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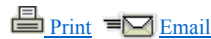
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## News Releases



For Immediate Release: July 29, 2008  
Contact: Kirsten Stade (202) 265-7337

### **NAVY SUED OVER PUGET SOUND DETONATIONS** — Underwater Demolition Program a Threat to Marine Life

Washington, DC — A federal lawsuit filed today charges that the U.S. Navy setting off scores of underwater explosive charges each year in some of the most sensitive waters of Puget Sound violates environmental statutes. Public Employees for Environmental Responsibility (PEER) and Wild Fish Conservancy also served legal notice that they would sue the Navy under the federal Endangered Species Act for the threat detonations pose to protected wildlife in the Sound.

On a regular basis, the U.S. Navy detonates live explosives in Puget Sound waters to provide “realistic” training for its divers in destroying and disabling mines. Unfortunately, the detonations also blow up marine life. In one exercise, for example, involving a five-pound explosive charge set off near Whidbey Island Naval Air Station, observers counted 1,000 dead fish on the surface but estimated that up to another 5,000 fish died and sank out of sight.

Since 2002, the National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS) have urged the Navy to change its practices to minimize damage to marine life, including deploying bubble curtains to drive away fish, using containers to muffle blast impacts or moving exercises to less sensitive sites such as submerged quarries or the open ocean rather than in the Puget Sound.

“The Navy has been repeatedly warned but apparently feels it does not have to comply with laws unless it is sued,” stated PEER Staff Counsel Adam Draper, whose organization also released a series of e-mails obtained under the Freedom of Information Act showing continuing frustration about Navy intransigence in the face of evidence about harm to wildlife. “We are not trying to block Navy demolition exercises; we are simply trying to induce the Navy to train without creating needless carnage.”

The Navy conducts approximately 60 demolition exercises each year, usually in the shallows of Crescent Harbor, Port Townsend and Hood Canal, using C4 plastic explosives, far more powerful than dynamite, in packets ranging in size from 2.5 to 20 pounds.

“The Navy doesn’t need to destroy Puget Sound’s wildlife at the same time they are training to protect us,” said Kurt Beardslee, Executive Director of Wild Fish Conservancy. “Juvenile

salmon and the food web of Puget Sound would be much better protected if the Navy would simply take the measures suggested by the government's own scientists."

The complaint filed today in U.S. District Court in Seattle by the law firm Smith & Lowney on behalf of PEER and Wild Fish Conservancy cites the Navy's failure to comply with the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) for ignoring the potential ecological effects of, and reasonable alternatives to, its underwater demolition program. PEER simultaneously served a notice of intent to sue on the Navy for violations of the Endangered Species Act, notably for impacts on federally protected species such as Chinook salmon, bull trout and marbled murrelets.

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[Read the complaint](#)

[View the accompanying notice of intent to sue under the Endangered Species Act](#)

[See NMFS and FWS negative response to Navy's assessment of impacts](#)

[Look at the Navy's dismissal of impacts on listed salmon](#)

[Examine growing FWS worries about effects on threatened marbled murrelets](#)

[Trace the background of the controversy](#)



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