



## DEPARTMENT OF THE NAVY

U.S. FLEET FORCES COMMAND  
1562 MITSCHER AVENUE SUITE 250  
NORFOLK, VA 23551-2487

5090  
Ser N46/072  
June 30, 2017

Rear Admiral Robert A. Crum  
Executive Director/Secretary, Hampton Roads Planning District Commission  
723 Woodlake Drive  
Chesapeake, VA 23320

Dear Rear Admiral Crum:

The Department of the Navy has prepared a Draft Environmental Impact Statement/Overseas Environmental Impact Statement (EIS/OEIS) to analyze the potential effects from training and testing activities conducted within the Navy's Atlantic Fleet Training and Testing (AFTT) Study Area. The U.S. Navy is requesting and welcomes your comments on the Draft EIS/OEIS.

The Study Area is in the western Atlantic Ocean and encompasses the waters along the east coast of North America and the Gulf of Mexico, portions of the Caribbean Sea, Navy pierside locations and port transit channels, waters near civilian ports, and inland waters (e.g., lower Chesapeake Bay). The AFTT Study Area covers approximately 2.6 million square nautical miles of ocean space and includes designated U.S. Navy operating areas and special use airspace (see enclosure).

The U.S. Navy's mission is to maintain, train and equip combat-ready naval forces capable of winning wars, deterring aggression, and maintaining freedom of the seas as mandated by federal law (Title 10 U.S. Code § 5062). The Chief of Naval Operations is charged with ensuring the readiness of the nation's naval forces and meets that directive, in part, by establishing and executing training programs and ensuring naval forces have access to training ranges, operating areas, and airspace needed to develop and maintain skills for the conduct of operations.

The Navy's Proposed Action is to conduct training and testing activities, which may include the use of active sonar and explosives. For more information on the U.S. Navy's Proposed Action and alternatives currently under consideration, please see the enclosure.

In compliance with the National Environmental Policy Act of 1969, the U.S. Navy is holding five public meetings to inform and provide an opportunity for the public to comment on the Proposed Action, alternatives under consideration, and the adequacy and accuracy of the analysis in the Draft EIS/OEIS. All comments (oral or written) submitted during the 60-day public review period (June 30, 2017, to August 29, 2017) will become part of the public record on the Draft EIS/OEIS and substantive comments will be addressed in the Final EIS/OEIS.

U.S. Navy representatives will be available during the public meetings to provide information and answer questions. Members of the public can arrive anytime between 4 p.m. and 8 p.m. The public meeting schedule is as follows:

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**Wednesday, July 19, 2017**

Hotel Providence  
139 Mathewson Street  
Providence, RI 02903

**Tuesday, August 1, 2017**

The Prime F. Osborn III  
Convention Center  
1000 Water Street  
Jacksonville, FL 32204

**Tuesday, July 25, 2017**

UNC Institute of Marine Sciences  
3431 Arendell Street  
Morehead City, NC 28557

**Thursday, August 3, 2017**

Gulf Coast State College  
Conference Center  
5230 W. Highway 98  
Panama City, FL 32401

**Wednesday, July 26, 2017**

Nauticus  
One Waterside Drive  
Norfolk, VA 23510

The Draft EIS/OEIS and additional information are available on the project website at:  
**[www.AFTTEIS.com](http://www.AFTTEIS.com)**.

Written comments may be submitted during public meetings or mailed to the following address:

Naval Facilities Engineering Command Atlantic  
Attn: Code EV22KP  
6506 Hampton Blvd  
Norfolk, VA 23508-1278

Online comments may also be submitted on the project website. All comments must be postmarked or received online by August 29, 2017, for consideration in the Final EIS/OEIS.

Sincerely,



Elizabeth Nashold  
Director, Fleet Installations and Environment  
and Deputy Director

Enclosure: U.S. Navy AFTT EIS/OEIS Project Description and Study Area Map

U.S. NAVY ATLANTIC FLEET TRAINING AND TESTING (AFTT) ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT  
STATEMENT/OVERSEAS ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT STATEMENT (EIS/OEIS) PROJECT  
DESCRIPTION AND STUDY AREA MAP

**AFTT EIS/OEIS Proposed Action and Alternatives:**

The Navy's Proposed Action is to conduct training and testing activities, which may include the use of active sonar and explosives, primarily within existing range complexes, operating areas, and testing ranges within the Atlantic Ocean along the eastern coast of North America, portions of the Caribbean Sea, in the Gulf of Mexico at Navy pierside locations and port transit channels, near civilian ports, and in inland waters (e.g., the lower Chesapeake Bay). These military readiness activities are generally consistent with those analyzed in the AFTT EIS/OEIS completed in December 2013 and are representative of training and testing that the Navy has been conducting in the AFTT Study Area for decades.

The purpose of the Proposed Action is to ensure that the Navy meets its mission under Title 10 United States Code Section 5062, which is to maintain, train and equip combat-ready naval forces capable of winning wars, deterring aggression, and maintaining freedom of the seas.

No Action Alternative - Under the No Action Alternative, the Proposed Action would not take place (i.e., the Navy would not conduct proposed training and testing activities in the AFTT Study Area). For National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS), denial of an application for an incidental take authorization constitutes the NMFS No Action Alternative, which is consistent with NMFS' statutory obligation under the Marine Mammal Protection Act (MMPA) to grant or deny requests for take incidental to specified activities. The resulting environmental effects from taking no action will be compared with the effects of the Proposed Action.

Alternative 1 - Alternative 1 is the Navy's preferred alternative. Under this alternative, the Navy proposes to conduct military readiness training and testing activities into the reasonably foreseeable future, as necessary to meet current and future readiness requirements. These military readiness training activities include new activities as well as activities subject to previous analysis that are currently ongoing and have historically occurred in the Study Area. These activities account for force structure (organization of ships, weapons, and personnel) changes and include training and testing with new aircraft, vessels, unmanned/autonomous systems, and weapon systems that will be introduced to the fleets after November 2018.

Alternative 1 reflects a representative year of training to account for the natural fluctuations of training cycles and deployment schedules. Using representative years rather than a maximum tempo of training activity in every year has reduced the amount of hull-mounted mid-frequency active sonar estimated to be necessary to meet training requirements. In addition, this alternative would not include the contingency for augmenting some weapon systems tests, accepts a lower level of overall military commitment resulting from a stable level of