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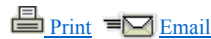
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## News Releases



For Immediate Release: July 3, 2006  
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### **NAVY CONTINUES UP TO 300 DETONATIONS PER YEAR IN PUGET SOUND — Promised Environmental Mitigation Measures “Floundering” Due to Navy Resistance**

Olympia — The U.S. Navy sets off between 180 and 300 underwater explosive charges each year in some of the most sensitive waters of Puget Sound, according to documents released today by Public Employees for Environmental Responsibility (PEER). Despite promises, four years ago after PEER first revealed the existence of the extensive Puget Sound demolition program, to conduct environmental reviews, measures to protect threatened or endangered marine mammals, fish and aquatic plants have yet to materialize.

Several times each month, the U.S. Navy detonates live explosives deep underwater to provide “realistic” training for its divers in destroying and disabling mines. Unfortunately, the detonations also blow up marine life. In one exercise, for example, involving a five-pound explosive charge set off near Whidbey Island Naval Air Station, observers counted 5,000 dead fish on the surface but estimated that up to another 20,000 fish died and sank out of sight to the seabed.

The Navy conducts approximately 60 demolition exercises each year, at least three every month, using three to five C4 plastic explosives, far more powerful than dynamite, in packets ranging in size from five to 20 pounds, often set off with 20 pound blasting charges.

Since 2002, the National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS), the two civilian agencies charged with enforcing the Endangered Species Act, have urged the Navy to undertake alternative training practices to minimize damage to marine life, such as using bubble curtains or other containers to minimize blast impacts, or conducting the training in quarries, lakes or the open ocean rather than in the waters of Puget Sound, a designated Essential Fish Habitat under the Sustainable Fisheries Act.

“Why are taxpayers spending millions to preserve Puget Sound when another government agency is busy blowing it up?” asked Washington PEER Director Sue Gunn, noting that the Navy is resisting her document requests filed under the Freedom of Information Act for the Navy’s own studies. “No one seeks to deny the Navy realistic demolition training opportunities but the question is whether the Navy is being a good neighbor by failing to minimize unnecessary harm caused by its explosive ordnance operations.”

According to documents obtained by PEER from the civilian services, both NMFS and FWS rejected the Navy's self-assessment that its demolition exercises were "not likely to adversely affect" federally protected species such as Chinook salmon, Stellar sea lions, humpback whales and bull trout. The Navy, in turn, rejected the services' suggestions for environmental mitigation. According to notes from a June 2, 2005 interagency meeting:

"Some conservation measures floundering – not being moved forward because no pressure."

"We are going to make it our business to bring sufficient pressure to move this glacial interagency consultation process off the dime," Gunn added, pointing out that the Navy exercises are often conducted in sensitive shallows such as Crescent Harbor, Port Townsend and Hood Canal. "National security does not demand that the Navy inflict maximum environmental damage in the waters it is supposed to defend."

###

[Read the April 18, 2002 letter from NMFS and FWS rejecting the Navy's biological assessment](#)

[View the July 8, 2002 reply from the U.S. Navy](#)

[Look at the March 30, 2004 NMFS/FWS letter describing status of Endangered Species Act consultation](#)

[Scan the agenda and notes from June 2, 2005 "Navy Underwater Explosive Ordnance Training Meeting"](#)



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