

Draft
Environmental Impact Statement/Overseas Environmental Impact Statement
for Atlantic Fleet Training and Testing
June 2017

Lead Agency: United States Department of Navy
Cooperating Agency: National Marine Fisheries Service
Title of Proposed Action: Atlantic Fleet Training and Testing Activities
Designation: **Draft Environmental Impact Statement/Overseas Environmental Impact Statement**

Abstract

The United States Department of the Navy (Navy) prepared this Draft Environmental Impact Statement (EIS)/Overseas Environmental Impact Statement (OEIS) to comply with the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) and Executive Order (EO) 12114. This EIS/OEIS evaluates the potential environmental impacts of conducting training and testing activities in the Atlantic Fleet Training and Testing (AFTT) Study Area after November 2018 into the future. The AFTT Study Area is located within the in-water areas of the western Atlantic Ocean along the eastern coast of North America, in portions of the Caribbean Sea and the Gulf of Mexico, at select Navy pierside locations, within port transit channels, near select civilian ports, and in bays, harbors, and inland waterways (e.g., lower Chesapeake Bay).

Three alternatives were analyzed in the Draft EIS/OEIS:

- The No Action Alternative considered that the Proposed Action would not take place (i.e., the proposed training and testing would not occur in the AFTT Study Area), and presented the resulting environmental effects from taking no action when compared with the effects of the Proposed Action.
- Alternative 1 (Preferred Alternative) reflects a representative year of training activity, rather than a maximum tempo of training activity in every year, a lower level of hull-mounted active sonar use from that conducted in the past and reflects the current practice of using synthetic training to meet some requirements. Alternative 1 proposes testing programs that are anticipated in any given year and limits the maximum amount of testing from occurring.
- Alternative 2 includes a higher number of training unit exercises and sonar hour use than Alternative 1 but is still a reduction from the past. Under this alternative, the Navy would be enabled to meet the highest levels of required readiness. Alternative 2 allows the Navy to meet all unit-level sonar training requirements through the conduct of discrete at-sea training exercises and not through the use of synthetic training. In Alternative 2, the maximum annual testing efforts predicted for each system or program could occur concurrently in any given year and the provision is included for high levels of annual testing of certain systems.

In this Draft EIS/OEIS, the Navy analyzed potential impacts on environmental resources resulting from activities under Alternatives 1 and 2. Under the No Action Alternative, this EIS/OEIS also includes an analysis of environmental effects from taking no action (activities would not occur) as a comparison to the effects of the Proposed Action. Evaluated resources included air quality, sediments and water quality, vegetation, invertebrates, marine habitats, reptiles, fishes, marine mammals, birds, cultural resources, socioeconomic resources, public health and safety, and cumulative impacts.

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