POINT MUGU SEA RANGE

Environmental Impact Statement/ Overseas Environmental Impact Statement

The U.S. Navy is preparing an Environmental Impact Statement/Overseas Environmental Impact Statement for the Point Mugu Sea Range.

INTRODUCTION

The U.S. Navy must test and train with new technologies to defend the United States and its interests. Sailors must be ready to respond to many different situations when called upon. Equipment and systems must also be tested prior to deployment and operational use. To ensure accuracy and safety, systems are tested in varying marine environments. The offshore areas of Southern California are critical testing and training areas for the Navy.

Using the most current, best available science and analytical methods, the Navy is preparing an Environmental Impact Statement/Overseas Environmental Impact Statement (EIS/OEIS) for the Point Mugu Sea Range. The Navy proposes to continue conducting research, development, testing, and evaluation and training activities (hereinafter referred to as "testing and training activities") within the Point Mugu Sea Range EIS/OEIS Study Area (hereinafter referred to as the "Study Area") as analyzed in the March 2002 Point Mugu Sea Range Final EIS/OEIS (hereinafter referred to as the "2002 EIS/OEIS"). The Study Area is depicted in Figure 1. The environmental impact analysis will support the issuance of federal regulatory permits and authorizations under the Marine Mammal Protection Act and the Endangered Species Act.

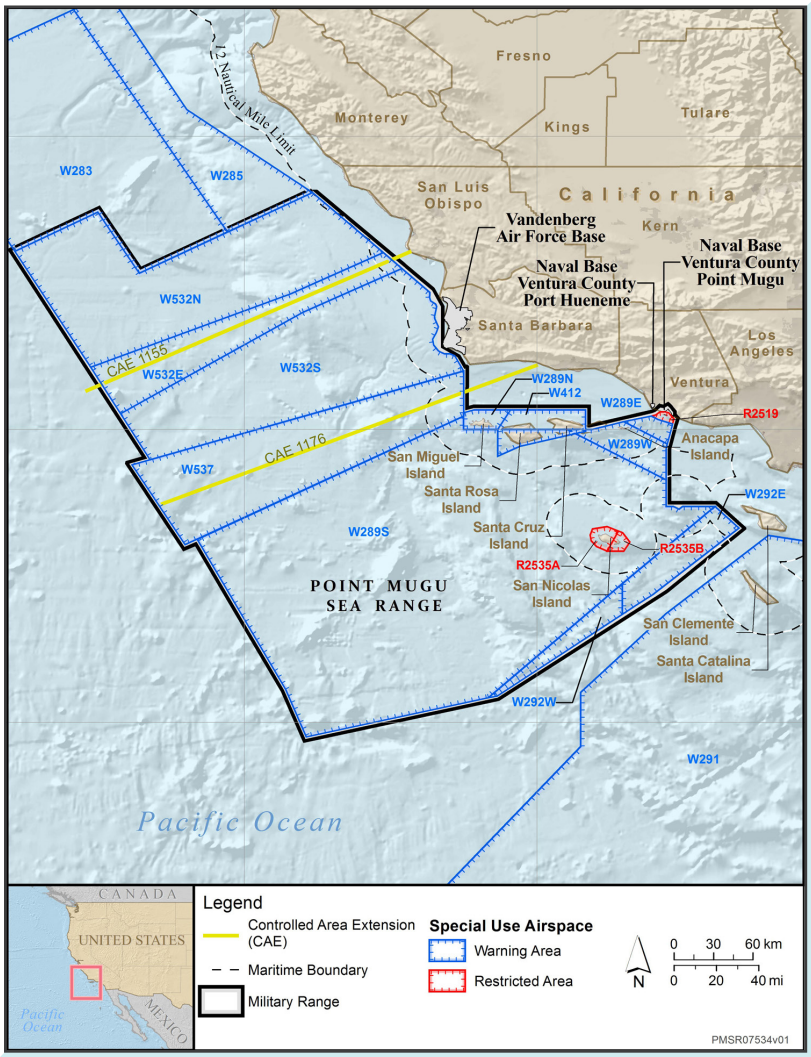
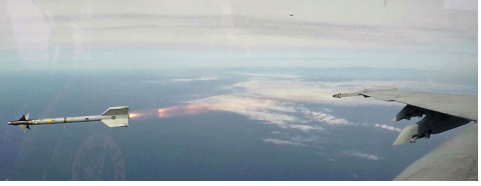


Figure 1. The Study Area includes the Point Mugu Sea Range, which consists of 36,000 square miles of controlled sea and airspace designated for military testing and training.



The **purpose** of the Proposed Action is to:

1. Provide modern instrumented airspace and sea space, maneuver areas, testing and training areas, and range infrastructure to fully support current, emerging, and future testing and training requirements; and
2. Ensure the long-term viability of the Point Mugu Sea Range while protecting human health and the environment.

The Proposed Action is **needed** to allow for continued testing and training activities in support of military readiness and Department of Defense mission requirements as required by Title 10 to provide combat ready forces.

The Navy has conducted testing and training activities in the Study Area for decades.

PROPOSED ACTION

The Navy proposes to continue conducting testing and training activities within the Study Area as analyzed in the 2002 EIS/OEIS. The majority of the proposed testing and training activities are similar to those that have occurred in the Study Area for decades. The Proposed Action also accommodates:

- An increase in the frequency of activities
- New mission areas
- New platforms (such as aircraft and vessels)

The type and frequency of testing and training activities can change due to the introduction of new technologies, the evolving nature of international events, advances in warfighting doctrine and procedures, and changes in force structure (organization of ships, submarines, aircraft, and weapons). Such developments can influence the frequency, duration, intensity, and location of required testing and training activities. The Proposed Action reflects the most current set of activities deemed necessary to accomplish the Navy mission in the Study Area.

Testing and training activities conducted within the Study Area include the use of:

- Aircraft
- Vessels
- Targets
- Ordnance
- Electronic warfare
- Biodegradable polymer vessel stopping payloads
- Direct energy systems/weapons
- Laser systems/weapons
- Radar and microwave systems
- Electromagnetic railgun/systems/weapons
- Unmanned systems

EVALUATING ALTERNATIVES

The National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) requires federal agencies to evaluate a range of reasonable alternatives to achieve the purpose of and need for the Proposed Action. Using the most current and best available science, the Navy will consider and analyze a no action alternative and action alternatives that support required military readiness activities into the reasonably foreseeable future.

During the scoping period, the public helps to identify potential environmental issues and viable alternatives for consideration in the Draft EIS/OEIS.

PUBLIC ACCESS AND SAFETY

The safety of the public and military personnel is of utmost importance. The Navy implements safety precautions when testing and training, including:

- Notifying commercial, civilian, and other military aviation through a Notice to Airmen
- Notifying commercial shipping, fishing, and recreational boating through a Notice to Mariners and daily VHF-FM Marine Radio (Channel 16) broadcasts
- Designating a safety area around potentially dangerous activities
- Using a surveillance system (land, sea, and air-based radar) to ensure areas are clear of civilians
- Tracking a missile's location and condition, and shutting down a missile at any time during flight if safety is in question

The Navy tests and trains in a manner that minimizes impacts on civilian activities while ensuring public safety at all times.

RESOURCE PROTECTION PROGRAMS

In its role as a responsible steward of the environment, the Navy protects the unique and sensitive resources present in areas where it tests and trains, while providing the proven equipment and realistic experiences necessary for the safety and readiness of its Sailors.

PROTECTIVE MEASURES AT SEA

The Navy implements protective measures to reduce or avoid effects on marine species, such as:

- Aerial monitoring for activities that include explosives
- Vessel monitoring for activities that include explosives from ships
- Seasonal considerations of marine mammal abundance during certain times of the year
- Location considerations for marine mammal groups and feeding activities in specific geographic locations

PROTECTIVE MEASURES AT SAN NICOLAS ISLAND

The Navy also implements protective measures for activities at San Nicolas Island, such as:

- Closing the south side of the island to all activities year-round
- Not entering pinniped haul-outs below the predicted missile path for two hours prior to a launch
- Avoiding launches during harbor seal pupping season (February through April), when possible
- Limiting launches during elephant seal (January through February) and California sea lion (June through July) pupping seasons, when possible
- Not crossing missiles over pinniped haul-outs at elevations less than 1,000 feet
- Monitoring haul-out sites for marine species during launches
- Conducting onshore monitoring of pinnipeds
- Limiting launches at night
- Not flying other aircraft at altitudes less than 1,000 feet over pinniped haul-outs and rookeries
- Closing western snowy plover nesting beaches during the breeding season (March through September)
- Conducting weekly monitoring of beaches and rookeries near operational sites for various seabirds
- Maintaining a native plant nursery to provide native vegetation for erosion control projects, native landscaping, and habitat improvement projects

CULTURAL RESOURCE PROGRAMS AT SAN NICOLAS ISLAND

Navy staff at San Nicolas Island maintain a field station, which includes the Archaeological Curation Facility. More than 500 archaeological sites have been located and mapped on San Nicolas Island. These sites have been entered into a central database and are considered before conducting activities.

RESOURCE AREAS TO BE ANALYZED IN THE DRAFT EIS/OEIS

For each alternative, the Navy will analyze the potential impacts on the following environmental resource areas from testing and training activities:

- Air quality
- Noise
- Sediments and water quality
- Habitats
- Invertebrates
- Fishes
- Sea turtles
- Marine mammals
- Terrestrial biology
- Cultural resources
- Traffic (ocean and air)
- Socioeconomics
- Hazardous materials, hazardous wastes, and non-hazardous wastes
- Public safety

NATIONAL ENVIRONMENTAL POLICY ACT PROCESS AND PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT

NEPA is a U.S. law that requires federal agencies to identify and analyze the potential environmental impacts of a proposed action before deciding whether to proceed with that action. The law encourages and facilitates public involvement to inform decision makers and the public on actions that may affect the community or the environment.

COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT

Public and agency input allows decision makers to benefit from local knowledge and consider community issues and concerns. The public participates in the NEPA process during the following stages:

- **Scoping Period:** Helping to identify the scope of the analysis, including potential environmental issues and viable alternatives
- **Draft EIS/OEIS Public Review and Comment Period:** Evaluating and providing substantive comments on the draft analysis
- **Final EIS/OEIS Wait Period:** Reviewing the Final EIS/OEIS and Navy responses to substantive comments received on the Draft EIS/OEIS

NEPA Process
Notice of Intent to Prepare an EIS/OEIS April 27, 2018
Scoping Period April 27, 2018 – June 26, 2018
Public Release of the Draft EIS/OEIS Fall 2019
Public Meetings and Draft EIS/OEIS Public Review and Comment Period Fall 2019
Public Release of the Final EIS/OEIS Winter 2021
30-Day Wait Period Winter 2021
Record of Decision Spring 2021

Opportunity for Public Review and Comment

SUBMITTING COMMENTS

The Navy encourages the public to participate in any of the following ways:

- Submit comments at a public meeting
- Submit comments via the project website at: **http://pmsr-eis.com**
- Mail comments to:
  Naval Air Warfare Center Weapons Division
  Range Sustainability Office
  Attention: EIS/OEIS Project Manager
  Point Mugu Sea Range
  Building 53A, Code 52F00ME
  575 I Ave., Suite 1
  Point Mugu, CA 93042

Comments must be postmarked or received online by **June 26, 2018**, for consideration in the development of the Draft EIS/OEIS.

For more information and to submit comments, visit **http://pmsr-eis.com**.

Public involvement is a fundamental aspect of the environmental impact analysis process. The Navy welcomes and appreciates the public's participation.

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May 2018