Range Sustainability

Importance of Navy Training

Realistic training is the single greatest asset the military has in preparing and protecting Navy personnel. “Train As We Fight” is not just a phrase. It is a statement of the absolute necessity to realistically train the men and women in uniform for the conditions in which they may find themselves while protecting the nation.

Realistic training requires access to areas and environments that closely match the locations where our military may face combat or complex situations. International events, changes in naval strategy, force structure, base closures, and population growth are increasing the challenges the Navy faces in training its personnel to be prepared to defend the nation. To respond to these challenges and increase the sustainability of Navy ranges, the Navy has launched a number of efforts aimed at preserving training ranges while also minimizing environmental effects of training activities. One such effort is the transition to managing training at a range complex-wide level to optimize the use of Navy ranges and provide for the efficient use of resources.

Navy Training

Comprehensive training is required to be prepared for real life combat situations and to provide maximum protection to service men and women who go in harm’s way. A variety of training exercises are conducted in the safe and controlled environments of the Navy’s range complexes, including:

- Gunnery & bombing
- Torpedo firing
- Aircraft operations
- Missile firing
- Vessel movements
- Mine hunting and detonation

What are Ranges?

“Ranges” are locations where the Navy personnel train to accomplish their mission of national defense. Ranges are grouped into complexes. A “range complex” is an organized and designated geographic area used by the Navy to conduct necessary activities and training exercises. Having a designated range complex allows our military to train and perform required exercises against a simulated enemy in an environment that is safe and controlled for our Sailors and for other users of the area. Ensuring sustained use of Navy ranges, operational areas and airspace is a growing challenge as encroachment from various sources limits and sometimes restricts their use. Yet Navy personnel require access to continued, consistent, and realistic training opportunities using ever-advancing technologies to defend our country.

Preserving Navy Training Ranges

The Navy has developed a comprehensive approach to “sustain” or preserve ranges for continued training access. The Tactical Training Theater Assessment and Planning "(TAP)" program is a multi-faceted approach focusing on:

Mission readiness and strategic vision;

Operational and training requirements, and enhanced range complex capabilities;

Environmental and encroachment issues;

Stakeholder and public involvement; and

Organizational efficiency.

The objectives of the TAP program are to ensure the readiness of Navy personnel and promote sustainability of Navy ranges. Preserving ranges means actively managing resources to promote sustainability, including protecting natural and cultural resources and minimizing effects on the environment.

The Next Phase of Environmental Planning

This EIS/OEIS furthers the objectives of the Navy's TAP Program and comprehensively analyzes Navy training and testing within the Northwest Range Complex. The Draft EIS/OEIS includes discussions regarding compliance with U.S. environmental laws and provides the opportunity for public review and comment. Comments received on the draft document will be addressed in the Final EIS/OEIS document.

Train As We Fight

Training to prepare for national defense also is required by Title 10 of the U.S. Code which states: "The Navy shall be organized, trained, and equipped primarily for prompt and sustained combat incident to operations at sea."

Navy training includes:

Navy personnel in the Northwest Training Range Complex participate in four levels of training:

Classroom and simulated training – usually using computers.

Unit level training - involves small groups of personnel or a single Ship or aircraft on its won.

Intermediate level training – involves exercises of strike groups operating together as large forces and may last several weeks. After completing this training, personnel are well-prepared and may be certified for deployment or other activities as required by the needs of the nation.

Advanced level training – involves training activities performed by Ships and submarines on or below the sea, and aircraft over land and sea. These exercises may involve multiple Services and foreign militaries.

Training activities in the range complex allow Navy personnel to learn skills they need to operate machinery or weapons. These activities provide realistic experiences and include:

- Operating vehicles, aircraft, submarines, and surface Ships;
- Conducting live fire training against surface and air targets at sea;
- Conducting airborne surveillance activities;
- Detecting, locating, and countering threat electronic signals; and
- Training Navy divers in a cold water environment.

Joint and multi-national exercises are larger training activities that occasionally bring together troops fro different branches of the U.S. military and military forces from allied nations to plan and conduct military activities at sea, in the air, and on land. The purpose of these exercises is to practice tactics, techniques, and procedures and to promote regional stability.

Navy operations in the Northwest Range Complex include the following:

Aircraft Training:

Training can include jet aircraft, helicopters and unmanned aerial systems, and can involve deployment of guns, missiles or sonobuoys used to detect underwater sounds. Training can be against a mock enemy ship, submarine or other aircraft. Unmanned aerial system events are predominantly used for training in surveillance and intelligence gathering.

Surface Training:

The Navy uses vessels ranging in size from rubber hull inflatable boats to aircraft carriers. Training can include activities geared toward improving navigation skills, object recognition through sonar use, underwater mine avoidance, and anti-terrorism measures. It can also involve gun or missile firings.

Subsurface Training:

Submarine training involves tracking ships or other submarines, and can include simulated attacks on surface ships or submarines. These activities may also involve the use of passive sonar (listening) for tracking purposes. Active sonar, which allows the Navy to "see" underwater by emitting pulses of sound, may also be used at a more limited level. (For more information about Navy use of sonar, please visit www.afasteis.gcsaic.com/sonar.aspx). Submarines also practice training activities for mobility in complex environments and situations, underwater mine avoidance and the deployment of special operations forces.

Research, Development, Test and Evaluation:

RDT&E activites include the development of new weapons systems or weapons delivery platforms. These activities allow the Navy to increase their understanding of the actual battlefield environment, improve weapon design and system performance, and maintain the technological edge necessary to meet future military requirements. RDT&E activities analyzed in the Northwest Training Range Complex EIS/OEIS are those which support current, emerging, and future training activities, primarily related to the use of Unmanned Aerial Systems (UASs).