By Electronic Mail

June 22, 2011

The Honorable Mike Thompson
United States Congress
231 Cannon Office Building
Washington, DC  20515

Re:  [Name of Amendment or other identifying information]

Dear Congressman Thompson:

On behalf of the undersigned groups and our millions of members and activists, many thousands of whom reside in Washington, Oregon, and Northern California, we are writing to express our appreciation and support for the amendment you are offering to the Department of Defense Appropriations Act, 2012 (H.R. 2219), [information identifying the amendment].

Your amendment, which would bar the use of FY 2012 funds for expanded training activities on the Navy’s Northwest Training Range Complex until the Navy receives a new letter of authorization from the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) for marine mammal takes, will help ensure that the Navy does not ramp-up activities on the range until NOAA has completed and incorporated an analysis of important habitat for mitigation purposes.

The Northwest Training Range Complex is 122,400 square nautical miles in size, spanning from Washington’s border with Canada to waters off of Northern California, a region of extraordinary biological diversity, and completely encompassing the 2,408 nm² Olympic Coast National Marine Sanctuary. Avoiding biologically important habitat is the most effective available means of reducing the impacts of mid-frequency sonar training, and many other types of naval training, on marine animals. Nonetheless, neither the Navy nor NMFS established any exclusion areas – or even special management areas requiring greater mitigation or procedural checks – anywhere within the 122,400 nm² range. Your amendment will ensure that future authorizations for expanded activities on the Northwest Range incorporate NOAA’s work identifying biologically significant habitat or “hotspots.”
Thank you for your leadership on this important matter. We deeply appreciate your ongoing support for our ocean environment and coastal resources.

Sincerely,

Zak Smith
Staff Attorney
NRDC