

## **Action Alert Concerning Responsible Use of Sonar**

### **Environmental Impact Statement for USWTR**

Three years ago, hundreds of you took action to help stop the Navy from building an ill-studied Undersea Warfare Training Range (USWTR) off the coast of North Carolina. Concerned citizens, fishermen, environmental organizations, and local officials identified serious flaws in the Navy's Environmental Impact Statement (EIS)--including its failure to properly analyze sonar's disastrous impacts on the marine environment or implement adequate mitigation measures. In response to overwhelming opposition to the EIS as presented, the Navy was forced to reassess its proposal to build a range for the intensive use of dangerous mid-frequency sonar over hundreds of square miles of ocean. Hearing your voices, the Navy withdrew its ill-conceived plan and promised to create a new Environmental Impact Statement that addressed concerns about impacts to fisheries, marine mammals, turtles, and hardbottom habitat.

On September 12, 2008, the Navy announced a new plan for its USWTR. But the only thing new about the plan is a change in its preferred location--this time off the northeast coast of Florida near Jacksonville and critical habitat for endangered Atlantic Right Whales. Again, the Navy's proposal fails to assess sonar's potential to cause significant harm to the marine environment. And the Navy repeats its failure to adopt common-sense protective measures it has used successfully in other places. **And even though the preferred alternative for the Navy's USWTR has moved to Florida, the Navy could change course and again locate the USWTR off the coast of North Carolina.**

Your voices must be heard again; we can ask the Navy to take another look at its plans, to better analyze the impacts of sonar and to protect the marine mammals, fish and sea turtles living off our shores. **Speak out** at one of the following hearings the Navy will hold on its USWTR proposal:

September 29, 2008

The Chincoteague Center  
6155 Community Drive  
Chincoteague, VA

The Navy's open house begins at 4:00 p.m. and the formal hearing begins at 7:00 p.m.

October 1, 2008

Crystal Coast Civic Center  
3505 Arendell Street  
Morehead City, NC

The Navy's open house begins at 6:00 p.m. and the formal hearing begins at 8:00 p.m.

October 6, 2008

The Sheraton North Charleston - Convention Center  
4770 Goer Drive  
North Charleston, SC

The Navy's open house begins at 5:00 p.m. and the formal hearing begins at 7:00 p.m.

October 7, 2008

The UNF University Center  
12000 Alumni Drive  
Jacksonville, FL

The Navy's open house begins at 5:00 p.m. and the formal hearing begins at 7:00 p.m.

The draft EIS can be read at [http://projects.earthtech.com/USWTR/EIS/DOEIS\\_2008.htm](http://projects.earthtech.com/USWTR/EIS/DOEIS_2008.htm).

## **2nd Environmental Impact Statement Concerning Sonar off North Carolina's Coast**

On September 12, the Navy also released its draft Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) for general sonar use and training in the Cherry Point Operating Area off North Carolina's coast. This draft EIS is available at <http://www.navycherrypointrangecomplexeis.com/EIS.aspx>. The Navy's documentation shows that even if USWTR is moved to the Florida coast, **North Carolina will still bear much of the brunt of the Navy's sonar training**, with many hundreds of hours of sonar use proposed for the Navy's operating areas in North Carolina's coastal waters. According to the Navy's own analysis, marine mammals would be significantly impacted by sonar *as much as 400,000 times each year* off North Carolina's coast. Nonetheless, the Navy refused to adopt mitigation measures that would help protect these and other marine animals.

In light of the Navy's failures and the real harm sonar poses to marine mammals and fish populations, please **urge the Navy to withdraw its draft EIS** and undertake a better analysis of sonar's impact on the marine environment and the people who depend on it.

Hearings on this draft EIS will be held in Beaufort, North Carolina on October 14 and in Wilmington, North Carolina on October 15. These public meetings begin at 5:00 p.m. with open houses and are concluded by formal hearings that begin at 7:00 p.m. The locations are:

North Carolina Maritime Museum  
315 Front Street  
Beaufort, NC

Best Western Coastline Inn & Convention Center  
503 Nutt Street  
Wilmington, NC

### **Comment Period**

The Navy is asking that all comments on these draft EISs be sent to them by October 27, 2008. This time frame is unrealistic considering the complexity of the issues. The Navy and its dozen of consultants and contractors have taken years to produce these documents. The USWTR document is over 1,000 pages long and the North Carolina document is nearly 700 pages long, yet the Navy expects citizens to study these documents and submit comments within 45 days - the minimum time required by federal law.

### **What You Can Do**

1. If you have not already done so, please go to [www.ncrus.org](http://www.ncrus.org) and click on **Contact Us** to register for fast breaking news about what the Navy is doing.
2. Attend, and speak at if you will, one of the hearings discussed above.
3. Send the attached message to every [elected official](#) you can and to the Navy asking that the comment periods on these two EIS documents be delayed until January 15, 2009. The address for the Navy is:

Naval Facilities Engineering Command, Atlantic  
Attention: Code EV22LL for USWTR and Code EV22SA for Cherry Point  
6506 Hampton Boulevard  
Norfolk, VA 23508-1278

The fax number for the USWTR document is (804) 200-5568. The fax number for the Cherry Point document is (757) 322-4894.

4. Stay alert for further guidance from NCRUS and our member / partner organizations about comment letters you might issue.
5. Forward this message to all your friends who care about ocean life and communities.
6. Send this message to the e-mail list that your organization maintains:

### **Sample Message Asking For an Extension of the Comment Periods until January 15**

#### **Re: Extra time needed for public comment on Navy's use of sonar**

Dear [Navy, US Senator, US Representative, Governor, Local Official, Candidate for Office, etc.]:

I am writing to ask for your help in extending the comment periods on two important documents recently published by the U.S. Navy.

On September 12, 2008, the Navy released its latest draft environmental impact statement (EIS) for its planned development of an Undersea Warfare Training Range off the southeast coast of the United States. The Navy proposes to locate its training range just off of Jacksonville, Florida, near designated critical habitat for endangered Atlantic Right Whales. Repeating mistakes it made three years ago when it first analyzed the proposal for such a training range, the Navy failed to properly analyze the impacts of repeated use of mid-frequency sonar on marine creatures in the area. Nor did it propose to adequately mitigate the harmful effects of sonar. Despite the fact that the draft EIS is over 1,000 pages long, the Navy has limited the time in which the public/citizens may submit comments to a 45-day period. This is the very minimum time frame required by federal law/NEPA.

On the same day, the Navy released a draft EIS for sonar and other naval training exercises off the coast of North Carolina, in the Cherry Point Operating Area. The Navy's own analysis indicates that North Carolina marine mammals in this area will be significantly impacted hundreds of thousands of times by its use of sonar each year. Yet the Navy has refused to adopt mitigation measures that would help protect these animals, even though it has used mitigation measures in other parts of the world's oceans. Once again, although the draft EIS for the Cherry Point sonar training is nearly 700 pages long, the Navy limited its comment period to 45 days.

In light of the Navy's failure to adequately analyze the impacts of repeated use of sonar on marine creatures, the dense information provided by the Navy in justifying its plans, and the simultaneous issuance of related documents, I urge you to ask the Navy for an extension of the comment period until January 15, 2009. Such an extension will give citizens the time to thoroughly analyze the Navy's proposals and submit comments on these critical issues.

Sincerely,

[Your Name]

