



Environmental Stewardship

In accordance with the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA), the Action Proponents are using the best available science and methods of analysis to assess the potential environmental impacts associated with conducting training and testing activities within the Atlantic Fleet Training and Testing (AFTT) Study Area, including activities that involve the use of active sonar and explosives.

Most of these training and testing activities have been previously analyzed and authorized under the Marine Mammal Protection Act and Endangered Species Act and are similar to the types of activities that have been occurring in the Study Area for decades. Throughout the NEPA process, the National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) will participate as a cooperating agency in preparation of the Supplemental Environmental Impact Statement/Overseas Environmental Impact Statement (SEIS/SOEIS).

ENVIRONMENTAL STEWARDSHIP PROGRAMS

The Atlantic and Gulf coasts are invaluable marine habitats, and the Action Proponents take an active role in their protection.

STEWARDS OF THE SEA

The Stewards of the Sea program is comprised of environmental stewardship initiatives that ensure the Navy protects the environment while successfully accomplishing its mission. These initiatives include developing clean shipboard technologies, implementing protective measures at sea, partnering with regulators and scientists, and engaging in public outreach and education. This program is instrumental in preserving the ocean environment for future generations.

NAVY MARINE SPECIES RESEARCH AND MONITORING PROGRAM

The Action Proponents must maintain operational readiness by conducting training and testing at sea. To ensure the best available science is used in compliance with the Marine Mammal Protection Act (MMPA) and the Endangered Species Act (ESA), the Navy invests in three main programs that range from basic research to monitoring marine species. Coordination across all three programs ensures projects with the highest potential to be beneficial to the Navy receive prioritization for support and funding. These programs are described in the gray box to the right.

Office of Naval Research Marine Mammals and Biology (ONR MMB) Program

- Supports basic and early applied research and technology development
- Mission: To support science-driven research related to understanding the effects of sound on marine mammals, including physiological, behavioral, and ecological effects, as well as population-level effects.
- Focus areas: Monitoring and detection, integrated ecosystem approach, and effects of sound on marine life.
- More: <https://www.nre.navy.mil/organization/departments/code-32/division-322/marine-mammals-and-biology>

Living Marine Resources (LMR) Program

Demonstrates and validates applied research methods and technologies

- Mission: To improve the Navy's understanding of how Navy activities may affect marine life, particularly the potential effects from activities that use sonar or explosives.
- Focus areas: Hearing studies, technology development, response studies, data analysis tools and standards.
- More: <https://exwc.navfac.navy.mil/lmr>

Navy Marine Species Monitoring Program

Implements validated tools and techniques to support Navy environmental compliance

- Mission: To monitor and assess the effects of Navy training and testing activities on protected marine species in compliance with MMPA/ESA permits and authorizations.
- Focus areas: Species distribution, abundance, habitat use, ecology and behavior
- More: <https://www.navy.marin-species-monitoring.us>

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ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION AT SEA

The Action Proponents are deeply committed to protecting the environment and actively strive to minimize potential effects of training and testing activities. The Action Proponents continue to implement and improve programs to reduce a vessel's environmental footprint by:

- Preventing the introduction of non-native species through ballast water management
- Ensuring no shipboard plastic waste is discharged while at sea
- Discharging solid waste in an environmentally responsible manner
- Installing new technologies and utilizing standard operating procedures to improve afloat units' energy resilience

PROTECTING THE NORTH ATLANTIC RIGHT WHALE

The Action Proponents have taken a proactive role throughout the AFTT Study Area in the protection of the North Atlantic right whale. This includes establishing communication networks and implemented procedures to monitor, track, and avoid right whales, and participating in a number of cooperative efforts aimed at protecting them, including:

- Conducting comprehensive crew training to spot whales and providing annual reminders to personnel about the right whales' [seasonal migration](#) (generally November 15 through April 15).
- Publicizing whale sightings through an early warnings system to increase awareness among ocean users.
- Contributing funds for National Marine Fisheries Service overflights of the waters off Georgia and northern Florida to locate and relay information about migrating right whales.
- Creating and managing the Right Whale Data Fusion Center, which provides a central location for multiple parties to report right whale sightings or other right whale issues.
- Participating in the Southeast and Northeast Implementation Teams, which assist the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration with implementation of the North Atlantic right whale recovery plan.



PARTNERING FOR SUSTAINABILITY

The Action Proponents have developed partnerships and built coalitions with other government agencies and organizations to better manage and protect natural and cultural resources and leverage limited resources.

The Action Proponents share common goals, objectives, and interests with environmental groups and government agencies for protecting threatened and endangered species, preserving critical habitat and open space, and promoting energy efficiency and resilience.

These environmental stewardship programs contribute both to the success of the military mission and the preservation of the ocean environment for future generations.