



SWITCHBOARD

Natural Resources Defense Council Staff Blog

Zak Smith's Blog

Harm of Staggering Proportions to Southern California and Hawaii Whales from Navy Training



Posted May 11, 2012 in [Reviving the World's Oceans, Saving Wildlife and Wild Places](#)

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Whales and dolphins will be harmed more than 14 million times in Southern California and Hawaii waters by proposed Navy training and testing activities released this week. According to the [Navy's draft environmental impact statement for its Hawaii and Southern California activities](#), 2 million of those 14 million "takes" will result in temporary hearing loss and 2,000 cases of permanent hearing loss.

Temporary hearing loss is an incredibly serious issue for animals that use hearing the way we use sight and, in a similar vein, it's likely game over for any whales or dolphins that suffer permanent hearing loss. And speaking of game over, the Navy estimates that its training and testing with explosives will kill 1,000 animals over the next five years.

These numbers are staggering. About five years ago when the Navy analyzed the impact its training would have on Southern California and Hawaii whales and dolphins, it estimated that the animals would be harmed 770,000 times. Now the number has jumped to more than 14 million. While we need to spend more time reviewing the document, it appears that two things are driving this dramatic increase. First, the Navy is planning on ramping up the tempo of its training: more training means more harm to marine mammals. Second, the Navy has made changes to its analysis based on advances in the scientific literature on how noise impacts marine mammals. Every year we learn more about how whales and dolphins are impacted by sounds at much lower intensities than previously thought.



While the Navy's understanding of how much harm its activities cause marine mammals has increased, it hasn't taken any corresponding steps to minimize this staggering level of harm. Its mitigation protocol remains largely unchanged, with the Navy refusing to set aside areas of high marine mammal density where sonar should not be used. This means sensitive breeding and foraging habitats and biologically unique areas within the training area can still be used for sonar and underwater explosives training. We know that safeguarding specific areas of sensitive habitat is the best way to lessen harm to whales and dolphins from sonar and other activities -- don't use the technology in the same areas where whale and dolphin numbers are high or during breeding seasons. Faced with such incredible numbers and levels of harm, the Navy must do more to identify and set aside portions of its training areas (areas often the size of large states, like California) where it will not conduct training and testing.

NRDC will continue to lead the fight to minimize the harm to marine mammals from the Navy's activities as detailed in our [Lethal Sounds](#) site.

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Corinne Gaudet — [May 11 2012 08:38 PM](#)

The Navy should give up warfare technology and go down to the Gulf and have their divers go swim in the Corexit filled water and see how long they last along with their New World Order. They would not even use straw to absorb the oil in the Gulf but have shown the world that they are criminal liars along with our faceless public servants.

Go ask Victor Schauburger who said about the criminal U.S. Government :

"They took everything from me, everything. I don't even own myself anymore". The Great Austrian Naturalist who said that Nature is My Teacher.

They have become Death, Destroyer of Worlds.

BS — [May 11 2012 09:51 PM](#)

Corinne,

Have you ever put straw in water? It absorbs water. That's why they never used all those absorbant materials that people said would absorb all the oil.

Sure, it absorbed oil if you put it in oil. If you put it in water that has oil in it, it absorbs mostly water. Hence, ineffective.

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