenever and wherever a marine mammal is detected, regardless of the probability that a marine mammal may be in a certain location.

In response to public comments and as part of ongoing discussions with NMFS under MMPA, the Navy was asked to consider whether additional mitigation is warranted, in each of the areas that have been identified as biologically important and partially overlapping the TMAA (see the species specific discussion of these areas presented in Section 3.8.2., Affected Environment). These areas include a North Pacific right whale feeding area (Figure 3.8-2) and a gray whale migration area (Figure 3.8-5), which were designated for consideration specifically because of those feeding and migrating behaviors.

The Navy conducted an assessment of GOA training activities in relation to the North Pacific right whale feeding behavior and gray whale migration behavior that may take place in each area that overlaps the nearshore western margin of the TMAA (Figure 5-3). Based on the likely locations for training in the TMAA, the Navy anticipates that training proposed in this Supplemental EIS/OEIS would have very limited, if any, spatial overlap with the designated North Pacific right whale area or gray whale areas during the April to October timeframe for the proposed action.

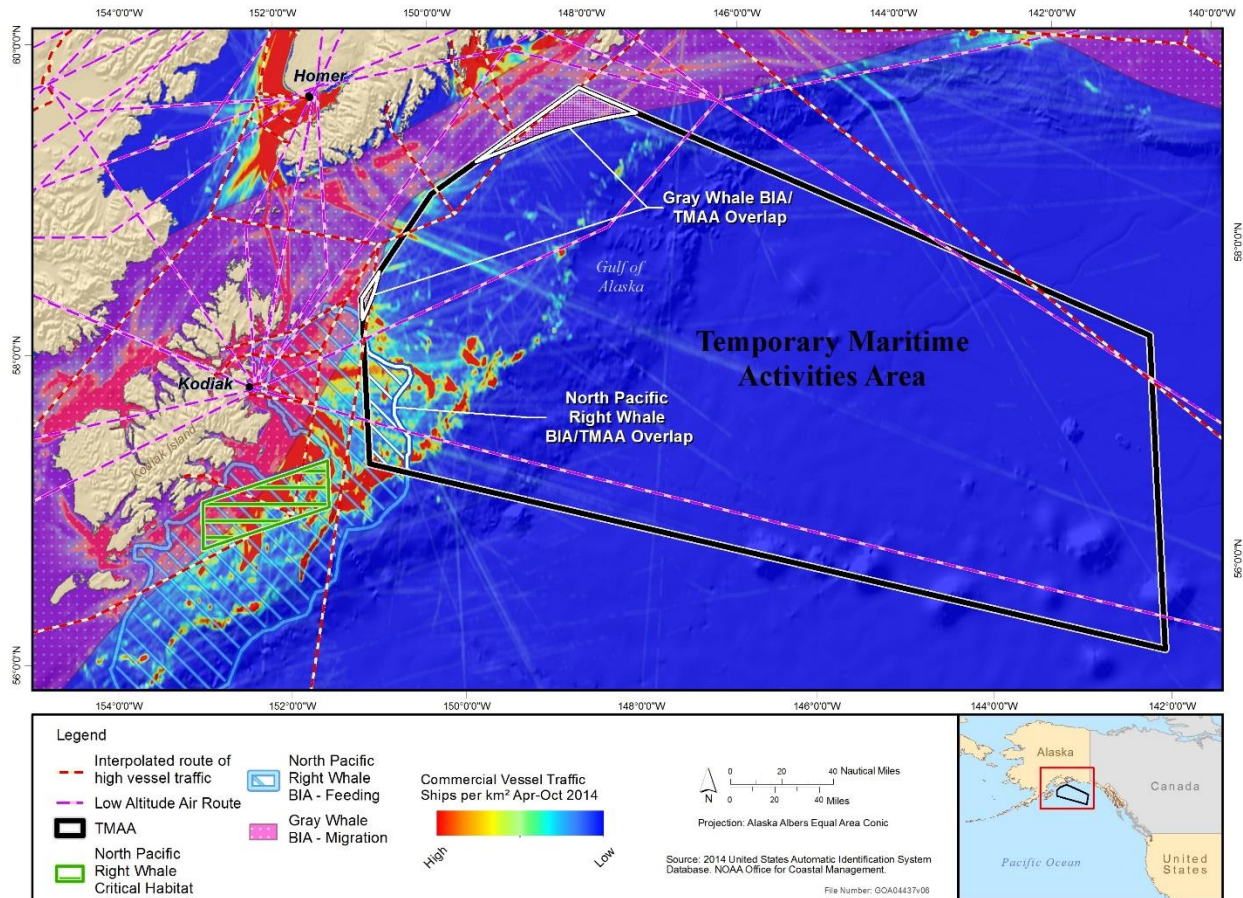


Figure 5-3: Non-Navy Vessel Traffic and Air Traffic Routes in Relation to the North Pacific Right Whale Feeding Area and the Gray Whale Migration Area Overlapping the Temporary Maritime Activities Area

Given the proximity to Kodiak Island and Kenai Peninsula, the nearshore margin of the TMAA is only likely to involve training activities such as Visit, Board, Search, and Seizure training events that are without sonar or explosives usage (see the 2011 GOA SEIS, Section 2.4.1.2 and Table 2.5). These are the principal type of Maritime Interdiction events which use naval forces that could be with potentially smaller vessels and do not involve use of surface ship hull-mounted mid-frequency sonar or underwater explosions as part of the training event. As detailed in the Chapter 2, these could include up to 24 Visit, Board, Search, and Seizure training and 28 Maritime Interdiction training, which often interact with participating contracted, as exercise participants, commercial vessels homeported out of Gulf of Alaska ports (ex. Kodiak, Homer, etc.).

Given the overlap with the North Pacific right whale feeding area and gray whale migration areas between or adjacent to Kodiak Island and Kenai Peninsula, the vast majority of human impacts to include any sound and interactions with marine mammals in these areas will be the result of non-Navy vessel activity (commercial shipping, commercial or recreational fishing and public boating). This would include the relatively pervasive broadband noise from warm season commercial vessel transits, echosounders (fathometers and fish detection sonars), and fishery-related seal bombs (see Baumann-Pickering et al. 2012a, b; Debich et al. 2013, 2014; see also the detailed discussion in Marine Mammals, Section 3.8.3.3.2 [Model Predicted Effects from Use of Sonar and Other Active Acoustic Sources]). Generally, sound from Navy training activities in the TMAA would be infrequent and transitory. Training

is not likely to occur close to shore in these feeding and migration areas. Sound propagating from hull-mounted mid-frequency sonar while vessels are in transit during ASW events located outside these areas and further offshore in the TMAA are a more likely possibility.

Due to the Navy's relative small contribution to anthropogenic noise and physical disturbance in these areas, there would be little to no biological benefit from wholesale adoption of area avoidance measures for Navy vessels. The science detailed in Section 3.8 (Marine Mammals) indicates Navy training would not have any biologically meaningful effect on North Pacific right whale feeding behavior or gray whale migration behavior in these areas delineated specifically for consideration with regard to those behaviors (see Ferguson et al. 2015a). Complete avoidance of these areas by transiting Navy ships is not warranted when balanced against the facts that (1) the Navy would constitute a small fraction of the activity in these areas; (2) Navy activities are unlikely to have a biologically meaningful impact, if any, on the North Pacific Right whale feeding behavior or gray whale migration behavior for which these areas have been designated; and (3) there would be impacts to the effectiveness of training when such areas were needed for training.

Specifically with respect to the North Pacific Right Whale feeding area, the endangered status of the species, and extremely small number of North Pacific right whales in the population has caused NMFS to ask Navy to reconsider whether any mitigation is practicable and warranted in the feeding area. The designated NPRW feeding area was based on a combination of historic whaling sightings prior to and during the time when the population levels were being reduced through direct mortality and NPRW visual sightings and acoustic detections between 1998 and 2006 south of Kodiak (Wade et al. 2011; Ferguson et al 2015). There have been no known recent sightings (since the 1941-1968 time period reported in Wade et al. 2011) and no acoustic detections in the eastern portion of the NPRW feeding area that overlaps with the TMAA. The Navy's effects analysis in this Supplemental EIS describes the potential for Level B behavioral takes. This was predicated based on assigning a nominal NPRW density to the entire TMAA to account for historic and potential future occurrence in all areas of the TMAA both onshelf and offshelf, and not just associated with the NPRW feeding area. Therefore, this predicted level of take is ultra conservative. Data also shows lack of current and consistent NPRW detections in the overlap portion of the TMAA and feeding area and limited temporal overlap with modern sightings primarily from July to September with Northern Edge exercises (traditionally in either May, June, or early July). Impact is also minimized because particular exercise requirements for sonar and explosive use in training generally causes the events to occur in deeper, offshore water within the TMAA and therefore, by the nature of the activity requirements makes avoidance of the overlap area limited in practical benefit to the population. Taking all the above into account, Navy has re-evaluated and agrees to establish the overlapped feeding area within the TMAA (the 2,051 km² area) as a North Pacific Right Whale Cautionary Area between June and September. In that June to September time period in the North Pacific Right Whale Cautionary Area, Navy will not use surface ship hull-mounted mid-frequency sonar or explosives during the proposed training events. However, the Navy does reserve the right to use surface ship hull-mounted mid-frequency sonar or explosives in the event of national security needs require that training in that area between June and September during any Northern Edge exercise. Navy will require a command requesting that training in that timeframe to seek approval in advance from Commander, U.S. Third Fleet.

With respect to the gray whale migration area that overlaps the TMAA between November through January and March through May, the Navy's training within the April to October timeframe would have no temporal overlap with this November through January migration period. There is only minimum temporal overlap between the months of March through May migration period and the potential range

of time during which the proposed Navy training might occur. The majority of Navy training activities including sonar and explosives use within the TMAA have historically occurred in summer months (June – July) outside of the gray whale migration period designated for the migration area and this training involving sonar and explosives typically take place some distance away from an operating area boundary to ensure sufficient sea or air space for tactical maneuvers, sufficient water depth, and to avoid interference from civilian vessels and aircraft (civilian ship and air transits are high in number along the nearshore boundary of the TMAA). In addition, as detailed in Chapter 3.8, there are no expected sonar or explosive effects predicted for gray whales nor requested takes based on acoustic effects modeling that considered gray whale occurrence and density as well as the types and quantities of Navy training being authorized. Given the lack of overlap for the majority of Navy activities in time and space and the lack of impact to the migration activity for which the BIA was designated, the Navy finds that a time and area avoidance of the designated gray whale migration area does not provide a practicable benefit to the population in balance with the impacts to training events.

There is no overlap of the TMAA or any of the Navy proposed training activities in time or space with any other designated biologically important areas in Alaska (see Section 3.8.2, [Affected Environment] for species specific details).

5.3.3.1.12 Avoiding Marine Protected Areas

There are several marine protected areas and habitats of particular concern within the TMAA (see Section 3.5, Fish; Section 6.1.1, National System of Marine Protected Areas; and Section 6.1.2, Fishery Management Habitat Protections). However, the identified impacts and purpose for the designation of these areas is to limit or restrict specific fishing activities. Since the Navy does not engage in fishing activities, preventing Navy training activities in these areas would be ineffective at preventing the identified impacts caused by certain fishing practices. Additionally, preventing the Navy from continuing to train in these areas as a mitigation measure would increase safety risks to personnel, be impractical with regard to implementation (since it would eliminate from use large portions of the TMAA), and would not be warranted based on the discussions presented in the Chapter 3 (Affected Environment and Environmental Consequences) environmental analyses for biological resources and Section 6.1.2 (National System of Marine Protected Areas).

Areas where training activities are scheduled to occur are carefully chosen to provide safety and allow realism of events. The proximity to facilities, range complexes, and ranges is essential to the training realism and effectiveness required to train and certify naval forces ready for combat operations. Limiting access to marine protected areas would restrict access to training locations and would increase transit time, which would result in an increased risk to personnel safety, particularly for platforms with fuel restrictions (e.g., aircraft).

5.3.3.1.13 Increasing Visual and Passive Acoustic Observations

Increasing visual and passive acoustic observations, including modification of sonobuoys for passive acoustic detection of vocalizing species, for the purpose of mitigation would be impractical with regard to implementation of military readiness activities and result in an unacceptable impact on readiness for the following reasons:

The Navy recommended mitigation measures already represent the maximum level of effort (e.g., numbers of Lookouts and passive sonobuoys) that the Navy can commit to observing mitigation zones given the number of personnel that will be involved and the number and type of assets and resources available. The number of Lookouts that the Navy recommends for each measure often represents the

maximum capacity based on limited resources (e.g., space and manning restrictions). For example, vessels are minimally manned and are therefore physically unable to accommodate more than one Lookout. Furthermore, training activities are carefully planned with regard to personnel duties. Requiring additional Lookouts would either require adding personnel, for which there would be no additional space, or reassigning duties, which would divert Navy personnel from essential tasks required to meet mission objectives.

The Navy will conduct passive acoustic monitoring during several activities with Navy assets, such as sonobuoys, already participating in the activity (e.g., SINKEXs and improved extended echo ranging sonobuoys). Refer to Section 5.3.2 (Mitigation Zone Procedural Measures) for additional information on the use of passive acoustics during training activities. The Navy does not have the resources to construct and maintain additional passive acoustic monitoring systems (e.g., modified passive sonobuoys) for each training activity.

5.3.3.1.14 Increasing the Size of Observed Mitigation Zones

Increasing the size of observed mitigation zones for the purpose of mitigation would be impractical with regard to implementation of military readiness activities and result in an unacceptable impact on readiness for the following reasons:

The Navy developed activity-specific mitigation zones based on the Navy's acoustic propagation model. In this GOA analysis, the Navy developed each recommended mitigation zone to avoid or reduce the potential for onset of the lowest level of injury, PTS, out to the predicted maximum range. Mitigating to the predicted maximum range to PTS consequently also mitigates to the predicted maximum range to onset mortality (1 percent mortality), onset slight lung injury, and onset slight gastrointestinal tract injury, since the maximum range to effects for these criteria are shorter than for PTS. Furthermore, in most cases, the predicted maximum range to PTS also covers the predicted average range to TTS. In some instances, the Navy recommends mitigation zones that are larger or smaller than the predicted maximum range to PTS based on the associated effectiveness and operational assessments presented in Section 5.3.2 (Mitigation Zone Procedural Measures).

The Navy recommended mitigation zones represent the maximum area the Navy can effectively observe based on the platform of observation, number of personnel that will be involved, and the number and type of assets and resources available. As mitigation zone sizes increase, the potential for reducing impacts decreases. For instance, if a mitigation zone increases from 1,000 to 4,000 yd. (914 to 3,658 m), the area that must be observed increases sixteen-fold. The Navy recommended mitigation measures balance the need to reduce potential impacts with the ability to provide effective observations throughout a given mitigation zone. Implementation of mitigation zones is most effective when the zone is appropriately sized to be realistically observed. The Navy does not have the resources to maintain additional Lookouts or observer platforms that would be needed to effectively observe mitigation zones of increased size. Further, as explained above, the number of Lookouts that the Navy recommends for each measure often represents the maximum capacity based on limited resources (e.g., space and manning restrictions). For example, some vessels are minimally manned and are therefore physically unable to accommodate more than one Lookout. Training activities are carefully planned with regard to personnel duties. Requiring observation of mitigation zones of increased size would either require adding personnel, for which there would be no additional space or resources, or reassigning duties, which would divert Navy personnel from essential tasks required to meet mission objectives. For most activities, Lookouts are required to observe for concentrations of detached floating vegetation (kelp

paddies), which are indicators of potential marine mammal and sea turtle presence, within the mitigation zone to further help reduce the potential for injury to occur.

5.3.3.1.15 Conducting Visual Observations Using Third-Party Observers

Since 2006 and as described in Section 3.8.5 (Summary of Observations During Previous Navy Activities), the Navy, non-Navy marine mammal scientists, and research institutions in consultation with NMFS have conducted scientific monitoring and research in and around ocean areas in the Atlantic and Pacific oceans where the Navy has been training and testing. This has included behavioral response studies, tagging, surveys, observations, and data collection using vessels, aircraft, and a variety of sensors and instruments before, during, and after training and testing events by independent scientists and research organizations as well as Navy scientists. A discussion regarding some of those findings is presented in Section 3.8.5 (Summary of Observations During Previous Navy Activities), as well as the location of or citation to those findings for further review. However, with those limited exceptions, use of third-party observers (e.g., trained marine species observers) in air or on surface platforms in addition to existing Navy Lookouts for the purposes of mitigation would be impractical with regard to implementation of military readiness activities and result in an unacceptable impact on readiness for the following reasons:

Use of third-party observers is not necessary because Navy personnel are extensively trained in spotting items on or near the water surface. Use of Navy Lookouts ensures immediate implementation of mitigation if marine species are sighted. A critical skill set of effective Navy training is communication. Navy Lookouts are trained to act swiftly and decisively to ensure that appropriate actions are taken to inform the appropriate person in the chain of command. Additionally, multiple training events can occur simultaneously and in various regions throughout the Study Area, and can last for days or weeks at a time. Every berth taken up by a third-party observer would reduce also the space available and number of Navy personnel and trainers that could otherwise participate in the training.

The use of third-party observers on other vessels and aircraft would compromise security for some activities involving active sonar due to the requirement to provide advance notification of specific times and locations of Navy platforms. Reliance on the availability of third-party personnel would impact training flexibility, given most events cannot be scheduled for a specific time. Events often occur more than 100 miles offshore, and having a small aircraft with sufficient range and loiter time operating at such distances from shore is a safety risk. The presence of other aircraft in the vicinity of naval activities would also raise safety concerns for both the commercial observers and naval aircraft. Furthermore, vessels have limited passenger capacity. Training event planning includes careful consideration of limited capacity in the placement of personnel on ships involved in the event. On surface ships engaged in activities like anti-submarine warfare using hull-mounted mid-frequency sonar, there is seldom open or spare berthing space available to support the number of third-party observers that would be necessary to observe around-the-clock training. Inclusion of non-Navy observers onboard these vessels would require that in some cases there would be no additional space for essential Navy personnel required to meet the exercise objectives.

The areas where training events will most likely occur in the Study Area cover more than 42,146 square nautical miles. Contiguous ASW events may cover many hundreds or even thousands of square miles. The number of civilian vessels or aircraft required to monitor the area of these events would be considerable. It is, thus, not feasible to survey or monitor the large exercise area in the time required. In addition, marine mammals may move into or out of an area, if surveyed before an event, or an animal could move into an area after an event took place. Given that there are no adequate controls to account

for these or other possibilities, there is little utility to performing extensive before or after event surveys of large exercise areas as a mitigation measure.

Surveying during an event raises safety issues with multiple, slow civilian aircraft operating in the same airspace as military aircraft engaged in combat training activities. In addition, many of the training events take place far from land, limiting both the time available for civilian aircraft to be in the event area and presenting a concern should aircraft mechanical problems arise. Scheduling civilian vessels or aircraft to coincide with training events would impact training effectiveness, since exercise event timetables cannot be precisely fixed and are instead based on the free-flow development of tactical situations. Waiting for civilian aircraft or vessels to complete surveys, refuel, or be on station would slow the progress of the exercise and impact the effectiveness of the military readiness activity.

5.3.3.1.16 Adopting Mitigation Measures of Foreign Navies

Adopting mitigation measures of foreign navies generally for the purpose of mitigation, such as expanding the mitigation zones to match those used by a particular foreign navy, would be impractical with regard to implementation of military readiness activities and result in an unacceptable impact on readiness for the following reasons:

Mitigation measures are carefully customized for and agreed upon by each individual navy based on potential impacts of the activities on marine species and the impacts of the mitigation measures on military readiness. The mitigation measures developed for one navy would not necessarily be effective at reducing potential impacts on marine species by all navies. Similarly, mitigation measures that do not cause an unacceptable impact to one navy may cause an unacceptable impact on another. For example, most other navies do not possess an integrated strike group and do not have integrated training requirements. The Navy's training is built around the integrated warfare concept and is based on the Navy's capabilities, the threats faced, the operating environment, and the overall mission. Implementing other navies' mitigation would be incompatible with U.S. Navy requirements. The U.S. Navy's recommended mitigation measures have been carefully designed to reduce potential impacts on marine species while not causing an unacceptable impact on readiness.

5.3.3.1.17 Increasing Reporting Requirements

The Navy has extensive reporting requirements, including exercise and monitoring reporting designed to verify implementation of mitigation, comply with current permits, and improve future environmental assessments (Section 5.5, Monitoring and Reporting; see also Section 3.8.5, Summary of Observations During Previous Navy Activities). Increasing the requirement to report marine species sightings to augment scientific data collection and to further verify the implementation of mitigation measures is unnecessary and would increase safety risks to personnel, be impractical with regard to implementation of military readiness activities, and result in an unacceptable impact on readiness for the following reasons:

Vessels, aircraft, and personnel engaged in training events are intensively employed throughout the duration of training activities. Any additional workload assigned that is unrelated to their primary duty would adversely impact personnel safety and the effectiveness of the military readiness activity they are undertaking. Lookouts are not trained to make accurate species-specific identification and would not be able to provide the detailed information that the scientific community would use. Alternatively, the Navy has an integrated comprehensive monitoring program (Section 5.5, Monitoring and Reporting) that does provide information that is available and useful to the scientific community in annual monitoring reports.

5.3.3.2 Previously Accepted but Now Eliminated

5.3.3.2.1 Implementing a Mitigation Zone for Missile Exercises with Airborne Targets

Per current mitigation, a mitigation zone of 1,000 yd. (914 m) is observed around the expected expended material field. The Navy is proposing to eliminate the need for a Lookout to maintain a mitigation zone for missile exercises involving airborne targets. Most airborne targets are recoverable aerial drones, and missile impact with the target does not typically occur. Most anti-air missiles used in training are telemetry configured (i.e., they do not have an actual warhead). Impact of a target is unlikely because missiles are designed to detonate (simulated detonation for telemetry missiles) in the vicinity of the target and not as a result of a direct strike on the target. Given the speed of the missile and the target, the high altitudes involved, and the long ranges of missile travel possible, it is not possible to definitively predict or to effectively observe where the missile fragments will fall. The potential expended material fall zone, which can be in excess of 80 nm from the firing location, can only be predicted within tens of miles for long-range events. For shorter events, the fall zone can occur within several thousand yards from the firing location but can only be predicted within thousands of yards. Establishment of a mitigation zone for activities involving airborne targets would be ineffective at reducing potential impacts.

Furthermore, the potential risk to any marine mammal or sea turtle from a missile exercise with an airborne target is a direct strike from falling expended material. Based on the extremely low potential for a target strike and associated expended material field to co-occur in space and time with a marine species at or near the surface of the water, the potential for a direct strike is negligible.

5.3.3.2.2 Implementing a Mitigation Zone for Medium- and Large-Caliber Gunnery Exercises with Airborne Targets

Per current mitigation, a mitigation zone is observed in the vicinity of the expected military expended material field. The Navy is proposing to eliminate the need for a Lookout to observe the vicinity of the expected military expended material for medium- and large-caliber gunnery exercises involving airborne targets. The potential expended material fall zone, which can be up to 7 nm from the firing location, can only be predicted within thousands of yards. Establishment of a mitigation zone for activities involving airborne targets would be ineffective at reducing potential impacts.

Furthermore, the potential risk to any marine mammal or sea turtle from a gunnery exercise with an airborne target is a direct strike from falling military expended materials. Based on the extremely low potential for an expended material field to co-occur in space and time with a marine species at or near the surface of the water, the potential for a direct strike is negligible.

5.4 MITIGATION SUMMARY

Table 5.4-1 provides a summary of the Navy's recommended mitigation measures and compares the current and recommended (proposed) mitigation measures for acoustic (non-impulsive and impulsive) stressors and for physical disturbance and strike stressors. Following that table, Section 5.4.1 contains the Navy's location-specific mitigation measures for training activities in the TMAA.

For reference, currently implemented mitigation measures for each activity category are also summarized in the table. The process for developing each of these measures is detailed in Section 5.2.3 (Assessment Method) and involved: (1) an effectiveness assessment to determine if implementation of the measure will likely result in avoidance or reduction of an impact on a resource; and (2) an operational assessment to determine if implementation of the measures will have acceptable

operational impacts on the Proposed Action with regard to personnel safety, practicality of implementation, readiness, and Navy policy. Measures are intended to meet applicable regulatory compliance requirements for NEPA, Executive Order 12114, and CEQ guidance. The Navy recommended mitigation measures were also developed consistent with resource-specific environmental requirements, as follows:

- Measures specifying marine mammals and indicators of marine mammal presence (e.g. floating vegetation [kelp paddies], large schools of fish, or flocks of seabirds) as the protection focus are intended to meet MMPA requirements.
- Measures specifying marine mammals, sea turtles, flocks of seabirds, floating vegetation (kelp paddies), large schools of fish, jellyfish aggregations, or shallow coral reefs as the protection focus are intended to meet ESA requirements.
- Measures specifying shallow coral reefs, live hardbottom, artificial reefs, or shipwrecks as the protection focus are intended to meet Essential Fish Habitat requirements of the Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act.
- Measures specifying shipwrecks is an additional protection focus intended to meet Abandoned Shipwreck Act and National Historic Preservation Act requirements.

The measures presented in Table 5.4-1 are discussed in greater detail in Section 5.3.1 (Lookout Procedural Measures), and Section 5.3.2 (Mitigation Zone Procedural Measures). As discussed in Section 5.2.2.2 (Protective Measures Assessment Protocol), the final suite of mitigation measures resulting from the ongoing planning for this Supplemental EIS/OEIS, as well as the regulatory consultation and permitting processes will be integrated into the PMAP for implementation purposes. Section 5.5 (Monitoring and Reporting) describes the monitoring and reporting efforts the Navy will undertake to investigate the effectiveness of implemented mitigation measures and to better understand the impacts of the Proposed Action on marine resources.

Table 5.4-2 examines the mitigation measures, describing their implementation, benefits, and how successful implementation is evaluated.

Table 5.4-1: Summary of Recommended Mitigation Measures

| Activity Category or Mitigation Area | 2011 GOA Final EIS/OEIS Measures and Protection Focus | Proposed Lookout Procedural Measure | Proposed Mitigation Zone and Protection Focus |
|--|--|---|---|
| Specialized Training | | | |
| Marine Species Awareness Training (Modules 1 through 4) | Applicable personnel will complete the U.S. Navy Marine Species Awareness Training prior to standing watch or serving as a Lookout. | Applicable personnel will complete the U.S. Navy Marine Species Awareness Training prior to standing watch or serving as a Lookout. | The mitigation zones observed by Lookouts are specified for each Mitigation Zone Procedural Measure below. |
| Acoustic Stressors – Sonar and Other Active Acoustic Sources | | | |
| Low-Frequency ¹ and Hull-Mounted Mid-Frequency Active Sonar during Anti-Submarine Warfare | 1,000 yd. (914 m) and 500 yd. (457 m) power downs and 200 yd. (183 m) shutdown for marine mammals and sea turtles | 2 Lookouts (general) 1 Lookout (minimally manned, moored, or anchored) | 1,000 yd. (914 m) and 500 yd. (457 m) power downs and 200 yd. (183 m) shutdown for cetaceans and sea turtles (excludes bow-riding dolphins) |
| High-Frequency and Non-Hull Mounted Mid-Frequency Active Sonar | Non-hull mounted mid-frequency: 200 yd. (183 m) for marine mammals, floating vegetation, and kelp paddies. High-frequency: None | 2 Lookouts (general) 1 Lookout (minimally manned, moored, or anchored) | 200 yd. (183 m) for marine mammals and concentrations of floating vegetation. |
| Acoustic Stressors – Explosive and Impulsive Sound | | | |
| Improved Extended Echo Ranging Sonobuoys | 1,000 yd. (914 m) for marine mammals and sea turtles. | The Navy is not proposing to continue Improved Extended Echo Ranging training activities in the TMAA. | The Navy is not proposing to continue Improved Extended Echo Ranging training activities in the TMAA. |
| Explosive Signal Underwater Sound buoys using >0.5–2.5 lb. NEW | None | 1 Lookout | 350 yd. (320 m) for marine mammals, sea turtles, and concentrations of floating vegetation. |
| Gunnery Exercises – Small- and Medium-Caliber Using a Surface Target | 200 yd. (183 m) for marine mammals, sea turtles, floating vegetation. | 1 Lookout | 200 yd. (183 m) for marine mammals, sea turtles, and concentrations of floating vegetation. |
| Gunnery Exercises – Large-Caliber Explosive Rounds using a Surface Target | None. (Current mitigation measures were for all gunnery exercises and included only a 200 yd. [180 m] mitigation zone, which the Navy feels is too small for high-explosive gunnery.). | 1 Lookout | 600 yd. (549 m) for marine mammals, sea turtles, and concentrations of floating vegetation. |
| Missile Exercises (Including Rockets) up to 250 lb. NEW Using a Surface Target | 1,800 yd. (1.6 km) for marine mammals, sea turtles, floating vegetation and kelp paddies. | 1 Lookout | 900 yd. (823 m) for marine mammals, sea turtles, and concentrations of floating vegetation. |

Table 5.4-1: Summary of Recommended Mitigation Measures (continued)

| Activity Category or Mitigation Area | 2011 GOA Final EIS/OEIS Measures and Protection Focus | Proposed Lookout Procedural Measure | Proposed Mitigation Zone and Protection Focus |
|---|--|---|---|
| Acoustic Stressors – Explosive and Impulsive Sound (continued) | | | |
| Missile Exercises Using 251–500 lb. NEW Using a Surface Target | 1,800 yd. (1.6 km) for marine mammals, sea turtles, floating vegetation, and kelp paddies. | 1 Lookout | 2,000 yd. (1.8 km) for marine mammals, sea turtles, and concentrations of floating vegetation (kelp paddies). |
| Explosive and Non-Explosive Bombing Exercises | Explosive: 1,000 yd. (914 m) for marine mammals, sea turtles, and floating vegetation. | 1 Lookout | Explosive: 2,500 yd. (2.3 km) for marine mammals, sea turtles, and concentrations of floating vegetation. Non-Explosive: 1,000 yd. (914 m) for marine mammals, sea turtles, and concentrations of floating vegetation. |
| Sinking Exercises | 2.0 nm for marine mammals, sea turtles, floating vegetation and jellyfish aggregations. SINKEX will not be conducted within Habitats of Particular Concern. | 2 Lookouts (1 each on an aircraft and a surface vessel) | 2.5 nm (4.6 km) for marine mammals, sea turtles, concentrations of floating vegetation (kelp paddies), and jellyfish aggregations. Passive acoustic monitoring conducted with Navy assets participating in the activity. |
| Weapons Firing Noise During Gunnery Exercises – Large-Caliber | None | 1 Lookout | 70 yd. (60 m) within 30 degrees on either side of the gun target line on the firing side for marine mammals, sea turtles, and concentrations of floating vegetation. |
| Physical disturbance and Strike | | | |
| Vessel Movements | 500 yd. (457 m) for whales. | 1 Lookout | 500 yd. (457 m) for whales. 200 yd. (183 m) for all other marine mammals (except bow riding dolphins). Navy operators are alert at all times, use extreme caution, and proceed at a safe speed while in transit |
| Towed In-Water Device Use | 250 yd. (229 m) for marine mammals. | 1 Lookout | 250 yd. (229 m) for marine mammals |
| Gulf of Alaska TMAA-specific Measures | | | |

| Activity Category or Mitigation Area | 2011 GOA Final EIS/OEIS Measures and Protection Focus | Proposed Lookout Procedural Measure | Proposed Mitigation Zone and Protection Focus |
|---|---|-------------------------------------|---|
| North Pacific Right Whale Cautionary Area | None | 1 Lookout (general) | Navy will not use surface ship hull-mounted mid-frequency sonar or explosives during training within the portion of the North Pacific right whale feeding area overlapping the TMAA in the June to September timeframe unless necessary for an emergency. |
| Use of explosives in the Portlock Bank area | None | 1 Lookout (general) | Use of explosives during training will not occur in the Portlock Bank area. |

¹ This low-frequency sonar is not the Surveillance Towed Array Sensor System (SURTASS) system. SURTASS will not occur within or near the TMAA.

Notes: EIS = Environmental Impact Statement, km = kilometer, lb.= pound, m = meter, NEW = net explosive weight, nm = nautical mile, OEIS = Overseas Environmental Impact Statement, TMAA = Temporary Maritime Activities Area, yd.= yard

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Table 5.4-2: Mitigation Identification and Implementation

| Mitigation Measure | Benefit | Evaluation Criteria | Implementation | Responsible Command | Date Implemented |
|---|--|--|--|---|------------------|
| <p>Marine Species Awareness Training</p> <p>All personnel standing watch on the bridge and Lookouts will successfully complete the training before standing watch or serving as a Lookout.</p> | <p>To learn the procedures for searching for and recognizing the presence of marine species, including detection cues (e.g., congregating seabirds) so that potentially harmful interactions can be avoided.</p> | <p>Successful completion of training by all personnel standing watch and all personnel serving as Lookouts.</p> <p>Personnel successfully applying skills learned during training.</p> | <p>The multimedia training program has been made available to personnel required to take the training.</p> <p>Personnel have been and will continue to be required to take the training prior to standing watch and serving as Lookouts.</p> | <p>Officer Conducting the Exercise or Test or civilian equivalent</p> | <p>Ongoing</p> |
| <p>Lookouts</p> | | | | | |
| <p>Use of Four Lookouts for Underwater Detonations¹</p> <p>Mine countermeasure and neutralization activities using time delay or positive control firing devices will include the use of two to four Lookouts, depending on the size of the charge. If applicable, aircrew and divers will report sightings of marine mammals or sea turtles.</p> | <p>Lookouts can visually detect marine species so that potentially harmful impacts to marine mammals and sea turtles from explosives use can be avoided.</p> <p>Lookouts can more quickly and effectively relay sighting information so that corrective action can be taken. Support from aircrew and divers, if they are involved in the activity, will increase the probability of sightings, reducing the potential for impacts.</p> | | | | |
| <p>Use of One or Two Lookouts</p> <p>Vessels using low-frequency active sonar or hull-mounted mid-frequency active sonar associated with ASW activities will have either one or two Lookouts, depending on the activity and size of the vessel.</p> <p>Mine countermeasure and neutralization activities with positive control will use two Lookouts, with one on each support vessel. If applicable, aircrew and divers will also report the presence of marine mammals or sea turtles. One Lookout may be used under certain circumstances specific in Section 5.3.1.2 (Lookouts).</p> | <p>Lookouts can visually detect marine species so that potentially harmful impacts to marine mammals and sea turtles from Navy sonar and explosives use can be avoided.</p> <p>Lookouts can more quickly and effectively relay sighting information so that corrective action can be taken. Support from aircrew and divers, if they are involved in the activity, will increase the probability of sightings, reducing the potential for impacts.</p> | <p>Annual report documenting the number of marine mammals and sea turtles sighted, including trend analysis after 3 years.</p> <p>Annual report documenting the number of incidents when a Navy activity was halted or delayed as a direct result of a marine mammal or sea turtle sighting.</p> | <p>All Lookouts will receive marine species awareness training and will be positioned on vessels, boats, and aircraft as described in Section 5.3.1.1.1 (Training for Navy Personnel and Civilian Equivalents).</p> | <p>Officer Conducting the Exercise or Test</p> | <p>Ongoing</p> |
| <p>Use of One Lookout</p> <p>Surface ships and aircraft conducting ASW, ASUW, or MIW activities using HFAS, non-hull-mounted mid-frequency active sonar, helicopter dipping mid-frequency active sonar, anti-swimmer grenades, explosive buoys, surface gunnery activities, surface missile activities, bombing activities, explosive torpedo testing², and activities using non-explosive practice munitions, will have one Lookout.</p> | <p>Lookouts can visually detect marine species so that potentially harmful impacts to marine mammals and sea turtles from Navy sonar, explosives, sonobuoys, gunnery rounds, missiles, explosive torpedoes, pile driving, towed systems, surface vessel propulsion, and non-explosive munitions can be avoided.</p> <p>Lookouts will quickly and effectively relay sighting information so that corrective action(s) can be taken.</p> | | | | |

Table 5.4-2: Mitigation Identification and Implementation (continued)

| Mitigation Measure | Benefit | Evaluation Criteria | Implementation | Responsible Command | Date Implemented |
|---|---|--|---|--|------------------|
| Mitigation Zones | | | | | |
| <p>Use of a Mitigation Zone</p> <p>A mitigation zone is an area defined by a radius and centered on the location of a sound source or activity. The size of each mitigation zone is specific to a particular training activity (e.g., sonar use or explosive use).</p> | <p>A mitigation zone defines the area in which Lookouts survey for marine mammals and sea turtles.</p> <p>Mitigation zones reduce the potential for injury to marine species.</p> | <p>For those activities where monitoring is required, record observations of marine mammals and sea turtles located outside of the mitigation zone and note any apparent reactions to on-going Navy activities. Observation of acute reactions may be used as an indicator that the radius of the mitigation zone needs to be increased.</p> | <p>Mitigation zones have been and will continue to be implemented as described in Section 5.3.2 (Mitigation Zone Procedural Measures). Lookouts are trained to conduct observations within mitigation zones of different sizes.</p> | <p>Officer Conducting the Exercise or Test</p> | <p>Ongoing</p> |

¹ Mine countermeasure and neutralization activities are not conducted in the Study Area and are not part of the Proposed Action. However, these activities are shown in the table for completeness

² Explosive torpedo testing is not conducted in the Study Area and is not part of the Proposed Action. However, this activity is shown in the table for completeness.

5.4.1 AREA AND ACTIVITY SPECIFIC MITIGATION MEASURES IN THE TMAA

In addition to the procedural mitigation measures explained earlier in this chapter, the following subsections present the area and activity specific measures that the Navy has agreed to implement while training in the TMAA.

Area: Habitats of Particular Concern/Activity: SINKEX

Navy has agreed not to conduct the SINKEX in Habitats of Particular Concern, which refer to the specifically delineated slope and seamount areas within the TMAA where certain fishing activities (e.g., trawling) have been prohibited. For details regarding these areas, see the 2011 GOA Final EIS/OEIS Appendix C and Chapter 3.6 (Fish) in that document.

Area: Portlock Bank/Activity: Use of explosives

Use of explosives during training will not occur in the Portlock Bank area. See Figure 5-2 for a depiction of the Portlock Bank area as defined by the 50 fathom isobath. This prohibition will prevent any training in the Portlock Bank involving use of improved extended echo ranging sonobuoys, explosive signal underwater sound buoys, gunnery exercises using explosive projectiles, and explosive bombing exercises.

Area: North Pacific Right Whale Cautionary Area/Activity: Use of surface ship hull-mounted mid-frequency sonar or explosives

Navy will not use surface ship hull-mounted mid-frequency sonar or explosives during training within the portion of the NMFS-identified North Pacific right whale feeding area overlapping the TMAA in the June to September timeframe. See Figure 5-3 for a depiction of the North Pacific Right Whale Cautionary Area. Navy reserves the right to use surface ship hull-mounted mid-frequency sonar or explosives in that area in the event national security needs require it and following approval in advance from Commander, U.S. Third Fleet.

5.5 MONITORING AND REPORTING

5.5.1 APPROACH TO MONITORING

The Navy is committed to demonstrating environmental stewardship while executing its National Defense Mission and complying with the suite of Federal environmental laws and regulations. As a complement to the Navy's commitment to avoiding and reducing impacts of the Proposed Action through mitigation, the Navy will undertake monitoring efforts to track compliance with take authorizations, help evaluate the effectiveness of implemented mitigation measures, and gain a better understanding of the effects of the Proposed Action on marine resources. Taken together, mitigation and monitoring comprise the Navy's integrated approach for reducing environmental impacts from the Proposed Action. The Navy's overall monitoring approach will seek to leverage and build on existing research efforts whenever possible.

Consistent with the cooperating agency agreement with NMFS, mitigation and monitoring measures presented in this EIS/OEIS focus on the requirements for protection and management of marine resources. A well-designed monitoring program can provide important feedback for validating assumptions made in analyses and allow for adaptive management of marine resources. Since monitoring will be required for compliance with the Letters of Authorization issued for the Proposed Action under the MMPA, details of the monitoring program will be developed in coordination with NMFS through the regulatory process. Discussions with resource agencies during the consultation and permitting processes may result in changes to the mitigation as described in this document. Such

changes will be reflected in the Records of Decision and consultation documents such as the ESA Biological Opinion.

5.5.1.1 Integrated Comprehensive Monitoring Program

The Integrated Comprehensive Monitoring Program is intended to coordinate monitoring efforts across all regions where the Navy trains and tests and to allocate the most appropriate level and type of effort for each range complex (U.S. Department of the Navy 2010). The current Navy monitoring program is composed of a collection of “range-specific” monitoring plans, each developed individually as part of MMPA and ESA compliance processes as environmental documentation was completed. These individual plans establish specific monitoring requirements for each range complex, training area, or activity and are collectively intended to address the Integrated Comprehensive Monitoring Program top-level goals.

A 2010 Navy-sponsored monitoring meeting in Arlington, Virginia, initiated a process to critically evaluate the current Navy monitoring plans and begin development of revisions and updates to both existing region-specific plans as well as the Integrated Comprehensive Monitoring Plan. Discussions at that meeting as well as the following Navy and NMFS annual adaptive management meeting established a way ahead for continued refinement of the Navy's monitoring program. This process included establishing a Scientific Advisory Group of leading marine mammal scientists with the initial task of developing recommendations that would serve as the basis for a Strategic Plan for Navy monitoring. The Strategic Plan is intended to be a primary component of the Integrated Comprehensive Monitoring Program, provide a “vision” for Navy monitoring across geographic regions—serving as guidance for determining how to most efficiently and effectively invest the marine species monitoring resources to address Integrated Comprehensive Monitoring Program top-level goals, and satisfy MMPA Letter of Authorization regulatory requirements.

The objective of the Strategic Plan is to continue the evolution of Navy marine species monitoring towards a single integrated program, incorporating Scientific Advisory Group recommendations, and establishing a more transparent framework for soliciting, evaluating, and implementing monitoring work across the range complexes and training areas. The Strategic Plan must consider a range of factors in addition to the scientific recommendations including logistic, operational, and funding considerations and will be revised regularly as part of the annual adaptive management process.

The Integrated Comprehensive Monitoring Plan establishes top-level goals that have been developed in coordination with NMFS (U.S. Department of the Navy 2010). The following top-level goals will become more specific with regard to identifying potential projects and monitoring field work through the Strategic Plan process as projects are evaluated and initiated in the Study Area.

- An increase in our understanding of the likely occurrence of marine mammals or ESA-listed marine species in the vicinity of the action (i.e., presence, abundance, distribution, and density of species);
- An increase in our understanding of the nature, scope, or context of the likely exposure of marine mammals and ESA-listed species to any of the potential stressor(s) associated with the action (e.g., tonal and impulsive sound), through better understanding of one or more of the following: (1) the action and the environment in which it occurs (e.g., sound source characterization, propagation, and ambient noise levels), (2) the affected species (e.g., life history or dive patterns), (3) the likely co-occurrence of marine mammals and ESA-listed marine species with the action (in whole or part) associated with specific adverse effects, or (4) the

likely biological or behavioral context of exposure to the stressor for the marine mammal and ESA-listed marine species (e.g., age class of exposed animals or known pupping, calving or feeding areas);

- An increase in our understanding of how individual marine mammals or ESA-listed marine species respond (behaviorally or physiologically) to the specific stressors associated with the action (in specific contexts, where possible, e.g., at what distance or received level);
- An increase in our understanding of how anticipated individual responses, to individual stressors or anticipated combinations of stressors, may impact either: (1) the long-term fitness and survival of an individual; or (2) the population, species, or stock (e.g., through impacts on annual rates of recruitment or survival);
- An increase in our understanding of the effectiveness of mitigation and monitoring measures;
- A better understanding and record of the manner in which the authorized entity complies with the Incidental Take Authorization and Incidental Take Statement;
- An increase in the probability of detecting marine mammals (through improved technology or methods), both specifically within the mitigation zone (thus allowing for more effective implementation of the mitigation) and in general, to better achieve the above goals; and
- A reduction in the adverse impact of activities to the least practicable level, as defined in the MMPA.

5.5.1.2 Scientific Advisory Group Recommendations

Navy established the Scientific Advisory Group in 2011 with the initial task of evaluating current Navy monitoring approaches under the Integrated Comprehensive Monitoring Plan and existing MMPA Letters of Authorization and developing objective scientific recommendations that would form the basis for the Strategic Plan. While recommendations were fairly broad and not prescriptive from a range complex perspective, the Scientific Advisory Group did provide specific programmatic recommendations that serve as guiding principles for the continued evolution of the Navy Marine Species Monitoring Program and provide a direction for the Strategic Plan to move this development. Key recommendations include:

- Working within a conceptual framework of knowledge, from basic information on the occurrence of species within each range complex, to more specific matters of exposure, response, and consequences.
- Facilitating collaboration among researchers in each region, with the intent to develop a coherent and synergistic regional monitoring and research effort.
- Striving to move away from a “box-checking” mentality. Monitoring studies should be designed and conducted according to scientific objectives, rather than on merely cataloging effort expended.
- Approach the monitoring program holistically and select projects that offer the best opportunity to advance understanding of the issues, as opposed to establishing range-specific requirements.

5.5.2 REPORTING

The Navy is committed to documenting and reporting relevant aspects of training activities to verify implementation of mitigation, comply with current permits, and improve future environmental assessments. Navy reporting initiatives are described below.

5.5.2.1 Exercise and Monitoring Reporting

The Navy will submit annual exercise and monitoring reports to the Office of Protected Resources at NMFS. The exercise report will describe the level of training conducted during the reporting period, if the North Pacific right whale cautionary area had been used for hull-mounted mid-frequency sonar or explosives, and the monitoring report will describe both the nature of the monitoring that has been conducted and the actual results of the monitoring. If during a given year, no Navy training or monitoring occurs, then NMFS will be informed with a memorandum stating that fact vice publication of a formal report. All of the details regarding the content of the annual reports will be coordinated with NMFS through the permitting process. All unclassified reports submitted to date can be found on the NMFS Office of Protected Resources webpage.

5.5.2.2 Additional Reporting Requirements

5.5.2.2.1 Marine Mammal or Sea Turtle

If there is evidence that a marine mammal or sea turtle may have been stranded, injured, or killed by the action, Navy training activities will be immediately suspended and the situation immediately reported by the participating unit to the Officer in Charge of the Exercise, who will follow Navy procedures for reporting the incident to Commander, Pacific Fleet, Commander, Navy Region Northwest, Environmental Director, and the chain-of-command. The situation will also be reported to NMFS.

Navy personnel shall ensure that NMFS is notified immediately (or as soon as clearance procedures allow) if an injured, stranded, or dead marine mammal is found during or shortly after, and in the vicinity of, any Navy training exercise utilizing mid-frequency active sonar, high-frequency active sonar, or underwater explosive detonations. The Navy will provide NMFS with the name of species or description of the animal(s), the condition of the animal(s) (including carcass condition if the animal is dead), location, time of first discovery, observed behaviors (if alive), and photo or video (if available). In the event that an injured, stranded, or dead marine mammal is found by the Navy that is not in the vicinity of, or during or shortly after, mid-frequency active sonar, high-frequency active sonar, or underwater explosive detonations, the Navy will report the same information as listed above as soon as operationally feasible and clearance procedures allow.

General Notification of Ship Strike

In the event of a ship strike by any Navy vessel, at any time or place, the Navy shall do the following:

- Immediately report to NMFS the species identification (if known), location (lat/long) of the animal (or the strike if the animal has disappeared), and whether the animal is alive or dead (or unknown).
- Report to NMFS as soon as operationally feasible the size and length of animal, an estimate of the injury status (e.g., dead, injured but alive, injured and moving, unknown, etc.), vessel class/type and operational status.
- Report to NMFS the vessel length, speed, and heading as soon as feasible.
- Provide NMFS a photo or video, if equipment is available.

5.5.2.3 Stranding Response Plan

In consultation with NMFS, there will be a NMFS-Navy stranding response plan applicable to periods in which Navy training events occur within the TMAA. All of the details regarding the content of the stranding response plan will be coordinated with NMFS through the permitting process.

5.5.2.4 Bird Strikes

The Navy will report all damaging and non-damaging bird strikes to the Naval Safety Center through the chain of command.

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