

Story Updated.



## **PUBLIC PRESSURE WORKS!:** Navy relenting on DU use at NWTRC, animal killing is the next fight

by **Carol Van Strum**



Thu Apr 02, 2009 at 12:23:00 PM PDT

The U.S. Navy discovered Tuesday what adequate public notice means, when more than 100 people turned up at a special public information meeting of the Mendocino County Board of Supervisors. At the request of CA Congressman Mike Thompson, the Navy had sent representatives to Ukiah to answer questions about the Navy's Pacific Northwest Training Range Complex draft Environmental Impact Statement, or EIS. The history of the Navy's attempt to push through the NWTRC's EIS with little notice or time for public input can be found [here](#).

*The public also learned what informed public comments can accomplish, when Navy Project Manager John Mosher announced that due to comments already received on the EIS, the Navy has issued a directive ordering all Pacific Fleet ships to stop all use of depleted uranium, effective immediately, and to offload existing stocks of depleted uranium ordnance at the earliest opportunity.*

- **Carol Van Strum's diary** :: ::

In response to supervisors' questions, Mosher said that the depleted uranium (DU) would be disposed of as hazardous waste, and assured the supervisors that he would provide them with a copy of the written Navy directive. Present were Mendocino County Supervisors John Pinches, Kendall Smith, David Kolfax, John McCowan and Carre Brown.

The Navy was represented by John Mosher, project manager for the EIS, Kimberly Kler, environmental planner and also project manager, and Brian Wauer, Project Operations Specialist. Wauer is a military contractor whose expertise in environmental matters consists of degrees in administrative and industrial management.

After a well-rehearsed presentation of charts and summaries by Navy representatives, the supervisors opened the meeting to public comments and questions. For more than four hours, individuals – limited to three

minutes each -- criticized the Navy plans and raised questions, many of them well prepared with citations to scientific data and specific statements in the EIS. Their comments noted the uniform vagueness of the EIS, particularly its total lack of specific information about the Navy's past and present activities off the Northwest coast, which Mosher admitted were the "baseline" for assessing impacts of increasing such activities.

Other commenters raised pointed questions about the toxic chemicals the Navy leaves behind to pollute Pacific waters, and many emphasized the Navy's admission that its sonar activities alone will "take" the lives and/or health of 32 species of marine mammals. A repeated comment was that the Navy should not be allowed to proceed with its plans.

The Navy's responses to questions were at best superficial. Kimberly Kler, the Navy's environmental planner and project manager, answered all questions about effects of explosions and sonar on fish and other marine life by referring to NOAA's National Marine Fisheries Service reports that were not included in the EIS. The Navy evaded most questions with what one viewer called "canned irrelevancies," and on occasion outright misinformation.

For example, Mr. Wauer claimed that the Navy's estimates of marine mammal 'takes' (a euphemism for actions defined by the Endangered Species Act as "to harass, harm, pursue, hunt, shoot, wound, kill, trap, capture or collect..." ) include all exposures to sonar going down to ambient levels. "This is untrue," says Natural Resources Defense Council (NRDC) attorney, Taryn Kiekow. "The Navy sets specific thresholds for temporary and permanent injury, as well as behavioral effects, that are significantly higher than ambient levels (which is why the Navy would consider it to be an effect in the first place)."

A number of Vietnam veterans and at least one Navy Gulf War veteran said bluntly that they in particular had no reason to trust anything the Navy or military said; one veteran quite eloquently listed the government's lies that Agent Orange was safe, that federal forest spraying was safe, that depleted uranium was safe. Only one member of the public spoke in favor of the Navy's proposed actions, a Navy veteran whose daughter was currently in the Navy. His statement that he wanted her to get the best training the Navy could give was almost identical to the only statement in favor given by another Navy parent at the Tillamook, Oregon, public meeting on February 26, 2009.

Following public comment, Supervisor Kendall Smith read and summarized NRDC's comments on the EIS as well as a letter from Humboldt County Supervisors, criticizing the Navy's extremely poor public notice, its inadequate discussion of behavioral and sub-lethal effects of sonar on marine animals and fish, and its total failure to explain the need to expand the Navy's training operations. The Mendocino supervisors asked questions of their own, and with one unpleasant dissent (Supervisor John Pinches), agreed to draft a letter, modeled on the comments prepared by NRDC, to be sent to congressional delegations of California, Oregon, and Washington. The draft letter will be discussed at the next board meeting, scheduled for April 7.

Even as the Navy asserts in public meetings and in its EIS that its mitigation measures -- which consist of posting a lookout on the ship's bow to look for whales -- are adequate to protect marine mammals, **the Navy**

simultaneously has requested authorization from NOAA's National Marine Fisheries Service to "take" - - i.e., maim, kill, and harass -- individuals of 32 species of marine mammals in the waters off the Northwest coast. The Navy asks permission to "take" 129,112 individuals per year, for a total of 5 years and 645,560 "takes."

**TO TAKE ACTION ON NAVY PLAN TO KILL MARINE MAMMALS:**

*The National Marine Fisheries Service will accept public comments on the Navy's request until April 10, 2009.* The Navy's request is reported in the **Federal Register**, Vol. 74, No. 46, Wednesday, March 11, 2009/Notices, page 10557, or found [here](#).

<b>Address</b>	<b>Public</b>	<b>Comments</b>	<b>to</b>	<b>NOAA</b>	<b>c/o:</b>
<i>Michael Payne, Chief, Permits Conservation and Education Division, Office of Protected Resources,</i>					
<i>National</i>		<i>Marine</i>		<i>Fisheries</i>	<i>Service</i>
<i>1315</i>	<i>East-West</i>	<i>Highway,</i>	<i>Silver</i>	<i>Spring,</i>	<i>MD</i>
					<i>20910-3225.</i>

The mailbox address for providing email comments is [PR1.0648-XN87@noaa.gov](mailto:PR1.0648-XN87@noaa.gov).

**TO TAKE ACTION AND MAKE COMMENT ON THE NAVY'S EIS:**

To read the Navy EIS, click [here](#).

Go [here](#) to file comments on Navy EIS on-line.

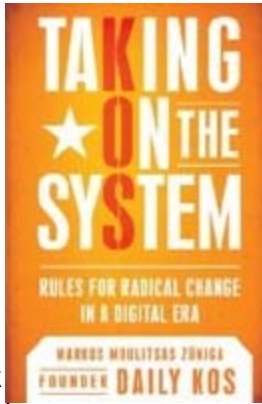
**OR TO SEND COMMENTS BY SNAIL MAIL WRITE TO:**

Naval Facilities Engineering Command Northwest, 1101 Tautog Circle, Suite 203 Silverdale, Washington 98315  
ATTN: Mrs. Kimberly Kler – NWTRC

**THE DEADLINE FOR PUBLIC COMMENT ON THE NAVY EIS IS APRIL 13.**

Contact all of your elected officials today – Ask for more Public Hearings – File Public Comment Complaints – and ask your elected officials to Extend the Public Comment Deadline and oppose this Navy Warfare Testing program.

**Tags:** [Navy](#), [environment](#), [Northwest Target Range Complex](#), [DU](#), [marine animal protection](#) ([all tags](#)) :: [Previous Tag Versions](#)



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