



Lincoln County Board of Commissioners

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November 3, 2010

Senator Ron Wyden
1220 SW 3rd Avenue
Suite 585
Portland, OR 97204

Senator Jeff Merkley
121 SW Salmon Street
Suite 1400
Portland, OR 97204

Representative Kurt Schrader
494 State Street
Suite 210
Salem, OR 97301

RE: Navy Northwest Training Range Complex

Dear Senator Wyden, Senator Merkley, and Representative Schrader:

Last year, we were in contact with your office to express our serious concerns about the Navy's plans regarding the Northwest Training Range Complex (NWTRC). At the same time, we submitted comments for the official record during the public comment period. We appreciated the positive response from you and your staff and your pledge at that time to do all that you could to insure that Oregon's interests are protected in this process. The most recent developments in this case lead us to the conclusion that continued oversight on your part is essential, and we strongly encourage you to take any steps that you deem appropriate on behalf of the people of Oregon.

Throughout this process, we have never questioned the need for the Navy to fulfill its training mission. However, the vagueness and secrecy that has surrounded this entire episode has caused us to question whether the Navy has done an adequate job of insuring meaningful public input and whether it has taken reasonable steps to mitigate or prevent damage to the environmental and economic health of Oregon's ocean. The vague assurances contained in the latest EIS are not enough when so much may be at stake.

Oregon has been a national, and even a world leader, in taking steps to recover fish populations. These efforts could be jeopardized by the Navy's activities. It seems foolish to allow the Navy to negatively impact threatened ocean resources when significant public resources are being invested at the state and local levels to protect them. Commercial and sport fishing are more than important elements of our coastal economy; they are inextricably a part of our coastal way of life.

The Navy's plans are also troubling in light of the move of NOAA's Pacific Research Fleet to the Oregon Coast. The NOAA fleet, when added to the existing scientific resources based at the OSU Hatfield Marine Science Center complex, promises to make Newport one of the premiere bases for ocean research in the country. It would truly be a shame to see our ocean subjected to potentially harmful activities at a time when we are poised to expand our important scientific work. Some of the work in the coming years could provide key data,

including information on the health of threatened marine mammal populations, that will be critical for informed decision-making the next time the Navy's permits come up for review. Without the work of the NOAA fleet and other scientists, we will find ourselves in this same situation next time.

Thank you for your continued vigilance on behalf of the people of the coast and all of Oregon. Please keep us informed about what steps you will take and how we can support your efforts.

Sincerely,


LINCOLN COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS



Bill Hall, Chair



Don Lindly, Commissioner



Terry N. Thompson, Commissioner