



Letter of Authorization

Hawaii-California Training and Testing Study Area

Coast Guard Training

Commandant (CG-7), Assistant Commandant for Capability, U.S. Coast Guard, 2703 Martin Luther King Jr Ave SE, Stop 7324, Washington DC 20593-7324, and persons operating under their authority (*i.e.*, U.S. Coast Guard (Coast Guard)), are authorized to take marine mammals incidental to Coast Guard training activities conducted in the Hawaii-California Training and Testing (HCTT) Study Area, subject to the provisions of the Marine Mammal Protection Act (16 U.S.C. 1361 *et seq.*; MMPA) of 1972, as amended, and the applicable regulations (see 50 CFR §§ 218.80 – 218.89 (“the regulations”)), provided they are in compliance with all terms, conditions, and requirements described herein.

A copy of this Letter of Authorization (LOA) or a document containing the equivalent requirements specified in this Authorization and the regulations, must be in the possession of the holder of this LOA, or his/her designee in order to take marine mammals under the authority of this LOA while conducting the specified activities.

1. Effective Dates

This LOA is effective for the period of December 21, 2025, through December 20, 2032.

2. Geographic Region

The geographic region is the HCTT Study Area (Figure 1). The HCTT Study Area includes areas in the north-central Pacific Ocean, from California west to Hawaii and the International Date Line, and including the Hawaii Range Complex (HRC) and Temporary Operating Area (TOA), Southern California (SOCAL) Range Complex, Point Mugu Sea Range (PMSR), Silver Strand Training Complex, areas along the Southern California coastline from approximately Dana Point to Port Hueneme, and the Northern California (NOCAL) Range Complex. Also included in the HCTT Study Area are Navy pierside locations in Hawaii and Southern California, Pearl Harbor, San Diego Bay, and the transit corridor on the high seas where training and testing may occur.

3. Specified Activities

This Authorization is valid for the training activities identified in Table 1-9 of the September 16, 2024 HCTT Training and Testing LOA application that include sonar and other transducers, explosives, and vessel use in the HCTT Study Area. These activities fall under the following warfare areas:

- (a) Expeditionary warfare;
- (b) Mine warfare;
- (c) Surface warfare;



- (d) Unmanned systems;
- (e) Vessel movement.

4. Permissible Methods of Taking

Coast Guard may incidentally, but not intentionally, take marine mammals within the geographic region in the course of conducting the specified activities described above and in 50 CFR § 218.70(c), provided Coast Guard is in complete compliance with all terms, conditions, and requirements described herein. The incidental take of marine mammals is limited to the species and stocks listed in this condition (see below) by the indicated method of take and number of takes.

- (a) Incidental take by Level A and Level B harassment from training activities is limited to the species and stocks, indicated method, and number of takes shown in Table 1.

Table 1. Authorized Incidental Take by Level A and Level B Harassment, by Species and Stock, from All Training Activities.

Species	Stock	Maximum annual Level B harassment	Maximum annual Level A harassment	7-year total Level B harassment	7-year total Level A harassment
Gray Whale	Eastern North Pacific	16	0	103	0
Gray Whale	Western North Pacific	1	0	2	0
Blue Whale	Central North Pacific	1	0	1	0
Blue Whale	Eastern North Pacific	19	0	125	0
Bryde's Whale	Eastern Tropical Pacific	1	0	5	0
Bryde's Whale	Hawaii	2	0	13	0
Fin Whale	Hawaii	2	0	8	0
Fin Whale	CA/OR/WA	62	0	432	0
Humpback Whale	Central America/Southern Mexico - CA/OR/WA	7	0	45	0
Humpback Whale	Mainland Mexico - CA/OR/WA	15	0	97	0
Humpback Whale	Hawaii	7	0	46	0
Minke Whale	Hawaii	2	0	14	0
Minke Whale	CA/OR/WA	7	0	48	0
Sei Whale	Hawaii	1	0	4	0
Sei Whale	Eastern North Pacific	1	0	4	0
Sperm Whale	Hawaii	7	0	45	0
Sperm Whale	CA/OR/WA	28	0	196	0

Dwarf Sperm Whale	Hawaii	386	3	2,695	13
Dwarf Sperm Whale	CA/OR/WA	52	1	345	1
Pygmy Sperm Whale	Hawaii	354	1	2,469	1
Pygmy Sperm Whale	CA/OR/WA	50	0	333	0
Baird's Beaked Whale	CA/OR/WA	54	0	378	0
Blainville's Beaked Whale	Hawaii	25	0	170	0
Goose-Beaked Whale	Hawaii	143	0	1,001	0
Goose-Beaked Whale	CA/OR/WA	653	0	4,569	0
Longman's Beaked Whale	Hawaii	145	0	1,013	0
Mesoplodont Beaked Whale	CA/OR/WA	416	0	2,902	0
False Killer Whale	Main Hawaiian Islands Insular	4	0	27	0
False Killer Whale	Northwest Hawaiian Islands	2	0	9	0
False Killer Whale	Hawaii Pelagic	12	0	83	0
False Killer Whale	Baja California Peninsula Mexico	17	1	110	1
Killer Whale	Hawaii	2	0	10	0
Killer Whale	Eastern North Pacific Offshore	1	0	7	0
Killer Whale	West Coast Transient	1	0	5	0
Melon-Headed Whale	Hawaiian Islands	224	0	1,559	0
Pygmy Killer Whale	Hawaii	56	0	390	0
Pygmy Killer Whale	California - Baja California Peninsula Mexico	3	0	18	0
Short-Finned Pilot Whale	Hawaii	83	0	578	0
Short-Finned Pilot Whale	CA/OR/WA	10	0	69	0
Bottlenose Dolphin	Hawaii Pelagic	33	0	226	0
Bottlenose Dolphin	California Coastal	2	0	12	0

Bottlenose Dolphin	CA/OR/WA Offshore	121	0	830	0
Fraser's Dolphin	Hawaii	18	0	114	0
Long-Beaked Common Dolphin	California	927	0	6,475	0
Northern Right Whale Dolphin	CA/OR/WA	251	0	1,754	0
Pacific White-Sided Dolphin	CA/OR/WA	247	0	1,729	0
Pantropical Spotted Dolphin	Hawaii Island	24	0	164	0
Pantropical Spotted Dolphin	Hawaii Pelagic	227	0	1,580	0
Pantropical Spotted Dolphin	O'ahu	1	0	7	0
Pantropical Spotted Dolphin	Baja California Peninsula Mexico	491	0	3,429	0
Risso's Dolphin	Hawaii	35	0	240	0
Risso's Dolphin	CA/OR/WA	188	0	1,309	0
Rough-Toothed Dolphin	Hawaii	406	0	2,838	0
Short-Beaked Common Dolphin	CA/OR/WA	9,658	1	67,598	2
Spinner Dolphin	Hawaii Pelagic	24	0	165	0
Striped Dolphin	Hawaii Pelagic	249	0	1,738	0
Striped Dolphin	CA/OR/WA	776	0	5,420	0
Dall's Porpoise	CA/OR/WA	412	1	2,867	3
Harbor Porpoise	San Francisco/Russian River	2	0	11	0
California Sea Lion	U.S.	14,937	0	104,545	0
Guadalupe Fur Seal	Mexico	3,857	0	26,989	0
Northern Fur Seal	Eastern Pacific	634	0	4,426	0
Northern Fur Seal	California	555	0	3,885	0
Steller Sea Lion	Eastern	4	0	22	0
Harbor Seal	California	141	0	977	0
Hawaiian Monk Seal	Hawaii	1	0	5	0
Northern Elephant Seal	California Breeding	1,795	1	12,549	1

- (b) Incidental take by serious injury or mortality from vessel strike is limited to a total of two large whales over the total 7-year period during Coast Guard training activities from the species listed in Table 2. Of the two total takes, no more than one whale can be taken by vessel strike from each species and stock, as indicated in Table 2.

Table 2. Authorized Serious Injury or Mortality, by Species and Stock, from Vessel Strike Incidental to Training Activities.

Species	Stock	Annual Authorized Serious Injury or Mortality	7-year Authorized Serious Injury or Mortality (no more than two large whales over the 7-year period during Coast Guard training activities)
Blue Whale	Eastern North Pacific	0.14	1
Fin whale	CA/OR/WA	0.14	1
Humpback whale	Mainland Mexico – CA/OR/WA	0.14	1
Humpback whale	Central America/Southern Mexico – CA/OR/WA	0.14	1
Gray whale	Eastern North Pacific	0.14	1
Sei whale	Eastern North Pacific	0.14	1
Humpback whale	Hawaii	0.14	1

5. Prohibitions

Except for incidental take described under section 4 (Permissible Methods of Taking), it is unlawful for any person to do the following in connection with the activities described herein:

- (a) Violate, or fail to comply with, the terms, conditions, and requirements of this LOA or the regulations;
- (b) Take any marine mammal not specified in Table 1 or Table 2;
- (c) Take any marine mammal specified in Table 1 or Table 2 in any manner other than as specified in section 4 (Permissible Methods of Taking) or number greater than those specified in Table 1 or Table 2; or
- (d) Take a marine mammal specified in Table 1 or Table 2 after NMFS determines such taking results in more than a negligible impact on the species or stock.

6. Mitigation Requirements

When conducting the specified activities in the geographic region, Coast Guard must implement the following mitigation measures:

- (a) Environmental awareness and education

Coast Guard personnel (including civilian personnel) involved in mitigation and training

activity reporting under the specified activities will complete one or more modules of the U.S. Navy Afloat Environmental Compliance Training Series, or Coast Guard equivalent. Modules include: Introduction to the U.S. Navy Afloat Environmental Compliance Training Series, Marine Species Awareness Training; U.S. Navy Protective Measures Assessment Protocol; and U.S. Navy Sonar Positional Reporting System and Marine Mammal Incident Reporting.

(b) Activity-Based Mitigation

Activity-based mitigation is mitigation that the Coast Guard must implement whenever and wherever an applicable military readiness activity takes place within the HCTT Study Area.

i. Activity-Based Mitigation for Active Acoustic Stressors

Table 3 through Table 5 describe required activity-based mitigation for acoustic stressors. This mitigation does not apply to:

- Sources not operated under positive control (*e.g.*, moored oceanographic sources);
- Sources used for safety of navigation (*e.g.*, fathometers);
- Sources used, deployed, or towed by unmanned platforms except when escort vessels are already participating in the event and have positive control over the source;
- De minimis sources (*e.g.*, those >200 kHz);
- Unattended sources, including those used for acoustic and oceanographic research; and
- Vessel-based, unmanned vehicle-based, or towed in-water sources when marine mammals (*e.g.*, dolphins) are determined to be intentionally swimming at the bow or alongside or directly behind the vessel, vehicle, or device (*e.g.*, to bow-ride or wake-ride).

Table 3. Mitigation for Active Acoustic Sources with Powerdown and Shutdown Capabilities

Stressor	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Low-frequency active sonar ≥ 200 dB ● Mid-frequency active sonar sources that are hull mounted on a surface ship (including surfaced submarines) ● Broadband and other active acoustic sources >200 dB
Mitigation Zones and Requirements	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Within 1,000 yd (914.4 m) from a marine mammal, Coast Guard personnel must power down active acoustic sources by 6 decibels (dB) total. ● Within 500 yd (457.2 m) from a marine mammal, Coast Guard personnel must power down active acoustic sources by 10 dB total. ● Within 200 yd (182.9 m) from a marine mammal, Coast Guard personnel must shut down active acoustic sources.
Lookout Requirements	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● One Lookout in or on one of the following: aircraft; pierside, moored, or anchored vessel; underway vessel with space/crew restrictions (including small boats); or underway vessel already participating in the event that is escorting (and has positive control over sources used, deployed, or towed by) an unmanned platform.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Two Lookouts on an underway vessel without space or crew restrictions. • Lookouts must use information from passive acoustic detections to inform visual observations when passive acoustic devices are already being used in the event.
Mitigation Zone Observation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Coast Guard personnel must observe the applicable mitigation zone for marine mammals and floating vegetation immediately prior to the initial start of using active acoustic sources (e.g., while maneuvering on station). • Coast Guard personnel must observe the applicable mitigation zone for marine mammals during use of active acoustic sources.
Commencement/Recommencement Conditions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Coast Guard personnel must ensure one of the commencement or recommencement conditions in measure 6(b)(v) of this LOA is met prior to the initial start of the activity (by delaying the start) or during the activity (by not recommencing or powering up active sonar transmission). • The wait period for this activity is 30 minutes for activities conducted from vessels and for activities conducted by aircraft that are not fuel constrained and 10 minutes for activities involving aircraft that are fuel constrained (e.g., rotary-wing aircraft).

Table 4. Mitigation for Active Acoustic Sources with Shutdown (but not power down) Capabilities.

Stressor	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Low-frequency active sonar <200 dB • Mid-frequency active sonar sources that are not hull mounted on a surface ship (e.g., dipping sonar, towed arrays) • High-frequency active sonar • Air guns • Broadband and other active acoustic sources <200 dB
Mitigation Zones and Requirements	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • At 200 yd (182.9 m) from a marine mammal, Coast Guard personnel must shut down active acoustic sources.
Lookout Requirements	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • One Lookout in or on one of the following: aircraft; pierside, moored, or anchored vessel; underway vessel with space/crew restrictions (including small boats); or underway vessel already participating in the event that is escorting (and has positive control over sources used, deployed, or towed by) an unmanned platform. • Two Lookouts on an underway vessel without space or crew restrictions. • Lookouts must use information from passive acoustic detections to inform visual observations when passive acoustic devices are already being used in the event.
Mitigation Zone Observation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Coast Guard personnel must observe the applicable mitigation zone for marine mammals and floating vegetation immediately prior to the initial start of using active acoustic sources (e.g., while maneuvering on station). • Coast Guard personnel must observe the applicable mitigation zone for marine mammals during use of active acoustic sources.

Commencement/ Recommencement Conditions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Coast Guard personnel must ensure one of the commencement or recommencement conditions in measure 6(b)(v) of this LOA is met prior to the initial start of the activity (by delaying the start) or during the activity (by not recommencing or powering up active sonar transmission). ● The wait period for this activity is 30 minutes for activities conducted from vessels and for activities conducted by aircraft that are not fuel constrained and 10 minutes for activities involving aircraft that are fuel constrained (e.g., rotary-wing aircraft).
---	---

Table 5. Mitigation for Weapons Firing Noise.

Stressor	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Explosive and non-explosive large-caliber gunnery firing noise (surface-to-surface and surface-to-air)
Mitigation Zones and Requirements	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Coast Guard personnel must cease weapons firing if a marine mammal is sighted within 30 degrees on either side of the firing line out to 70 yd (64 m) from the gun muzzle (cease fire).
Lookout Requirements	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● One Lookout on a vessel.
Mitigation Zone Observation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Coast Guard personnel must observe the mitigation zone for marine mammals and floating vegetation immediately prior to the initial start of large-caliber gun firing (e.g., during target deployment). ● Coast Guard personnel must observe the mitigation zone for marine mammals during large-caliber gun firing.
Commencement/ Recommencement Conditions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Coast Guard personnel must ensure one of the commencement or recommencement conditions in measure 6(b)(v) of this LOA is met prior to the initial start of the activity (by delaying the start) or during the activity (by not recommencing explosive and non-explosive large-caliber gunnery firing noise (surface-to-surface and surface-to-air)). The wait period for this activity is 30 minutes.

ii. Activity-Based Mitigation for Explosive Stressors

Table 6 describes required activity-based mitigation for explosive stressors. This mitigation does not apply to explosives:

- Deployed by aircraft operating at high altitudes;
- Deployed against aerial targets;
- During vessel-launched missile or rocket events;
- Used at or below the *de minimis* threshold (≤ 0.1 lb (0.05 kg) net explosive weight (NEW)); and
- Deployed by unmanned platforms except when escort vessels are already participating in the event and have positive control over the explosive.

Table 6. Mitigation for Explosive Gunnery.

Activity or Stressor	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Air-to-surface medium-caliber, surface-to-surface medium-caliber, surface-to-surface large-caliber ordnance
-------------------------	---

Mitigation Zones and Requirements	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Coast Guard personnel must cease air-to-surface medium-caliber use if a marine mammal is sighted within 200 yd (182.9 m) of the intended impact location. • Coast Guard personnel must cease surface-to-surface medium-caliber use if a marine mammal is sighted within 600 yd (548.6 m) of the intended impact location. • Coast Guard personnel must cease surface-to-surface large-caliber use if a marine mammal is sighted within 1,000 yd (914.4 m) of the intended impact location.
Lookout Requirements	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • One Lookout on a vessel or in an aircraft.
Mitigation Zone Observation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Coast Guard personnel must observe the applicable mitigation zone for marine mammals and floating vegetation immediately prior to the initial start of gun firing (e.g., while maneuvering on station). • Coast Guard personnel must observe the applicable mitigation zone for marine mammals during gunnery fire. • If a marine mammal is visibly injured or killed as a result of detonation, use of explosives in the event shall be suspended immediately and established incident reporting procedures shall be followed. • After the event, when practical, Coast Guard personnel must observe the detonation vicinity for injured or dead marine mammals. If any injured or dead marine mammals are observed, Coast Guard personnel must follow established incident reporting procedures.
Commencement/Recommencement Conditions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Coast Guard personnel must ensure one of the commencement or recommencement conditions in measure 6(b)(v) of this LOA is met prior to the initial start of the activity (by delaying the start) or during the activity (by not recommencing air-to-surface medium-caliber, surface-to-surface medium-caliber, surface-to-surface large-caliber explosive gunnery). The wait period for this activity is 30 minutes for activities conducted from vessels and for activities conducted by aircraft that are not fuel constrained and 10 minutes for activities involving aircraft that are fuel constrained (e.g., rotary-wing aircraft).

iii. Activity-Based Mitigation for Non-Explosive Ordnance

Table 7 describes required activity-based mitigation for non-explosive ordnance. This mitigation does not apply to non-explosive ordnance deployed:

- By aircraft operating at high altitudes;
- Against aerial targets and land-based targets;
- During vessel-launched missile or rocket events; and
- By unmanned platforms except when escort vessels are already participating in the event and have positive control over ordnance deployment.

Table 7. Mitigation for Non-Explosive Gunnery.

Activity or Stressor	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Non-explosive surface-to-surface large-caliber ordnance, non-explosive surface-to-surface and air-to-surface medium-caliber ordnance, non-explosive surface-to-surface and air-to-surface small-caliber ordnance
Mitigation Zones and Requirements	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Coast Guard personnel must cease non-explosive surface-to-surface large-caliber ordnance, non-explosive surface-to-surface and air-to-surface medium-caliber ordnance, and non-explosive surface-to-surface and air-to-surface small-caliber ordnance use if a marine mammal is sighted within 200 yd (182.9 m) of the intended impact location (cease fire).
Lookout Requirements	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • One Lookout on a vessel or in an aircraft.
Mitigation Zone Observation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Coast Guard personnel must observe the mitigation zone for marine mammals and floating vegetation immediately prior to the start of gun firing (e.g., while maneuvering on station). • Coast Guard personnel must observe the mitigation zone for marine mammals during gunnery firing.
Commencement/Recommencement Conditions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Coast Guard personnel must ensure one of the commencement or recommencement conditions in measure 6(b)(v) of this LOA is met prior to the initial start of the activity (by delaying the start) or during the activity (by not recommencing use of non-explosive surface-to-surface large-caliber ordnance, non-explosive surface-to-surface and air-to-surface medium-caliber ordnance, and non-explosive surface-to-surface and air-to-surface small-caliber ordnance). The wait period for this activity is 30 minutes for activities conducted from vessels and for activities conducted by aircraft that are not fuel constrained and 10 minutes for activities involving aircraft that are fuel constrained (e.g., rotary-wing aircraft).

iv. Activity-Based Mitigation for Physical Disturbance and Strike Stressors

Table 8 through Table 10 describe required activity-based mitigation for physical disturbance and strike stressors. Activity-based mitigation for physical disturbance and strike stressors will not be implemented:

- By unmanned vehicles except when escort vessels are already participating in the event and have positive control over the unmanned vehicle movements;
- When marine mammals (e.g., dolphins) are determined to be intentionally swimming at the bow, alongside the vessel or vehicle, or directly behind the vessel or vehicle (e.g., to bow-ride or wake-ride);
- When pinnipeds are hauled out on man-made navigational structures, port structures, and vessels; and
- When impractical based on mission requirements (e.g., during certain aspects of amphibious exercises).

Table 8. Mitigation for Manned Surface Vessels.

Activity or Stressor	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Manned surface vessels, including surfaced submarines
Mitigation Zones and Requirements	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Underway manned surface vessels must maneuver themselves (which may include reducing speed) to maintain the following distances as mission and circumstances allow: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ 500 yd (457.2 m) from whales. ○ 200 yd (182.9 m) from other marine mammals.
Lookout Requirements	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● One or more Lookouts on manned underway surface vessels in accordance with the most recent navigation safety instruction.
Mitigation Zone Observation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Coast Guard personnel must observe the mitigation zone for marine mammals immediately prior to manned surface vessels getting underway and while underway.

Table 9. Mitigation for Unmanned Vehicles.

Activity or Stressor	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Unmanned Surface Vehicles and Unmanned Underwater Vehicles already being escorted (and operated under positive control) by a manned surface support vessel
Mitigation Zones and Requirements	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● A surface support vessel that is already participating in the event, and has positive control over the unmanned vehicle, must maneuver the unmanned vehicle (which may include reducing its speed) to ensure it maintains the following distances as mission and circumstances allow: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ 500 yd (457.2 m) from whales. ○ 200 yd (182.9 m) from other marine mammals.
Lookout Requirements	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● One Lookout on a surface support vessel that is already participating in the event, and has positive control over the unmanned vehicle.
Mitigation Zone Observation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Coast Guard personnel must observe the mitigation zone for marine mammals immediately prior to unmanned vehicles getting underway and while underway.

Table 10. Mitigation for Towed In-water Devices.

Activity or Stressor	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● In-water devices towed by an aircraft, a manned surface vessel, or an Unmanned Surface Vehicle or Unmanned Underwater Vehicle already being escorted (and operated under positive control) by a manned surface vessel
Mitigation Zones and Requirements	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Manned towing platforms, or surface support vessels already participating in the event that have positive control over an unmanned vehicle that is towing an in-water device, must maneuver itself or the unmanned vehicle (which may include reducing speed) to ensure towed in-water devices maintain the following distances as mission and circumstances allow: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ 250 yd (228.6 m) from marine mammals.
Lookout Requirements	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● One Lookout on the manned towing vessel or aircraft, or on a surface support vessel that is already participating in the event and has positive control over an unmanned vehicle that is towing an in-water device.

Mitigation Zone Observation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Coast Guard personnel must observe the mitigation zone for marine mammals immediately prior to and while in-water devices are being towed.
-----------------------------	--

v. Commencement or Recommencement Conditions

Coast Guard must not commence or recommence an activity after a marine mammal is observed within a relevant mitigation zone until one of the following conditions has been met:

- A Lookout observes the animal exiting the mitigation zone;
- A Lookout concludes that the animal has exited the mitigation zone based on its observed course, speed, and movement relative to the mitigation zone;
- A Lookout affirms the mitigation zone has been clear from additional sightings for the activity-specific wait period; or
- For mobile events, the stressor has transited a distance equal to double the mitigation zone size beyond the location of the last sighting.

(c) Geographic Mitigation Areas

Geographic mitigation is mitigation that the Coast Guard must implement whenever an applicable military readiness activity takes place within the designated areas in Figure 2 and Figure 3. The San Nicolas Island Pinniped Haulout Mitigation Area, Northern California Large Whale Mitigation Area, Central California Large Whale Mitigation Area, and Hawaii Humpback Whale Special Reporting Mitigation Area in Figure 2 and Figure 3 do not include restrictions applicable to Coast Guard training activities:

Should national security require the Coast Guard to exceed a requirement(s) in measure (6)(c)(i) through measure (6)(c)(x), Coast Guard personnel must provide NMFS with advance notification and include the information (*e.g.*, sonar hours, explosives usage, or restricted area use) in its annual activity reports submitted to NMFS.

i. Hawaii Island Marine Mammal Mitigation Area

- A. The Coast Guard must not detonate in-water explosives (including underwater explosives and explosives deployed against surface targets) within the mitigation area.

ii. Hawaii 4-Islands Marine Mammal Mitigation Area

- A. The Coast Guard must not detonate in-water explosives (including underwater explosives and explosives deployed against surface targets) within the mitigation area (year-round).

iii. Hawaii Humpback Whale Awareness Notification Mitigation Area

- A. The Coast Guard must broadcast awareness messages to alert applicable assets (and their Lookouts) transiting and training in the Hawaii Range Complex to the possible presence of concentrations of humpback whales from November 1 through May 31.
 - B. Lookouts must use that knowledge to help inform their visual observations during military readiness activities that involve vessel movements, active sonar, in-water explosives (including underwater explosives and explosives deployed against surface targets), or the deployment of non-explosive ordnance against surface targets in the mitigation area.
- iv. Southern California Blue Whale Mitigation Area
- A. From June 1-October 31, the Coast Guard must not detonate in-water explosives (including underwater explosives and explosives deployed against surface targets) during large-caliber gunnery training.
- v. California large Whale Awareness Messages
- A. The Coast Guard must broadcast awareness messages to alert applicable assets (and their Lookouts) transiting and training off the U.S. West Coast to the possible presence of concentrations of large whales, including gray whales (November-June), fin whales (November-May), and mixed concentrations of blue, humpback, and fin whales that may occur based on predicted oceanographic conditions for a given year (*e.g.*, May-November, April-November).
- vi. California Large Whale Real-Time Notification Mitigation Area
- A. For each instance an aggregation of large whales (three or more whales within 1 nmi (1.9 km)) is sighted in the area between 32-33 degrees North and 117.2-119.5 degrees West, Coast Guard surface vessels must report the sightings to other U.S. Navy and Coast Guard vessels in the vicinity. Reported sightings will be made as soon as operationally and safely feasible.

(d) Cetacean live stranding

In the event of a cetacean live stranding (or near-shore atypical milling) event within the HCTT Study Area or within 50 km (27 nmi) of the boundary of the HCTT Study Area, where the NMFS Stranding Network is engaged in herding or other interventions to return animals to the water, NMFS Office of Protected Resources will advise the Coast Guard of the need to implement shutdown procedures for all active acoustic sources or explosive devices within 50 km of the stranding. Following this initial shutdown, NMFS will communicate with the Coast Guard to determine whether circumstances support modification of the shutdown zone. The Coast Guard may decline to implement all or part of the shutdown if the holder of the LOA, or his/her designee, determines that it is necessary for national security.

Shutdown procedures for live stranding or milling cetaceans include the following:

- i. If at any time, the marine mammal(s) die or are euthanized, or if herding/intervention efforts are stopped, NMFS will immediately advise that the shutdown around the animals' location is no longer needed;
- ii. Otherwise, shutdown procedures will remain in effect until NMFS determines and advises that all live animals involved have left the area (either of their own volition or following an intervention); and
- iii. If further observations of the marine mammals indicate the potential for re-stranding, additional coordination will be required to determine what measures are necessary to minimize that likelihood (*e.g.*, extending the shutdown or moving operations farther away) and to implement those measures as appropriate.

7. Monitoring and Reporting

When conducting the specified activities, Coast Guard must implement the following monitoring and reporting requirements.

All reports must be submitted to the Director, Office of Protected Resources, National Marine Fisheries Service, 1315 East-West Highway, Silver Spring MD 20910 via email to PR.ITP.MonitoringReports@noaa.gov and ITP.davis@noaa.gov.

(a) Notification of Take

If the Coast Guard reasonably believes that the specified activities resulted in the mortality or serious injury of any marine mammals, or in any Level A harassment or Level B harassment of marine mammals not identified Table 1, then Coast Guard shall notify NMFS immediately or as soon as operational security considerations allow.

(b) Monitoring and reporting under the LOAs

The Coast Guard must conduct all monitoring and reporting required under the LOAs, including abiding by the HCTT Study Area monitoring program. Details on program goals, objectives, project selection process, and current projects are available at www.navy-marinespeciesmonitoring.us.

(c) Notification of injured, live stranded, or dead marine mammals

The Coast Guard must abide by the Notification and Reporting Plan, attached, which sets out notification, reporting, and other requirements when dead, injured, or live stranded marine mammals are detected.

(d) Changes in Lookout Policies

The Coast Guard must report changes in its policies regarding the number of required Lookouts to NMFS as soon as practicable after a change is made.

(e) Annual HCTT Study Area marine species monitoring report

The Navy, on behalf of all the HCTT Action Proponents (Navy, U.S. Coast Guard, and U.S. Army, as defined in 50 CFR §§ 218.70) will submit an annual HCTT Study Area marine species monitoring report describing the implementation and results from the previous calendar year. Data collection methods will be standardized across range complexes and the HCTT Study Area to allow for comparison in different geographic locations. The draft report must be submitted to the Director, Office of Protected Resources, NMFS, annually. NMFS will submit comments or questions on the report, if any, within 3 months of receipt. The report will be considered final after the Action Proponents have addressed NMFS' comments, or 3 months after submittal of the draft if NMFS does not provide comments on the draft report. The report must describe progress of knowledge made with respect to intermediate scientific objectives within the HCTT Study Area associated with the Integrated Comprehensive Monitoring Program (ICMP). Similar study questions must be treated together so that progress on each topic can be summarized across all Navy ranges. The report need not include analyses and content that do not provide direct assessment of cumulative progress on the monitoring plan study questions.

(f) Quick look reports

In the event that the sound levels analyzed in promulgation of the regulations were exceeded within a given reporting year, the Coast Guard must submit a preliminary report detailing the exceedance within 21 days after the anniversary date of issuance of this LOA.

(g) Annual HCTT Training Report

Regardless of whether analyzed sound levels were exceeded, the Coast Guard must submit a detailed report (HCTT Annual Training Exercise Report) to the Director, Office of Protected Resources, NMFS annually within 3 months of the one-year anniversary of the date of the issuance of the LOA. NMFS will submit comments or questions on the report, if any, within 1 month of receipt. The report will be considered final after the Coast Guard has addressed NMFS' comments, or 1 month after submittal of the drafts if NMFS does not provide comments on the draft report. The annual report must contain a summary of all sound sources used (total hours or quantity (per the LOAs) of each bin of sonar or other non-impulsive source; total annual number of each type of explosive exercises; and total annual expended/detonated rounds (missiles, bombs, sonobuoys, *etc.*) for each explosive bin). The annual report must also contain cumulative sonar and explosive use quantity from previous years' reports through the current year. Additionally, if there were any changes to the sound source amount analyzed in the reporting year, or cumulatively, the report would include a discussion of why the change was made and include analysis to support how the change did or did not affect the analysis in the 2025 HCTT EIS/OEIS and MMPA final rule. The annual report must also include the details regarding specific requirements associated with the mitigation areas listed in measure (7)(g)(iv) of this LOA. The analysis in the detailed report must be based on the accumulation of data from the current year's report and data collected from previous annual reports. The final annual/close-out report at the conclusion of the authorization period (year 7) will also serve as the comprehensive close-out report and provide the annual totals for each sound source bin with a comparison to the annual amount analyzed and the 7-year total for each sound source bin with a comparison to the 7-year amount analyzed. The HCTT Annual Training Report must include the specific information described herein.

i. Summary of sources used

This section of the report must include the following information summarized from the analyzed sound sources used in all training events:

- A. Total annual hours or quantity of each bin of sonar; and
- B. Total annual expended/detonated ordnance (projectiles) for each explosive bin.

ii. Special reporting for geographic mitigation areas

This section of the report must contain the following information for activities conducted in geographic mitigation areas in the HCTT Study Area:

A. California Large Whale Real-Time Notification Mitigation Area

The Coast Guard must report the date, time and general location of the whales when an aggregation is first sighted and the total number of whales in the aggregation. If the whales are identified by species, the Coast Guard must report that information as well.

B. National security requirement

If Coast Guard evokes the national security requirement described in measure (6)(c) of this LOA, Coast Guard personnel must include information about the event in its Annual HCTT Training Report.

(h) Communication plan

The Coast Guard and NMFS shall develop a communication plan that will include all of the communication protocols (phone trees, etc.) and associated contact information required for NMFS and the Coast Guard to carry out the necessary expeditious communication required in the event of a stranding or vessel strike.

8. Modifications to Letter of Authorization

(a) This LOA shall be modified, upon request by Coast Guard, provided that:

- i. The specified activities and mitigation, monitoring, and reporting measures, as well as the anticipated impacts, are the same as those described and analyzed for the regulations (excluding changes made pursuant to the adaptive management provision in measure (8)(c)), and
- ii. NMFS determines that the mitigation, monitoring, and reporting measures required by the previous LOA were implemented.

(b) For LOA modification requests by Coast Guard that include changes to the activity or the mitigation, monitoring, or reporting measures (excluding changes made pursuant to the

adaptive management provision in measure (8)(c)) that do not change the findings made for the regulations or result in no more than a minor change in the total estimated number of takes (or distribution by species or years), NMFS may publish a notice of proposed modified LOA in the *Federal Register*, including the associated analysis of the change, and solicit public comment before issuing the LOA.

(c) Adaptive management

After consulting with the Coast Guard regarding the practicability of the modifications, NMFS may modify (including adding or removing measures) the existing mitigation, monitoring, or reporting measures if doing so creates a reasonable likelihood of more effectively accomplishing the goals of the mitigation and monitoring.

- i. Possible sources of data that could contribute to the decision to modify the mitigation, monitoring, or reporting measures in an LOA include:
 - A. Results from the Coast Guard's monitoring from the previous year(s);
 - B. Results from other marine mammal and/or sound research or studies; or
 - C. Any information that reveals marine mammals may have been taken in a manner, extent, or number not authorized by the regulations and this LOA.
- ii. If, through adaptive management, the modifications to the mitigation, monitoring, or reporting measures are substantial, NMFS will publish a notice of planned LOA in the *Federal Register* and solicit public comment.

(d) Emergencies

If NMFS determines that an emergency exists that poses a significant risk to the well-being of the species or stocks of marine mammals specified in section 4 (Permissible Methods of Taking), an LOA may be modified without prior notification or opportunity for public comment. Notification would be published in the *Federal Register* within 30 days of the action.

Kimberly Damon-Randall,
Director, Office of Protected Resources,
National Marine Fisheries Service

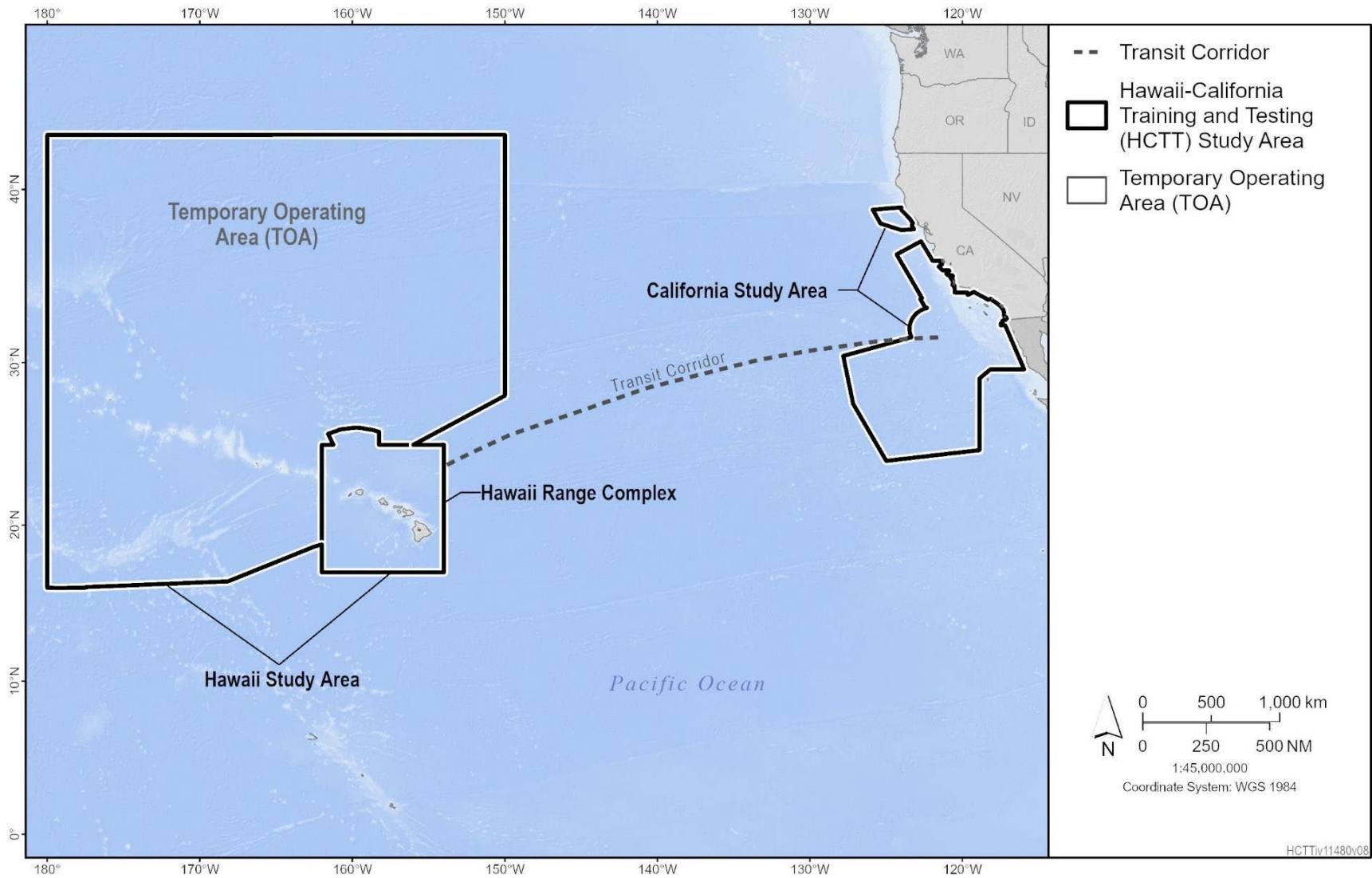


Figure 1. HCTT Study Area.

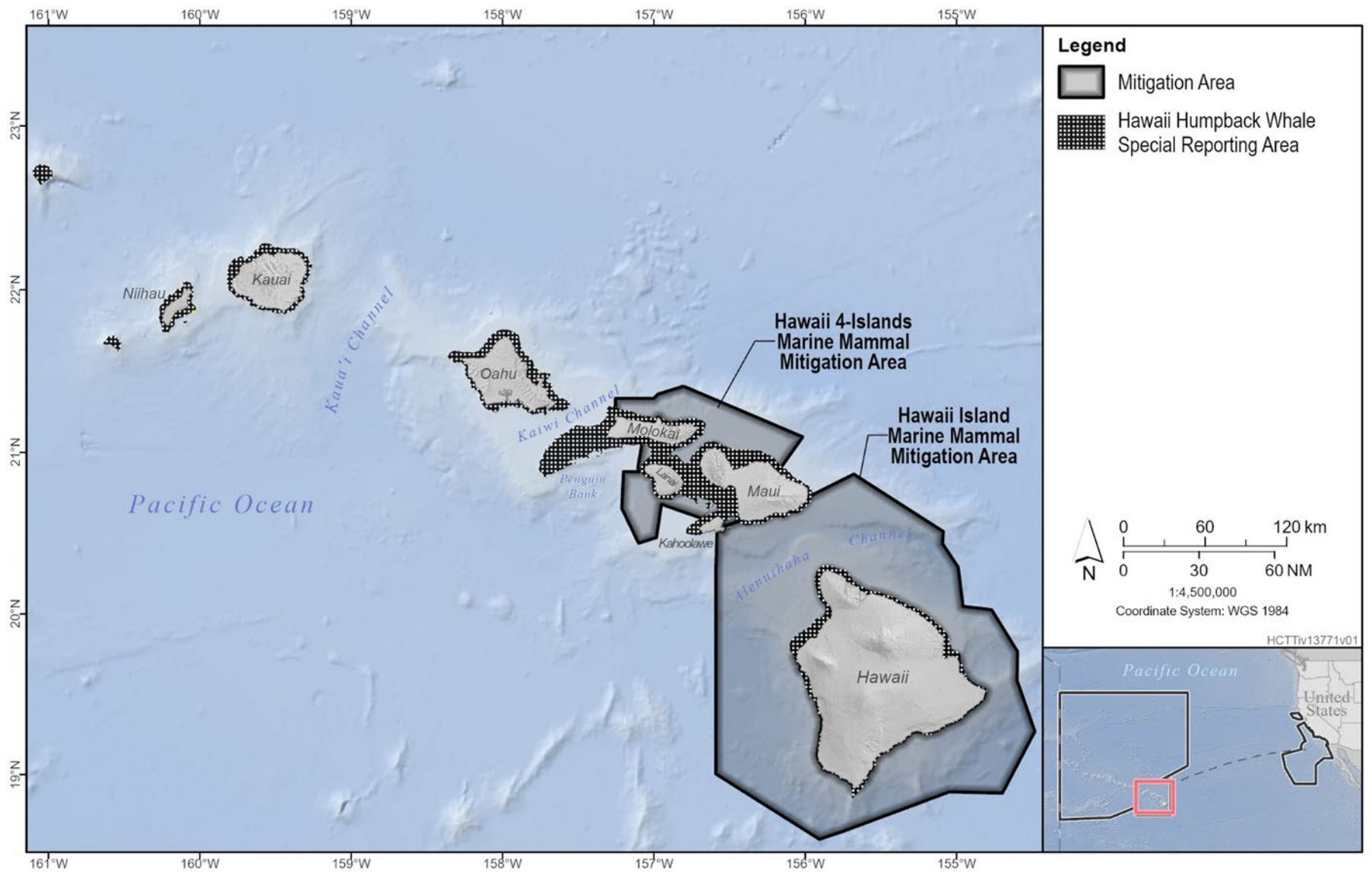


Figure 2. Geographic Mitigation Areas for Marine Mammals in the Hawaii Study Area.

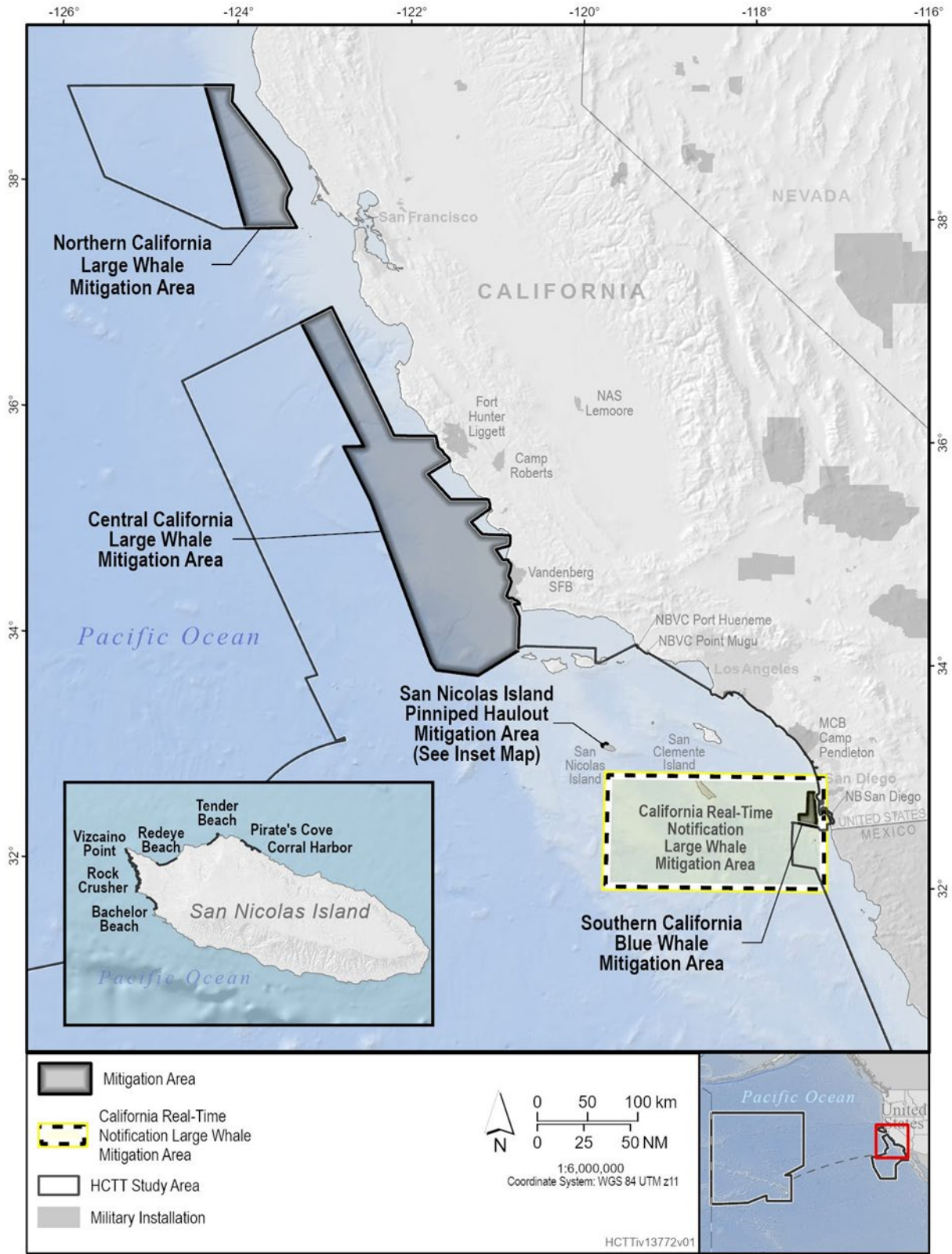


Figure 3. Geographic Mitigation Areas for Marine Mammals in the California Study Area.

NOTIFICATION AND REPORTING PLAN

PHASE IV MILITARY READINESS ACTIVITIES

BACKGROUND

Marine Mammal Protection Act (MMPA) Letters of Authorization (LOAs) indicate the conditions under which the holder (referred to herein as the Action Proponent) is authorized to take marine mammals pursuant to military readiness activities involving sonar, explosive detonations, or vessel movements, conducted in the waters of the Study Area.

This Notification and Reporting Plan is specifically intended to outline the applicable requirements the authorization is conditioned upon in the event that a marine mammal stranding (or near-shore atypical milling) event is reported in or immediately adjacent to (within 50 kilometer (km) (27 nautical miles (nmi) of)) the Study Area (or as specified in the specific regional Communication Plan). Since the National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) considers all plausible causes when investigating any injury, death, or stranding, any reporting provided pursuant to this plan does not, in any way, imply that any injuries, deaths, strandings, or milling events are related to, or caused by, Action Proponent training or testing activities. All data provided will undergo appropriate security clearance procedures by the Action Proponent prior to release to NMFS.

COMMUNICATION PLAN

Effective communication is critical to the successful implementation of this Notification and Reporting Plan in the Study Area. The Communication Plan is a study-area specific plan that contains very specific communication protocols. These protocols include identification of the Action Proponent personnel authorized to implement a shutdown and the NMFS personnel authorized to advise the Action Proponent of the need to implement shutdown procedures within each NMFS region. The communication protocols in the Communication Plan are organized as a flow chart and have been finalized for the Study Area prior to issuance of the LOA(s). The communication protocols for each Study Area will be updated annually (or more frequently, as appropriate, given changes in personnel).

REQUIREMENTS

1. Notification of the Discovery of a Stranded Marine Mammal¹

a. Floating at Sea

In the event that Action Proponent personnel (uniformed military, civilian, or contractors while conducting Action Proponent work) discover a dead floating marine mammal within the Study Area

¹ As defined in Title IV of the MMPA, a "stranding" is defined as "an event in the wild in which (A) a marine mammal is dead and is (i) on a beach or shore of the United States, or (ii) in waters under the jurisdiction of the United States (including any navigable waters) ; or (B) a marine mammal is alive and is (i) on a beach or shore of the United States and unable to return to the water; (ii) on a beach or shore of the United States and, although able to return to the water, is in need of apparent medical attention; or (iii) in the waters under the jurisdiction of the United States (including any navigable waters), but is unable to return to its natural habitat under its own power or without assistance."

the Action Proponent shall report the incident to the NMFS Regional Stranding Coordinator as soon as feasible.

b. On Land

In the event that Action Proponent personnel (uniformed military, civilian, or contractors while conducting Action Proponent work) discover a live or dead stranded marine mammal within the Study Area or on Action Proponent property overlapping or adjacent to the Study Area the Action Proponent shall report the incident to the local stranding network as soon as feasible. Reports of stranded pinnipeds on rookeries are exempt from this provision.

In the event that the stranding is a cetacean or ESA-listed pinniped, the Action Proponent shall also report the incident to NMFS Regional Stranding Coordinator and Office of Protected Resources Marine Mammal Health and Stranding Response Program staff (see Communication Protocols section of this Notification and Reporting Plan) as well as the local stranding network response organization. For non ESA-listed pinnipeds, the Action Proponent shall report to the local stranding network response organization only.

c. Reporting Elements (Floating at Sea and On Land)

For all reports of discovery of a stranded marine mammal, the Action Proponent will provide NMFS/local stranding network organization with the information needed to evaluate a response and/or capture basic data on a Level A data sheet. This information is:

- Date, time, and location (latitude/longitude) of the first discovery (and updated location information if known and applicable);
- Species identification (if known) or description of the animal(s) involved;
- Condition of the animal(s) (including carcass condition if the animal is dead);
- Observed behaviors of the animal(s), if alive;
- Photographs or video footage of the animal(s), if available; and
- General circumstances under which the animal was discovered (*e.g.*, during an explosive event, found on Action Proponent property, or found by transiting vessel).

2. Vessel Strike

If a marine mammal is struck by an Action Proponent vessel within the Study Area, whether such vessel strike was authorized by the LOA(s) or not, the incident must be reported to NMFS immediately or as soon as security clearance procedures and safety conditions allow. The report should include the information outlined above in Section 1.

As soon as feasible, but no later than seven (7) business days, the Action Proponent shall additionally report to NMFS, the:

- Vessel's speed during and leading up to the incident;

- Vessel's course/heading and what training or testing activity was being conducted (if applicable);
- Status of all sound sources in use (e.g., active sonar, explosives);
- Description of avoidance measures/requirements that were in place at the time of the strike and what additional measures were taken, if any, to avoid strike;
- Environmental conditions immediately preceding the strike (e.g., wind speed and direction, Beaufort sea state, cloud cover, visibility);
- Estimated size and length of animal that was struck;
- Description of the behavior of the marine mammal immediately preceding and following the strike;
- Description of the presence and behavior of any other marine mammals immediately preceding the strike, if available;
- Estimated fate of the animal (e.g., dead, injured but alive, injured and moving, blood or tissue observed in the water, status unknown, disappeared, etc.);
- Photographs or video footage of the animal(s) to the extent practicable; and
- Relevant information discovered during Action Proponent's investigation of a vessel strike, including but not limited to other Action Proponent in-water platforms in use within a mile immediately preceding the strike, as available.

3. Additional Information Requests

If NMFS personnel determine that the circumstances of any marine mammal stranding found within the Study Area or within 50 km (27 nmi) of the Study Area's boundary warrant investigating a potential association with the Action Proponent's activities (examples noted below), and an investigation into the stranding is underway, NMFS personnel will submit a written request to the Action Proponent. This request will ask the Action Proponent to provide the initial available information specified below as soon as possible, but no later than seven (7) business days after the request.

- Status of all permitted sound source and/or explosive use in the 48 hours (hrs) preceding and within 50 km (27 nmi) of the discovery/notification of the stranding by NMFS, or estimated time of stranding; and
- Description of the behavior of any marine mammal(s) sightings preceding (48 hrs and 50 km (27 nmi)) and immediately after the discovery of the stranding (if available).

Examples of circumstances that could trigger the additional information request include, but are not limited to, the following:

- Atypical nearshore milling events of live cetaceans;
- Mass strandings of cetaceans (two or more individuals, not including cow/calf pairs);
- Beaked whale strandings;

- Necropsied animals with findings from gross or histopathology that are unusual for the species or area; and
- Stranded animals with findings consistent with blast trauma.

In the event that the investigation is still inconclusive, the investigation of the association of Action Proponent activities is still warranted, and the investigation is still being pursued, NMFS may have additional information requests.

If the previously mentioned factors are present (*i.e.*, investigation is still inconclusive, *etc.*), the Action Proponent would be required to answer additional questions regarding their activities within 148 km (80 nmi) and 72 hr prior, provided appropriate security clearance procedures are followed.

4. Actions to Minimize Additional Harm to Live-Stranded (or Near-shore Atypical Milling) Marine Mammals

In the event of a live stranding or near-shore atypical milling event within the Study Area or within 50 km (27 nmi) of the boundary of the Study Area, where the stranding network is engaged in herding or other interventions to return animals to the water, NMFS (individuals specifically identified in the study area-specific Communication Plan, NMFS Office of Protected Resources (OPR) – HQ senior administrators) will advise the Action Proponent of the need to implement shutdown procedures for all permitted active acoustic sources or explosive devices within 50 km (27 nmi) of the stranding or near-shore atypical milling event. Following this initial shutdown, NMFS will communicate with the Action Proponent to determine if circumstances support any modification of the shutdown zone. The Action Proponent may decline to implement all or part of the shutdown if the holder of the LOA, or his/her designee, determines that continuation of the military readiness activities are necessary for national security. Shutdown procedures for live stranding or milling marine mammals include the following:

- If at any time, the marine mammal(s) die or are euthanized, or if herding/intervention efforts are stopped, NMFS (individuals specifically identified in the relevant Stranding Communication Protocol) will immediately advise the Action Proponent that the shutdown around the location of the animal(s) is no longer needed.
- Otherwise, shutdown procedures will remain in effect until NMFS (individuals specifically identified in the relevant Stranding Communication Protocol) determines and advises the Action Proponent that all live animals involved have left the area (either of their own volition or following an intervention).
- If further observations of the marine mammals indicate the potential for restranding or milling, additional coordination with the Action Proponent will be required to determine what measures are necessary to minimize that likelihood (*e.g.*, extending the shutdown or moving operations farther away) and to implement those measures as appropriate.

Shutdown procedures are not related to the investigation of the cause of the stranding or milling event, and their implementation is not intended to imply that Action Proponent activity is the cause of the stranding. Rather, shutdown procedures are intended to protect marine mammals exhibiting indicators of distress by minimizing their exposure to possible additional stressors, regardless of the factors that contributed to the stranding or milling event.