
1 Purpose and Need

**Supplemental Environmental Impact Statement/
Overseas Environmental Impact Statement
Northwest Training and Testing**

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1 Purpose and Need

1.1 Introduction

The United States (U.S.) Department of the Navy (Navy) has prepared this supplement to the October 2015 *Final Northwest Training and Testing Environmental Impact Statement/Overseas Environmental Impact Statement (EIS/OEIS)* (U.S. Department of the Navy, 2015), hereinafter referred to as the 2015 NWTT Final EIS/OEIS, pursuant to 40 Code of Federal Regulations (CFR) section 1502.9(c)(2). The Navy proposes to conduct training activities (hereinafter referred to as “training”) and research, development, testing, and evaluation (hereinafter referred to as “testing”) activities in the Northwest Training and Testing (NWTT) Study Area (Figure 1.1-1). The Study Area includes the at-sea areas off the coast of Washington, Oregon, and northern California; in the Western Behm Canal, Alaska; and at select Navy pierside and harbor locations. Training and testing activities, collectively referred to as “military readiness activities,” that prepare the Navy to fulfill its mission to protect and defend the United States and its allies, have the potential to impact the environment. The Navy prepared this Supplemental EIS/OEIS (hereinafter referred to as this Supplemental) to comply with the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) and Executive Order 12114, *Environmental Effects Abroad of Major Federal Actions*, by assessing the potential environmental impacts associated with the proposed military readiness activities to be conducted within the Study Area.

This Supplemental was prepared to update the Navy’s assessment of the potential environmental impacts associated with proposed training and testing to be conducted at sea. These proposed activities are generally consistent with those activities analyzed in the 2015 NWTT Final EIS/OEIS, and are representative of activities the military has conducted in the Study Area for decades. These military readiness activities include the use of active sonar and other acoustic sources, as well as the use of explosives and other types of training and testing.

New information specifically addressed in this Supplemental includes updates to training and testing requirements and activities, an updated acoustic effects model,¹ updated marine mammal density data, and current best available science. Using the updated information, the Navy requested the reissuance of federal regulatory permits and authorizations under the Marine Mammal Protection Act (MMPA) and Endangered Species Act (ESA) to support training and testing requirements within the Study Area upon the expiration of current authorizations and consultations in 2020. The Navy consulted with the National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) and U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service to obtain new authorizations and issue appropriate permits.

The United States is facing a complex and volatile security environment. Major conflicts, terrorism, outlaw actions, and natural disasters all have the potential to threaten the national security of the United States. The security, prosperity, and vital interests of the United States are increasingly tied to other nations because of the close relationships between the United States and other national economies. The Navy operates on the world’s oceans, seas, and coastal areas—the international

¹ The 2015 NWTT Final EIS/OEIS used a new modeling system known as the Navy Acoustics Effects Model and marine mammal density information, developed by the Navy in cooperation with the National Marine Fisheries Service, that was the best available information at the time. The Navy Acoustics Effects Model has been refined, marine mammal density estimates have been updated, NMFS has published new criteria, and criteria used in the acoustic model have been revised.

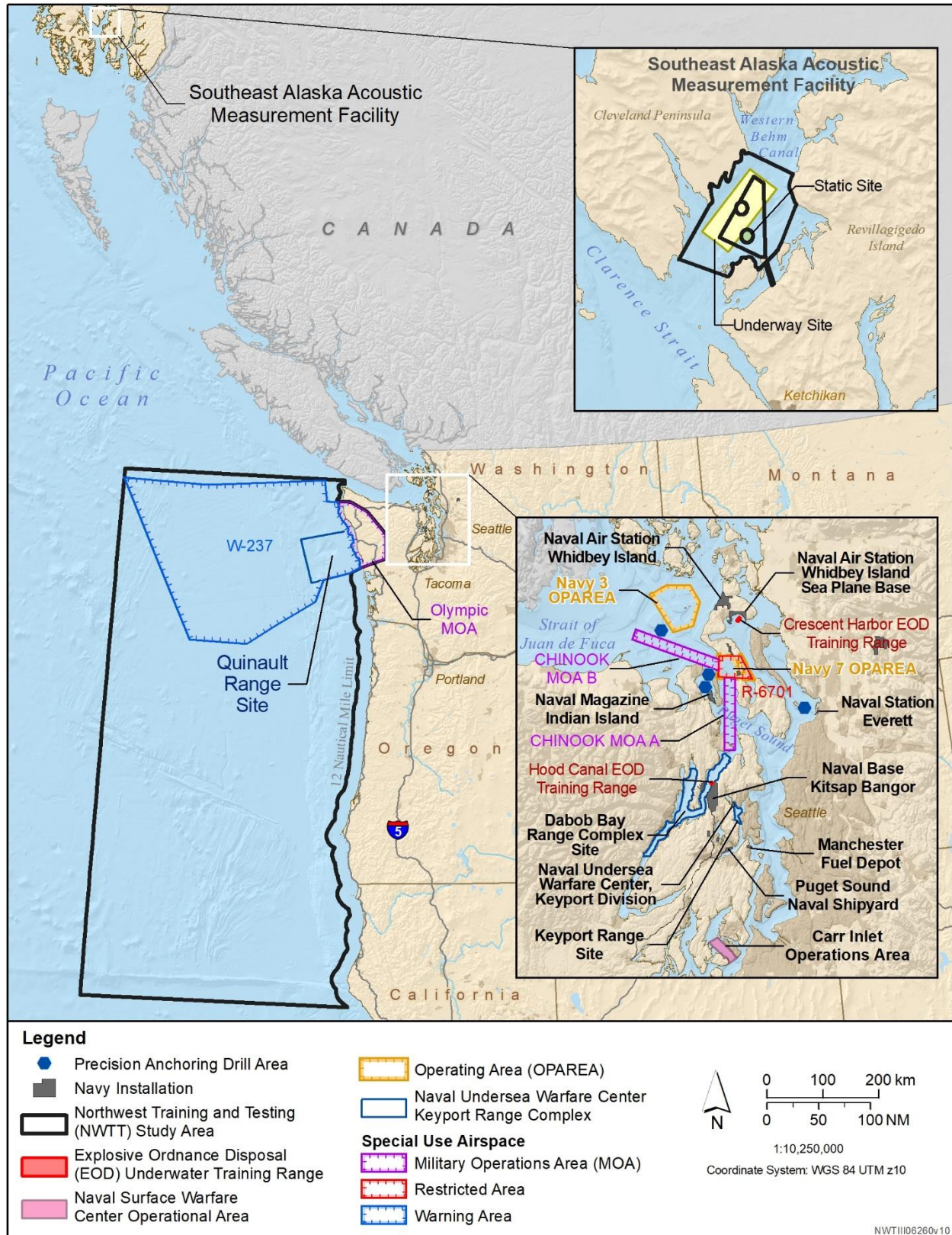


Figure 1.1-1: Northwest Training and Testing Study Area

maritime domain—on which 90 percent of the world’s trade and two-thirds of its oil are transported. The majority of the world’s population also lives within a few hundred miles of an ocean. The U.S. Navy carries out training and testing activities to be able to protect the United States against its potential adversaries, to protect and defend the rights and interests of the United States and its allies to move freely on the oceans, and to provide humanitarian assistance.

The 2015 NWTT Final EIS/OEIS Study Area consisted of three components: (1) the Offshore Area, (2) the Inland Waters, and (3) the Western Behm Canal, Alaska. Collectively, for the purposes of this Supplemental, these areas are unchanged and continue to be referred to as the Study Area (Figure 1.1-1).

1.2 The Navy’s Environmental Compliance and At-Sea Policy

In 2000, the Navy completed a review of its environmental compliance requirements for exercises and training at sea. The Navy then instituted the “At-Sea Policy” (U.S. Department of the Navy, 2000) to ensure compliance with applicable environmental regulations and policies, and preserve the flexibility necessary for the Navy and Marine Corps to train and test at sea. This policy directed, in part, that Fleet Commanders develop a programmatic approach to environmental compliance at sea for ranges and operational areas (OPAREAs) within their respective geographic areas of responsibility (U.S. Department of the Navy, 2000). Those ranges affected by the “At-Sea Policy” are designated water areas, sometimes containing instrumentation, that are managed by the Navy and used to conduct training and testing activities. Some ranges are further broken down into OPAREAs to better manage and deconflict military readiness activities.

In 2005, the Navy and the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) reached an agreement on a coordinated programmatic strategy for assessing certain environmental effects of military readiness activities at sea.

The first phase of the programmatic strategy was accomplished by the preparation and completion of individual or separate NEPA/Executive Order 12114 environmental documents for training and testing activities at each range complex. The second phase of the Navy’s environmental compliance planning covered activities and existing ranges and operating areas previously analyzed in the Phase I NEPA/Executive Order 12114 documents and additional geographic areas including, but not limited to, pierside locations. The Navy is currently in the third phase (Phase I and Phase II were described in Section 1.2, The Navy’s Environmental Compliance and At-Sea Policy, of the 2015 NWTT Final EIS/OEIS) of implementing this programmatic approach, which covers similar types of Navy training and testing activities in the same NWTT Study Area analyzed in Phase II. As was done in Phase I and Phase II, the Navy will use the Phase III analysis to support regulatory consultations and a request for a letter of authorization under the MMPA and incidental take statements under the ESA. Given that the training and testing activities have not substantially changed, there is not a significant change in environmental impacts when compared to activities analyzed in the 2015 NWTT Final EIS/OEIS, and the same Study Area is used for the proposed activities, the Navy determined a Supplemental EIS/OEIS to be appropriate for Phase III of the Navy’s environmental compliance planning in the NWTT Study Area. For further discussion of the first two phases, please see Section 1.2 (The Navy’s Environmental Compliance and At-Sea Policy) of the 2015 NWTT Final EIS/OEIS.

1.3 Proposed Action

The Navy's Proposed Action, described in detail in this Supplemental in Chapter 2 (Description of Proposed Action and Alternatives), is to conduct military readiness training and testing activities in the Study Area (Figure 1.1-1).

1.4 Purpose and Need

The Navy and NMFS (as a cooperating agency under the provisions of NEPA) have coordinated from the outset and developed this document to meet each agency's separate and distinct NEPA obligations and support the independent decision making of both agencies. The Navy's purpose for the Proposed Action is to ensure that the Navy meets its statutory mission, which is to maintain, train, and equip combat-ready naval forces capable of winning wars, deterring aggression, and maintaining freedom of the seas. This mission is achieved in part by conducting training and testing within the Study Area in accordance with established Navy military readiness requirements. The sections that follow provide a description of the need for military readiness activities.

The Navy will request reauthorization from NMFS to "take" marine mammals incidental to conducting training and testing activities in the Study Area by Level A and B harassment, serious injury, or mortality. Take under the MMPA is defined as "to harass, hunt, capture, or kill, or attempt to harass, hunt, capture, or kill any marine mammal." For military readiness activities, harassment is defined as "(i) any act that injures or has the significant potential to injure a marine mammal or marine mammal stock in the wild [Level A harassment] or (ii) any act that disturbs or is likely to disturb a marine mammal or marine mammal stock in the wild by causing disruption of natural behavioral patterns, including, but not limited to, migration, surfacing, nursing, breeding, feeding, or sheltering, to a point where such behavioral patterns are abandoned or significantly altered [Level B harassment]."

The purpose of issuing incidental take authorizations is to provide an exception to the take prohibition in the MMPA and to ensure that the Navy's proposed training and testing activities comply with the MMPA and implementing regulations. Incidental take authorizations may be issued as either (1) regulations and associated Letters of Authorization (LOAs) under section 101(a)(5)(A) of the MMPA, or (2) Incidental Harassment Authorizations (IHAs) under section 101(a)(5)(D) of the MMPA. An IHA can be issued only when there is no potential for serious injury or mortality or where any such potential can be negated through required mitigation measures. Because some of the activities under the Proposed Action may create a potential for lethal takes or takes that may result in serious injury that could lead to mortality, the Navy is requesting rulemaking and the issuance of LOAs for this action.

NMFS's purpose is to evaluate the Navy's Proposed Action pursuant to NMFS's authority under the MMPA, and to make a determination whether to issue incidental take regulations and LOAs, including any conditions needed to meet the statutory mandates of the MMPA. To authorize the incidental take of marine mammals, NMFS evaluates the best available scientific information to determine whether the take would have a negligible impact on the affected marine mammal species or stocks and an unmitigable impact on their availability for taking for subsistence uses (not relevant here for Navy's Proposed Action). NMFS must also prescribe permissible methods of taking, other "means of effecting the least practicable adverse impact" on the affected species or stocks and their habitat, and monitoring and reporting requirements. NMFS cannot issue an incidental take authorization unless it can make the required findings. The need for NMFS's action is to consider the impacts of the Navy's activities on

marine mammals and meet NMFS' obligations under the MMPA. This Supplemental analyzes the environmental impacts associated with issuance of the requested authorization of the take of marine mammals incidental to the training and testing activities (and their corresponding mitigation measures) within the Study Area. The analysis of mitigation measures considers benefits to species or stocks and their habitat, and analyzes the practicability and efficacy of each measure. This analysis of mitigation measures was used to support requirements pertaining to mitigation, monitoring, and reporting that would be specified in final MMPA regulations and subsequent LOAs.

1.4.1 Why the Navy Trains

As described above, the Navy is statutorily mandated to protect U.S. national security by being ready, at all times, to effectively prosecute war and defend the nation by conducting operations at sea. The Navy is essential to protecting U.S. national interests, considering that 70 percent of the earth is covered in water, 80 percent of the planet's population lives within close proximity to coastal areas, and 90 percent of global commerce is conducted by sea. Naval forces must be ready for a variety of military operations to deal with the dynamic, social, political, economic, and environmental issues that occur in today's world. Through its continuous presence on the world's oceans, the Navy can respond to a wide range of situations because, on any given day, over one-third of its ships, submarines, and aircraft are deployed overseas. Units must be able to respond promptly and effectively while forward deployed. This presence helps to dissuade aggression, which prevents conflict escalation, and provides the President with options to promptly address global contingencies. Before deploying, naval forces must train to develop a broad range of capabilities to respond to threats, from full-scale armed conflict in a variety of different geographic areas and environmental conditions to humanitarian assistance and disaster relief efforts.

Training prepares Navy personnel to be proficient in operating and maintaining the equipment, weapons, and systems they will use to conduct their assigned missions. The training process provides personnel with an in-depth understanding of their individual limits and capabilities; the training process also helps the testing community improve new weapon systems' capabilities and effectiveness. Refer to Chapter 1, Section 1.4.1 (Why the Navy Trains) in the 2015 NWTT Final EIS/OEIS for additional information on Navy training.

1.4.2 Optimized Fleet Response Training

The Fleet Response Plan that the Navy operated under during Phase I and II emphasized constant readiness, with the number of personnel and vessels that had to be ready to deploy on short notice identified in the plan. However, due to

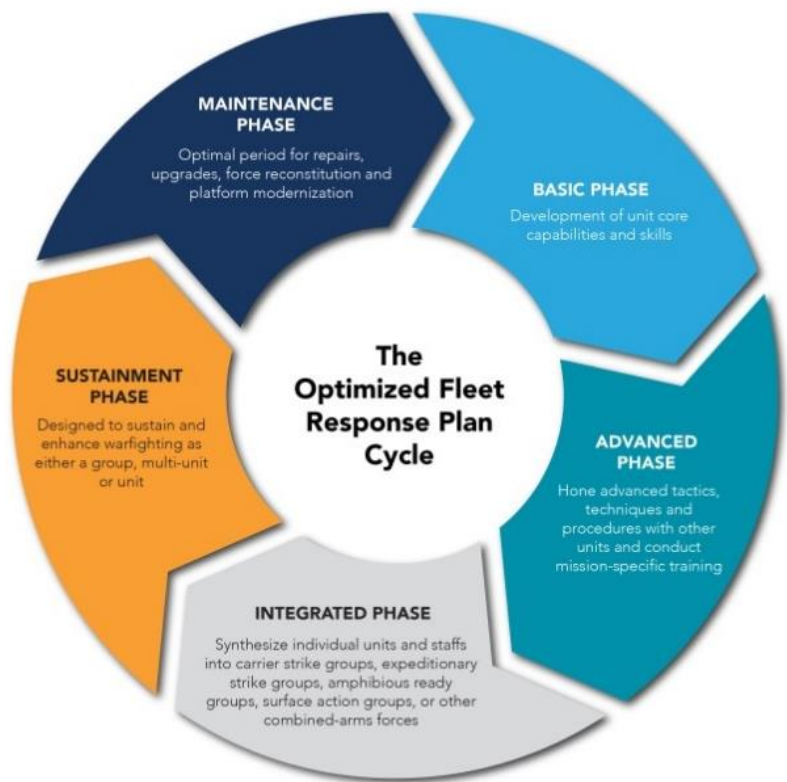


Figure 1.4-1: Optimized Fleet Response Plan

world events and the increasing need for naval forces to be located overseas, Navy vessels deployed for longer periods than previously planned, resulting in longer maintenance periods. Therefore, the Fleet Response Plan no longer represented fleet readiness preparation requirements.

In December 2014, the Navy initiated the Optimized Fleet Response Plan, which better aligns manning distribution with operational requirements; optimizes maintenance and modernization plans; improves the overall quality of work and life balance for personnel; and ensures that forces deploy with the right capabilities, properly trained and equipped to meet mission objectives. The Optimized Fleet Response Plan outlines the training activities required to achieve a state of military readiness that will enable Navy personnel to execute operations as ordered by their Commanders, to include responding to a conflict. The plan uses a building-block approach and proceeds in five phases: maintenance, basic, advanced, integrated, and sustainment, as depicted in Figure 1.4-1.

1.4.3 Why the Navy Tests

The Navy's research and acquisition community, including research-funding organizations, laboratory facilities, and systems commands, have a mission to provide weapons, systems, and platforms for the Navy to support its missions and ensure a technological edge over the United States' potential adversaries. This community is at the forefront of researching, developing, testing, evaluating, acquiring, and delivering modern platforms, systems, and related equipment to meet fleet capability and readiness requirements. The Navy's research funding organizations and laboratories concentrate primarily on the development of new science and technology, and the initial testing of concepts that are relevant to the Navy of the future. As a result, systems commands develop ship, aircraft, and weapons products that support all Navy platforms throughout their life cycles from systems acquisition through sustainment to end of life. Refer to Chapter 1, Section 1.4.3 (Why the Navy Tests) in the 2015 NWTT Final EIS/OEIS for additional information on Navy testing.

The Navy's research and acquisition community operating in the Study Area includes the following commands:

- Naval Air Systems Command, which develops, tests, acquires, delivers, and sustains naval aviation aircraft, unmanned aerial systems, weapons, and systems
- Naval Sea Systems Command, which develops, acquires, delivers, and maintains surface ships, submarines, unmanned vehicles, and weapon system platforms

1.5 Overview and Strategic Importance of Existing Range Complexes and Testing Ranges

The range complexes analyzed in this Supplemental have existed for decades, many dating back to the early 1900s. Range use and infrastructure have developed over time as military readiness requirements in support of modern warfare have evolved. The Study Area for this Supplemental is the same as that covered in the 2015 NWTT Final EIS/OEIS; the Navy is not proposing to change or expand the Study Area.

Proximity of the Navy's training and testing areas to naval homeports and air stations creates efficiency in the utilization of government resources as well as safe conditions in which naval forces may train and test. Training and testing events taking place in close proximity to naval homeports and naval air stations occur in areas equipped with robust search and rescue capabilities, medical facilities, and

alternate airfields, all of which are necessary to safely execute training and testing activities at sea. Increasing the distance between homeports and air stations which house such necessary components of safety, and respective training locales, greatly increases the potential of both a training mishap and serious harm or death to service members. Fuel is saved and equipment is exposed to less wear when ranges are near where the platforms are based. The proximity of training to homeports also ensures that Sailors and Marines do not need to spend unnecessary time away from their families during the training cycle. Less time away from home is an important factor in military readiness, morale, and retention. The proximate availability of the Navy's training and testing areas in the Pacific Northwest is critical to Navy efforts in these areas.

Systems commands also require access to a realistic environment to conduct testing. The systems commands frequently conduct tests on fleet range complexes and use fleet assets to support the testing. The Study Area must provide the flexibility to meet diverse testing requirements, given the wide range of various advanced platforms and systems and capabilities that the fleets and systems commands must demonstrate before certification for utilization by the fleet. This is important because testing in controlled conditions similar to those in which technology could be employed enhances combat readiness.

1.6 The Environmental Planning Process

NEPA and Executive Order 12114 requires federal agencies to examine the environmental impacts of their proposed actions within the United States and its territories. An EIS/OEIS is a detailed public document that assesses the potential effects that a major federal action might have on the human environment (includes the natural and biological environment). The Navy undertakes environmental planning for major Navy actions occurring throughout the world in accordance with applicable laws, regulations, and Executive Orders.

A supplemental EIS is prepared when the agency makes substantial changes in the proposed action that are relevant to environmental concerns (40 CFR section 1502.9(c)(1)(i)), or there are significant new circumstances or information relevant to environmental concerns and bearing on the proposed action or its impacts (40 CFR section 1502.9(c)(1)(ii)). An agency may also supplement a final EIS when the agency determines that the purpose of NEPA will be furthered by doing so (40 CFR section 1502(c)(2)).

Pursuant to 40 CFR section 1502.9(c)(1), the Navy has prepared this Supplement to the 2015 NWTT Final EIS/OEIS. This Supplemental will consider future activities conducted at sea, and updated training and testing requirements; incorporate new information from an updated acoustic effects model and updated marine mammal density data; and incorporate evolving and emergent best available science. It will also support any reissuance of federal regulatory permits and authorizations under the MMPA and the ESA using the best available science and analytical methods to assess potential environmental impacts.

1.6.1 National Environmental Policy Act Requirements

When developing a supplement to an existing EIS/OEIS, the first step in the NEPA process (Figure 1.6-1) is to prepare a Notice of Intent. The Notice of Intent is published in the *Federal Register* and in local newspapers, and provides an overview of the proposed action and the scope of the Supplemental (see

scope of the Supplemental (see Appendix G, Federal Register Notices). The Notice of Intent is also the first step in engaging the public, initiating the scoping process.

Scoping is an early and open process for developing the “scope” of issues to be addressed in an EIS and for identifying significant issues related to a proposed action. In accordance with the Council on Environmental Quality regulations for implementing the requirements of NEPA, scoping is not required for a supplement to a draft or final EIS; however, in an effort to maximize public participation and ensure the public’s input was considered, the Navy chose to conduct a scoping period for this Supplemental.

After the scoping process, a Draft Supplemental is prepared to assess potential impacts of the proposed action and alternatives on the environment. When completed, a Notice of Availability is published in the *Federal Register*, and notices are placed in local or regional newspapers announcing the availability of the Draft Supplemental. The Draft Supplemental is circulated for public review and comment. Public meetings may also be scheduled to further inform the public and solicit their comments.

The Final Supplemental addresses all public comments received on the Draft Supplemental. Responses to public comments may include factual corrections, supplements, or modifications to analysis, and inclusion of new information. Additionally, responses may explain why the comments do not warrant further agency response.

Finally, the decision-maker will issue a Record of Decision no earlier than 30 days after the Final Supplemental is made available to the public.

For a description of how the Navy complied with each of these requirements during the development of this NWTT Supplemental, please see Chapter 8 (Public Involvement and Distribution).

1.6.2 Executive Order 12114

Executive Order 12114 of 1979, *Environmental Impacts Abroad of Major Federal Actions*, furthers the purpose of NEPA by directing federal agencies to provide for informed environmental decision making for major federal actions outside the United States and its territories. Presidential Proclamation 5928, issued December 27, 1988, extended the exercise of U.S. sovereignty and jurisdiction under international law to 12 nautical miles (NM); however, the proclamation expressly provides that it does not extend or otherwise alter existing federal law or any associated jurisdiction, rights, legal interests, or obligations. Thus, as a matter of policy, the Navy analyzes environmental effects and actions within 12 NM under NEPA (an EIS) and those effects occurring beyond 12 NM under the provisions of Executive Order 12114 (an OEIS).



**Figure 1.6-1:
National
Environmental
Policy Act Process**

1.6.3 Other Environmental Requirements Considered

The Navy must comply with all applicable federal environmental laws, regulations, and executive orders as discussed in the 2015 NWTT Final EIS/OEIS. Further information can be found in Chapter 6 (Additional Regulatory Considerations).

1.7 Scope and Content

In this Supplemental, the Navy analyzed at-sea military readiness activities that could potentially impact human and natural resources, especially marine mammals, sea turtles, and other marine resources. Since the completion of the 2015 NWTT Final EIS/OEIS, new information has become available and is incorporated in this analysis. The range of alternatives includes the No Action Alternative and two action alternatives. This Supplemental updates the 2015 analysis of direct, indirect, and cumulative impacts that may result from the Proposed Action. The Navy is the lead agency for the Proposed Action and is responsible for the scope and content of this Supplemental; however, there are two designated cooperating agencies pursuant to 40 CFR section 1501.6. The U.S. Coast Guard is a cooperating agency as this document assesses potential impacts of U.S. Coast Guard activities that support the Navy in the Study Area. NOAA's NMFS is serving as a cooperating agency because the scope of the Proposed Action and alternatives involves activities that have the potential to impact protected resources under their jurisdiction by law and special expertise, including marine mammals, threatened and endangered species, and Essential Fish Habitat. In addition, NOAA's Office of National Marine Sanctuaries has the authority to manage the Olympic Coast National Marine Sanctuary under the National Marine Sanctuaries Act (16 United States Code 1431 et seq.). NOAA's authorities and special expertise is based on their statutory responsibilities under the MMPA, the ESA, the Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act, and the National Marine Sanctuaries Act (16 United States Code sections 1431-1445c-1). In addition, NMFS, in accordance with 40 CFR sections 1506.3 and 1505.2, may adopt this EIS/OEIS and issue a separate Record of Decision associated with its decision to grant or deny the Navy's request for an incidental take authorization pursuant to Section 101(a)(5)(A) of the MMPA.

Under this Supplemental, the Navy has evaluated the potential environmental impacts of training and testing activities within the NWTT Study Area involving different types of platforms and weapons systems, including EA-18G Growler aircraft. In the Pacific Northwest, separate NEPA documents were prepared for EA-18G "Growler" Airfield Operations, Electronic Warfare Training, and Naval Special Operations Training. The Navy prepares separate NEPA documents covering different proposed activities because each NEPA document is focused on a specific proposed action, is separated from other actions by its respective and distinct purpose and need, has independent utility, has different timing, and involves differing geographic locations. Specifically, this Supplemental, which is designed to address the Navy's statutory responsibility to maintain ready forces, analyzes the potential impacts of training and testing activities from the year 2020 forward.

The EIS for EA-18G "Growler" Airfield Operations at Naval Air Station Whidbey Island Complex (U.S. Department of the Navy, 2018a), which is designed to address an increase in such aircraft and associated personnel slated to occur in the near future, is focused on aircraft operations in and around Naval Air Station Whidbey Island Complex and installation facility improvements required by the operation of the Growler at Whidbey Island. Similarly, the Environmental Assessment covering Electronic Warfare Training in the Pacific Northwest (U.S. Department of the Navy, 2014) was focused on an immediate need to secure permits for driving emitter trucks on inland forest roads on federal and state property in the Olympic Peninsula to support ongoing electronic warfare training occurring in the

Offshore Area (see Figure 2.2-2); also, the Environmental Assessment for Naval Special Operations Training in Western Washington State (U.S. Department of the Navy, 2018b) supports training activities specifically for naval special operations personnel.

While the Navy has analyzed, and is currently analyzing, various proposed actions in the area, those proposed actions are not preconditions for the training and testing activities occurring in the NWTT Study Area and covered by this Supplemental. Training and testing in the NWTT Study Area would continue if regulatory and permitting actions were approved, regardless of the decisions made regarding EA-18G “Growler” Airfield Operations, Electronic Warfare Training, or Naval Special Operations Training. This Supplemental does consider the cumulative impacts from these three projects as well as other past, present, and reasonable foreseeable future actions in Chapter 4 (Cumulative Impacts).

A cumulative impact is the impact on the environment that results from the incremental impact of the action when added to other past, present, and reasonably foreseeable future actions, regardless of what agency (federal or non-federal) or person undertakes such other actions. Cumulative impacts can result from individually minor but collectively significant actions taking place over a period of time. The scope of the cumulative impacts analysis involves both the geographic and temporal extent of the effects in which the coincidental effects could be expected to occur. For this analysis, the Study Area is resource-specific, as identified in Chapter 3 (Affected Environment and Environmental Consequences) for each respective resource area. The time frame for the cumulative impacts centers on the timing of the Proposed Action.

1.8 Organization of This Supplemental Environmental Impact Statement/Overseas Environmental Impact Statement

This Supplemental is organized as follows:

- Chapter 1 (Purpose and Need) describes the purpose of and need for the Proposed Action.
- Chapter 2 (Description of Proposed Action and Alternatives) describes the Proposed Action, proposed changes to the 2015 NWTT Final EIS/OEIS implemented actions projected to take place starting in 2020, and alternatives to be carried forward for analysis.
- Chapter 3 (Affected Environment and Environmental Consequences) describes the existing conditions of the affected environment and potential environmental consequences on those resources requiring additional discussion or analysis beyond what was analyzed in the 2015 NWTT Final EIS/OEIS.
- Chapter 4 (Cumulative Impacts) describes the analysis of cumulative impacts, which are the impacts of the Proposed Action when added to past, present, and reasonably foreseeable future actions.
- Chapter 5 (Mitigation) describes the measures the Navy evaluated that could mitigate impacts on the environment.
- Chapter 6 (Additional Regulatory Considerations) describes considerations required by NEPA and describes how the Navy complies with other federal, state, and local plans, policies, and regulations.
- Chapter 7 (List of Preparers) includes a list of preparers of this Supplemental.
- Chapter 8 (Public Involvement and Distribution) describes the public participation process.
- References are provided at the end of each section.
- Appendices provide technical information that support this Supplemental analyses and conclusions.

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