



Sample Comments on the Olympic Coast National Marine Sanctuary June 10, 2020

Feel free to use the sample parts with which you agree. Add your own ideas and sentiments. Most of all, please comment to help save the Olympic Coast National Marine Sanctuary from Navy training destruction. **Thank you!**

DATE: Comments and information must be received no later than **July 17, 2020**.

ADDRESSES: You may submit comments on the document, referencing **NOAA-NMFS-2020-0055** (Docket ID)

- **Electronic submission:** Go to www.regulations.gov/document?D=NOAA-NMFS-2020-0055-0001 to submit your electronic public comments. Click the "Comment Now" button, complete the required fields, and enter and/or attach your comments.
- **Mail:** Submit written comments:

Dear Jolie Harrison, Chief
Permits and Conservation Division,
Office of Protected Resources,
National Marine Fisheries Service
1315 E West Hwy
Silver Spring, MD 20910

Re: NOAA-NMFS-2020-0055

I (We) have learned that NOAA is in the process of reissuing a seven-year Incidental Take Authorization permit to the Navy, that will allow its training activities to continue in the Olympic Coast National Marine Sanctuary beginning Nov. 2020. Agreeing to these activities for an additional seven years would be extremely damaging to this valuable Sanctuary. I (We) have several objections to this permit.

The permit would allow the following: Explosive detonations, sonar activity, small- and medium-caliber gunnery exercises, firing from aircraft at targets, firing from ships at targets, large-caliber gunnery exercises, missile exercises, and torpedo (explosive) testing.

These activities would cause extreme noise, add unnatural chemicals to the ocean and seashores, cause physical damage to wildlife (some threatened and endangered), and litter the area with training debris. This would harm marine mammals, seabirds, fishery habitat, and other marine assets in the Sanctuary and the areas around it. If this were not true, the permit would not be needed.

While this permit supersedes two prior permits, with the increase in the number of activities and the types of activities, it is time for the Navy to move out of this area. The Olympic Coast National Marine Sanctuary is dedicated to the preservation of habitat for sea creatures, many of which are endangered and threatened.

The training activity alone is enough to be dangerous to the sea creatures of the Sanctuary. But it does not end there. These activities leave debris that is difficult to remove. Debris in the ocean is often mistaken as food by a variety of creatures. Ropes, cables, etc., lost during these types of operations end up entangling turtles and a variety of marine mammals, causing injury at the least, death at the worst.

Should the permitting continue I (We) believe the Sanctuary would be unacceptably damaged by the continuation and increase of the Navy's training activities. These activities would harm marine mammals, sea turtles, seabirds, fishery habitat, and other marine assets in the Sanctuary, many of whom are threatened or endangered. The activities cited by the Navy would cause long-term damage to the Sanctuary ecosystem which NOAA is supposed to protect as its administrator.

The Navy attempts to claim reduced environmental damage with the promise of mitigation. Ecosystem health cannot be mitigated. Ecosystems are like organisms: when parts are reduced or removed from an organism, the organism cannot function as it once did. The only useful mitigation is not to use the Sanctuary for military training. Cannot the Navy find another area out of the other 99.5% of American shoreline to conduct these exercises?

This permit violates NOAA's own RECOVERY PLAN FOR U.S. PACIFIC POPULATIONS OF THE LEATHERBACK TURTLE (*Dermochelys coriacea*) prepared by the Pacific Sea Turtle Recovery Team for the National Marine Fisheries Service, Silver Spring, Maryland, and the Pacific Region, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Portland, Oregon. This report declares it an endangered species throughout its range. That range includes the Olympic Coast National Marine Sanctuary. The report continues, "In the Pacific, leatherback populations are in severe decline and recovery actions must be given the highest priority."

The concern is it would cause long-term damage to the Sanctuary ecosystem NOAA is supposed to protect.

There are many miles of American coastal shoreline available that is not within an area set aside for environmental protection. National defense is important to our future well-being. A healthy environment is also important to us and the generations to follow. These areas provide sources of current and future food and medicines because their ecosystems have been kept intact. That is as important as protection from an enemy country. Our future will depend on our knowledge and protection of the environment. Our country can do both.

Sincerely,

Your Name & Address

SAMPLE EMAIL TO MEMBERS OF CONGRESS

Dear Senator Murray,
Dear Senator Cantwell,
Dear Senator _____, (not Washington state resident)
Dear Representative _____,

(See Members of Congress links on olympicparkassociates.org to find)

I (We) have learned that NOAA is in the process of reissuing a seven-year Incidental Take Authorization permit to the Navy, allowing its training activities in the Olympic Coast National Marine Sanctuary starting Nov. 2020. Agreeing to these activities for an additional seven years would be extremely damaging to this valuable Sanctuary. I (We) have several objections to this permit.

I (We) contend the Navy's training activities in the Sanctuary would cause extreme damage to the Sanctuary's environment. The permit would allow the following: Explosive detonations, sonar activity, small- and medium-caliber gunnery exercises, firing from aircraft at targets, firing from ships at targets, large-caliber gunnery exercises, missile exercises, and torpedo (explosive) testing.

These activities would cause extreme noise, add unnatural chemicals to the ocean and seashores, cause physical damage to wildlife (some threatened and endangered), and litter the area with training debris. This would harm marine mammals, sea turtles, seabirds, fishery habitat, and other marine assets in the Sanctuary and the areas around it. If this were not true, the permit would not be needed. The concern is it would cause long-term damage to the Sanctuary ecosystem NOAA is supposed to protect.

The Navy admits in its EIS that "Noise is of particular concern to marine mammals because many species use sound as a primary sense for navigating, finding prey, avoiding predators, and communicating with other individuals. Noise may cause marine mammals to leave a habitat, impair their ability to communicate, or cause physiological stress." Also, "Noise can cause behavioral disturbances, mask other sounds including their own vocalizations, may result in injury, and in some cases may result in behaviors that ultimately lead to death."

This permit violates NOAA's own *RECOVERY PLAN FOR U.S. PACIFIC POPULATIONS OF THE LEATHERBACK TURTLE (Dermochelys coriacea)* prepared by the Pacific Sea Turtle Recovery Team for the National Marine Fisheries Service, Silver Spring, Maryland, and the Pacific Region, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Portland, Oregon. This report declares it an endangered species throughout its range. That range includes the Olympic Coast National Marine Sanctuary. The report continues, "In the Pacific, leatherback populations are in severe decline and recovery actions must be given the highest priority."

The Navy attempts to claim reduced environmental damage with the promise of mitigation. Ecosystem health cannot be mitigated. Ecosystems are like organisms: When organs are reduced or removed from an organism, the organism cannot function as it once did. The only useful mitigation is not to use the Sanctuary for military training. Cannot the Navy find another area out of the other 99.5% of American shoreline to conduct these exercises?

There are many miles of American coastal shoreline available that are not within an area set aside for environmental protection. The Olympic Coast National Marine Sanctuary is particularly important because of its immediate proximity to Olympic National Park. Both were created to protect part of the natural assets and beauty of the Olympic Peninsula.

National defense is important to our future well-being. A healthy environment is also important to us and the generations to follow. It will provide current and future food and medicines that are as important as protection from an enemy country. Our future will also depend on our knowledge and protection of the environment.

Sincerely,

Your Name & Address

(Your name and address are needed so they know you can vote for them. They can ignore you otherwise.)