

# YOUR Help Is Needed! Unique and in danger – the Olympic Coast National Marine Sanctuary

The ocean we see when we go to the Park's ocean strip or climb an Olympic mountain needs our help. It's the ocean where the Olympic Park's Marbled Murrelets go for fish. It's the ocean where salmon, halibut, cod and other fish feed in its rich upwellings. It's where sea turtles and 29 species of marine mammals, some endangered or threatened, spend part of their lives. Its waves wash the coastal wildlife refuges created by Theodore Roosevelt in 1907. Olympic Park Associates (OPA) asks for your help to protect it.

OPA contends that the National Oceanic Atmospheric Administration (NOAA), the administrative guardian of the Sanctuary, has failed to live up to its responsibility.

Five years ago, NOAA issued an Incidental Take Authorization permit to the Navy for their training activities in the Sanctuary. The permit allows incidental taking (killing) of marine mammals that would happen during Navy training activities in the Sanctuary. OPA discovered the 2015 permit by accident on the internet, six months after it was issued.

The training activities listed in the Navy's permit application are for much more than using sonobuoys to detect submarines, as the Navy did during the Cold War. Now they include 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.

OPA argues that NOAA needs to back up in its process for this permit. To impress NOAA, we need emails and letters to go to NOAA. To be sure NOAA hears us, emails are also needed to go to your U.S. Senators and congressional Representatives. Ask them to communicate with NOAA regarding your concerns about the permit and the harm it would do to the sea creatures of this valuable sanctuary.

OPA fails to see how these activities would not be disruptive to the mission of the Sanctuary. OPA feels this disruption would also result in damage to the Olympic National Park's ecosystem.

OPA contends that understanding Nature and its processes are vital to human wellbeing. As a protector of the Park for more than 70 years, OPA also helped to create the Olympic Coast National Marine Sanctuary (OCNMS) as a natural companion to the Park and its ecosystems. The interaction of land and sea is vital to the Earth's fruitful roles in human existence.

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?

To preserve sanctuaries, like wilderness, is to preserve libraries and laboratories for natural species and processes. By preserving some ecosystems and using them in ways that keep them whole, we gain multiple benefits. We save hundreds of species and their habitats. By studying these places, we learn how they work. They remain as sources of food and medicines for current and future diseases. Also, like trees on land, algae in the ocean absorb carbon dioxide and provide much of the Earth's oxygen. A healthy ocean is necessary for our successful living on Earth.

Navy training is needed BUT NOT in the Sanctuary or over Olympic National Park. Please tell NOAA and Congress now how you feel.

Following is what lives in this Sanctuary and is endangered by these activities. Twentynine species of marine mammals reside in or migrate through the Sanctuary and are endangered by these activities.

#### First are the regulars:

Sea Otter Enhydra lutris California sea lion Zalophus californianus Northern sea lion Eumpetopias jubatus Northern fur seal Callorhin usursinus Pacific harbor seal Phoca vitulina Northern elephant seal Mirounga angustirostris California gray whale Eschrichtius robustus **Endangered** Minke whale Balaenoptera acutorostrata Humpback whale Megaptera novaeangliae **Threatened** Risso's dolphin Grampus griseus Killer whale Orcinus orca **Endangered** Northern right whale dolphin Lissodelphis borealis Pacific white-sided dolphin Lagenorhynchus obliquidens Dall's porpoise Phocoenoides dalli

#### These mammals are more rare:

Northern right whale Eubalaena glacialis Fin whale Balaenoptera physalus **Endangered** Sei Whale Balaenoptera borealis **Endangered** Blue whale Balaenoptera musculus **Endangered** Sperm whale Physeter macrocephalus **Endangered** Pygmy sperm whale Kogia breviceps Stejneger's beaked whale Mesoplodon stejnegeri Hubb's beaked whale Mesoplodon carlhubbsi Cuvier's beaked whale Beradius bairdii Short-finned pilot whale Beradius bairdii Short-finned pilot whale Globicephala macrorhynchus False killer whale Pseudorca crassidens Common dolphin Delphinus delphis Striped dolphin Stenella coeruleoalba Harbor porpoise Pocoena phocoena These are not all that could be harmed by the Navy's activities. Here are quotes about the value of the Sanctuary from NOAA's own websites:

"The diverse and abundant fish fauna in Olympic Coast National Marine Sanctuary are significant commercial and recreational resources. Although Olympic Coast National Marine Sanctuary does not host breeding colonies or high numbers of sea turtles, they tend to roam widely ... "

"Seabirds and marine mammals are among the most charismatic and iconic animals that attract sanctuary visitors and supporters - the spouts and flukes of gray whales in migration, the colorful feathers and bills on tufted puffins in breeding plumage. For marine wildlife, the Olympic Coast is a complex and thriving region with highly productive waters that supports and attracts this nationally significant wildlife breeding and foraging area. For scientists, marine wildlife are megafauna (or large animals) that can serve as indicators of ecosystem health and productivity." There is more info at <u>olympiccoast.noaa.gov/</u>.

The Marbled Murrelet, Western Snowy Plover, and Short-tailed Albatross are birds that are threatened or endangered and have been found in the Sanctuary.

### RECOVERY PLAN FOR U.S. PACIFIC POPULATIONS OF THE LEATHERBACK TURTLE (Dermochelys coriacea) repository.library.noaa.gov/view/noaa/15968

Prepared by the Pacific Sea Turtle Recovery Team for National Marine Fisheries Service, Silver Spring, Maryland, and Pacific Region, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Portland, Oregon

# **Current Status:**

The leatherback turtle is listed as Endangered throughout its range. In the Pacific, leatherback populations are in severe decline and recovery actions must be given the highest priority. Primary threats to the species are incidental take in coastal and high seas fisheries, and the killing of nesting females and collecting of eggs at the nesting beaches. The United States does not have any nesting of leatherbacks in its jurisdiction in the Pacific, but has important foraging areas on the continental U.S. west coast and near the Hawaiian Islands. It is likely that stocks in U.S. waters originate in Mexico and Central America, though some may originate from Southeast Asia as well. While not directly classified as a threat, the lack of information on the movement patterns and habitat needs of this entirely pelagic species (leatherbacks are the only species which remains pelagic throughout its life) is severely hampering recovery efforts and must be addressed as a high priority.

# Goal:

The recovery goal is to de-list the species.

Recovery Criteria:

To consider de-listing, all of the following criteria must be met:

1) All regional stocks that use U.S. waters have been identified to source beaches based on reasonable geographic parameters.

2) Each stock must average 5,000 (or a biologically reasonable estimate based on the goal of maintaining a stable population in perpetuity) females estimated to nest annually (FENA) over six years.

3) Nesting populations at "source beaches" are either stable or increasing over a 25-year monitoring period.

4) Existing foraging areas are maintained as healthy environments.

5) Foraging populations are exhibiting statistically significant increases at several key foraging grounds within each stock region.

6) All Priority #1 tasks have been implemented.

7) A management plan designed to maintain sustained populations of turtles is in place.

### Actions Needed:

Five major actions are needed to achieve recovery (not in order of priority):

1) Eliminate incidental take of leatherbacks in U.S. and international commercial fisheries.

2) Support the efforts of Mexico and the countries of Central America to census and

protect nesting leatherbacks, their eggs, and nesting beaches.

3) Determine movement patterns, habitat needs and primary foraging areas for the species throughout its range.

4) Determine population size and status in U.S. waters through regular aerial or on-water surveys.

Leatherbacks also can die if they ingest floating plastic debris mistaken for their favorite food: jellyfish. Some individuals have been found to have almost 11 pounds of plastic in their stomachs.

In the 1,800-page EIS, the Navy quotes studies on noise and its effect on marine mammals. It further heightens OPA's concern.

"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 (Cholewiak et al., 2018; Courbis & Timmel, 2008; Erbe, 2002; Erbe et al., 2016; Hildebrand, 2009; Holt et al., 2017; Putland et al., 2018; Rolland et al., 2012; Southall et al., 2018; Tyack et al., 2011; Tyne et al., 2017; Williams et al., 2014b). 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 (Erbe et al., 2014; Erbe et al., 2016; National Research Council, 2003, 2005; Nowacek et al., 2007; Southall et al., 2009; Tsujii et al., 2018; Tyack, 2009; Wuïsig & Richardson, 2009)." [p. 3.4- 21 V-1 Northwest Training and Testing Draft Supplemental EIS/OEIS March 2019]

Four of the seven living species of sea turtles including leatherback (Dermochelys coriacea), loggerhead (Caretta caretta), olive ridley (Lepidochelys olivacea), and green (Chelonia mydas) have the potential to be found in the NWTT Action Area. The three hard-shell turtles of the Cheloniidae family (loggerhead, olive ridley, and green) are considered tropical, subtropical, and warm temperate species that rarely stray into cold waters (Eckert 1993b). Most hard-shell turtles seek optimal seawater temperatures near 65 degrees Fahrenheit (°F) (18.3 degrees Celsius [°C]) and are cold-stressed at seawater temperatures below 50°F (10°C) (Mrosovsky 1980; Schwartz 1978). Under certain oceanographic conditions (e.g., warmer currents), all four species could occur off the Washington and Oregon coasts (and occasionally in Alaska waters). However, the cold waters off Washington and Oregon are above the typical northern limits for the three hard-shell turtles; therefore, these species are considered rare in the NWTT Action Area. In contrast, leatherback sea turtles regularly occur in cold temperate waters characteristic of higher latitudes (Eckert et al. 1989a; Pritchard 1982b).