

United States Senate

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June 17, 2009

The Honorable Ray Mabus
Secretary of the Navy
1000 Navy Pentagon
Washington, D.C. 20350-1000

Dear Secretary Mabus:

It is my understanding that the United States Navy intends to increase range capabilities and expand activity in its Northwest Training Range Complex (NWTRC), which extends 250 nautical miles west from the coastline, and spans parts of Washington, Oregon, and Northern California. In accordance with the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) of 1969, the Navy has prepared an Environmental Impact Statement/Overseas Environmental Impact Statement (EIS/OEIS) to assess environmental impacts of the proposed changes in training exercises to be conducted in this area.

I am writing to express concern about the potential environmental impact of these exercises, and to urge the United States Navy to carefully consider the public comments and scientific information gathered for the EIS/OEIS in order to reduce any negative environmental impacts. It is my hope that the Navy will take every possible step to protect the environment while continuing to train our service men and woman effectively.

I am particularly concerned about the potential for these exercises to harm marine life. The EIS cites nine marine mammal species living in the NWTRC that are listed as endangered or threatened. There are also several productive fisheries in the area. I urge the Navy to fully explore the impacts of sonar, underwater detonations, and chemical discharges on marine organisms and to implement effective mitigation measures.

I am hopeful that the Navy will identify measures to preserve our valuable marine and coastal habitats while ensuring military readiness. I appreciate your consideration of this important matter and your continued commitment to protecting our national security.

Sincerely,



Barbara Boxer
United States Senator