

on: 1) Mission readiness and strategic vision; 2) Training and testing requirements and enhanced range complex capabilities; 3) Environmental and encroachment issues; 4) Tribal consultation, stakeholder engagement, and public involvement; and 5) Organizational efficiency.

The team's sustainment objectives included: 1) Promoting the use and management of operating areas (OPAREAs) and airspace in a manner that supports national security objectives and maintains the high state of readiness of Navy forces; and 2) Ensuring the long-term viability of ranges, OPAREAs, and airspace while protecting human health and the environment.

2.2 Significant Environmental Aspects of the Mission and other Environmental Challenges

The project was highly visible, controversial, and complex, completed in a region known for its environmentally aware and active public. For improved efficiencies and reduced cost, NWTT was an initial large-scale, at-sea EIS approved to be completed as a supplement. This was exceptionally challenging due to numerous changes in the Proposed Action from the previous EIS/OEIS. The project included activities from three major action proponents, conducted in sea and air space adjacent to four states, and required complex analysis of potential acoustic impacts from in-water and airborne sources. The public was highly interested in this project from the onset, with a strong focus on the Southern Resident killer whale, an iconic species in the Northwest, and with concern over noise impacts from aircraft training.

The project team had to address several challenges and unusual circumstances: a large and diverse Study Area, unique environmental resources and issues, and numerous protected species and habitat. Natural resources within the Study Area required extensive and complex consultations with federal regulators, balancing operational requirements against the potential impacts on terrestrial and marine endangered species. Consultations resulted in significant mitigations crafted to protect species while supporting necessary readiness activities. Respect for cultural practices and sensitivities were also imperative in the development of the approach for Tribal and public engagement.

Team scientists analyzed potential impacts from a variety of stressors on marine mammals, fish, marine vegetation, seabirds, sea turtles, and the habitats of these species across a vast marine environment. In addition, the team addressed challenges associated with potential adverse noise effects associated with aircraft training and increased use of Navy airspace over the Olympic National Park.

2.3 Environmental Management Program

The team was comprised of Navy and contractor personnel with expertise in naval operations, exercise planning, environmental planning and compliance, marine and terrestrial biology, acoustics analysis, cultural resources, public involvement, Geographic Information Systems, and legal requirements. This vast array of expertise was required due to the range of resources for analysis and the complexity of Tribal, stakeholder, and public concerns. Analyses necessitated the continual collection and interpretation of best available science, the creation and adoption of methodologies to predict environmental effects, and compilation of information into a scientifically accurate and readable study.

The team's composition and organization resulted in achieving important completion dates, even with several changes to proposed activities and regulatory timelines. Success was achieved through strong leadership and the dedicated efforts of highly motivated and skilled individuals from multiple Navy commands and disciplines, all working together as a cohesive team with a common goal.

2.3.1 Team Organization and Staffing

Team members critical to the successful completion of the project are listed in the Nomination Submission Form. This agile team was adept at responding to emergent issues, such as changes to the Proposed Action and addressing public concerns regarding impacts and mitigation measures. Mr. John

Mosher, from the CPF Environmental Readiness Division, led the team from kickoff in November 2016 through the Record of Decision, signed in September 2021. Ms. Jackie Queen, NAVFAC NW Project Manager, oversaw schedules, budgets, and contract deliverables. Mr. Brian Wauer led the ManTech contractor team as manager for all aspects of the SEIS/OEIS development and outreach coordination.

2.3.2 Management Approach

The management approach involved leading a team of scientists and specialists and compiling the input of Navy and contractor subject matter experts. This included determining the appropriate level of analysis on numerous resource areas and how best to supplement the previous EIS/OEIS. When CPF determined that aircraft flights needed to increase, the team identified the implications and, working in close collaboration with the contractor, developed meaningful input on how to best describe and analyze the changes. The following proved to be effective in project management:

- Involved numerous Navy commands and their subordinate offices to meet future training and testing requirements and minimize environmental impacts.
- Determined that a supplement was an appropriate and efficient NEPA approach.
- Used recognized management systems such as the Environmental Information Management System (EIMS) to manage multiple document reviews by more than 50 subject matter experts.
- Managed more than 2,500 citations of reports and scientific literature using Endnote.
- Coordinated early and formally consulted with multiple federal and state agencies to ensure documentation was current and met regulatory requirements.
- Continuously worked key milestones to meet objectives for renewing expiring authorizations.

This project was unique from previous NEPA efforts as a supplemental analysis instead of a standalone EIS, resulting in a streamlined approach and significant cost savings to the Navy. The largest single expense of this project was the cost of contractor support. With the decision to supplement the previous document, the effort was reduced from \$3.7 million to \$2.5 million, a savings of \$1.2 million in contractor support. This savings is indicative of reduced efforts across the project.

2.3.3 Conformance with DoD Environmental Management Policy and Guidance

Following Department of Defense (DoD) and Department of Navy (DoN) guidance, the SEIS/OEIS was prepared in compliance with section 102(2)(C) of the NEPA of 1969, sections 4321 et seq. of Title 42 U.S.C. Council on Environmental Quality regulations (Parts 1500-1508 of Title 40 Code of Federal Regulations [CFR]), DoN regulations (32 CFR Part 775), and Executive Order 12114 Environmental Effects Abroad of Major Federal Actions. Complying with OPNAV 5090.1 Environmental Readiness Program Manual, and DoD and DoN environmental policies, the Navy was able to meet changing military requirements to achieve operational readiness required under Title 10 U.S.C. Section 8062.

2.4 Community Involvement

In addition to extensive NEPA-related public engagement, the project team exerted significant efforts to build stakeholder relationships and engage communities by developing partnerships and participating in environmental outreach events.

Partnerships. The Navy has more than a dozen partnerships in the Hood Canal, Kitsap Peninsula, Puget Sound, and Western Washington areas, as well as along the coasts of Washington, Oregon, Northern California, and Alaska. The team sought out partnerships that balance the Navy mission with environmental stewardship responsibilities. These partnerships were essential to building trust and sustaining positive and constructive working relationships with stakeholders, leveraging limited resources, and creating win-win solutions while improving environmental conditions.

Task Force Participation. In 2019, team members joined the Washington state Governor's Southern Resident Orca Task Force working in groups on prey and vessel traffic. This effort is ongoing, as the group seeks to identify ways to support recovery for the Southern Resident population.

Environmental Outreach Events: The project team participated in annual outreach events, such as the Pacific Marine Exposition, as well as Navy-hosted events, such as Fleet Weeks and the NAS Whidbey Island Open House, to educate and raise awareness of environmental programs and efforts and promote two-way communication. This engagement resulted in productive dialogue and helped raise public awareness of the importance of Navy activities and stewardship programs, and also informed the Navy on public issues and concerns.

2.5 Significant Environmental Plans and Agreements

The team successfully met the requirements of 27 separate and complex consultation efforts with federal and state agencies and Tribes due to the team's concerted efforts and close coordination with each entity to meet Navy requirements while minimizing potential effects on marine resources. These consultations were required under the MMPA (2), ESA (2), Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act (1), Coastal Zone Management Act (3), National Historic Preservation Act (3), National Marine Sanctuaries Act (1), and Executive Order 13175 Consultation and Coordination with Indian Tribal Governments/DoN Instruction 11010.14B DoN Policy for Consultation with Federally Recognized Indian Tribes, Alaska Native Tribal Entities (15).

3.0 Summary of Accomplishments

The completion of the NEPA analysis and regulatory consultations directly contributed to meeting the Navy's mission to maintain, train, and equip combat-ready naval forces by ensuring those forces can continue to train and test on ranges in the Pacific Northwest. The team's innovative and proactive approach to environmental planning and compliance resulted in long-term solutions that allow Sailors to conduct critical readiness activities throughout Northwest waters and airspace, including the ability to use sonar and weapons systems, while continuing to protect marine resources.

The difficult balance between achieving Navy mission preparedness and environmental protection was accomplished by identifying and quantifying potential impacts from the Proposed Action and developing viable mitigation measures to avoid or minimize those impacts. The team completed critical marine and terrestrial environmental planning documents for threatened and endangered species compliance, resulting in favorable outcomes in regulatory consultations with the National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) for both proposed protections and the continued biological success of species.

The project team developed and implemented strategic stakeholder outreach and public involvement programs that promoted meaningful engagement and dialogue with elected officials, regulatory and government agencies, Tribes, nongovernmental organizations (NGOs), the media, and the public. Outreach efforts across four states fostered greater understanding of the Navy mission and a better awareness of the extensive measures the Navy takes in environmental stewardship.

The following sections describe the technical merit in the project team's approach, demonstrate the orientation to mission accomplishment, show how the team's many successes can be transferred throughout DoD and beyond, and provide a greater understanding of the stakeholder interaction fostered by the team's efforts.

3.1 Technical Merit

The project team implemented innovative techniques to keep the project on schedule and within budget to meet numerous legal requirements:

- The *Environmental Information Management System (EIMS)* is a web-based application used to manage the review of over 400 documents by more than 50 reviewers, significantly reducing the workload associated with multiple parties conducting simultaneous reviews.
- The *Protective Measures Assessment Protocol (PMAP)* software tool provides Navy personnel with detailed mitigation requirements identified during the ESA and MMPA consultations and ensures continued future compliance bridging the gap from establishing mitigation measures to applying them during Navy training and testing.
- The *Navy Acoustic Effects Model (NAEMO)* provides estimates of potential acoustic and explosive impacts on marine species based on the occurrence and density of species. Working with military personnel, the team provided model inputs and used the outputs to support the NEPA analysis, consultation efforts, and talking points for effective public communication.
- *Endnote* streamlines the process of accurately recording, compiling, tracking, and reproducing over 2,500 citations of scientific literature used in the project, resulting in a comprehensive and reliable bibliography and administrative record.

The project team considered input from the public, Tribes, and state and federal agencies to ensure the Pacific Northwest's unique environment would be effectively protected during diverse training and testing activities. Mitigation measures include 15 procedural and 10 regional geographic mitigation areas, such as use of qualified observers, cessation of activities, seasonal and geographic limitations, coordination with civilian species-detection networks, and use of adaptive management strategies.

To understand the scale of the team's accomplishments, please consider:

- *Geography.* The Study Area extends 250 nautical miles off the west coast and includes the biologically diverse waters of the Olympic Coast National Marine Sanctuary and Puget Sound.
- *Volume of Activities.* The team reviewed and evaluated each of the 53 activity types by location, season, time-of-day, duration, and potential stressors to develop measures protective of the environment without impacting mission readiness.
- *Analysis of Impacts.* Each activity was analyzed for potential impacts on marine species, with specific focus given to 30 marine mammals protected under the MMPA and 46 species protected under the ESA. To conduct a thorough and legally defensible analysis, team members searched nearly 1,500 marine mammal citations and more than 2,500 citations.
- *Tribal and Stakeholder Engagement.* The team informed and engaged 55 Native American and Alaska Native Tribes; 467 federal, state, and local elected officials; 199 federal, state, and local agencies; 178 NGOs; and 1,136 public individuals.
- *Public Interest.* The level of public interest in this project speaks to its scale. The Navy received 786 public comments during the scoping period. During the Draft review period, the project team received and responded individually to comments from 10 Tribes, 3 federal agencies, 19 state and local agencies and elected officials, 31 NGOs, 1 community/business group, 1 media group, 6 private companies, 1 research/university, and 1,911 private individuals. Additionally, the team received form letters and petitions from NGOs with 31,949 signatures.

As a direct result of the SEIS/OEIS and the associated regulatory consultations, the Navy has developed an extensive partnership with state and federal agencies, universities, research institutions, federal laboratories, and private researchers to better understand marine species occurrence and behavior. As one example of the scientific and environmental benefit of this important work, Navy-funded research enabled NMFS to identify and designate new critical habitat for the endangered Southern Resident killer whales in August 2021, establishing significant protective measures for the continued survival of the species.

3.2 Orientation to Mission

The project team worked directly with active-duty Navy personnel and those most knowledgeable of current and future training and testing requirements. This close coordination ensured the Proposed Action included all future required activities for detailed environmental analysis and regulatory coverage. The team considered public input and information obtained through agency and Tribal consultations to develop protective measures. Through collaboration with Navy personnel, these mitigations and monitoring activities were assessed to determine scientific benefit and practicability of implementation, striking a balance between minimizing environmental impacts and providing for valuable, realistic training and testing that promotes mission readiness.

The team's efforts included research of several databases of historic aircraft, ship, and submarine activities and direct discussions with aircraft squadron and ship personnel, training and testing range planners, and experts in program offices. As the team worked with regulators to renew expiring permits, conditions of the permits were revised based on combined Navy and regulator input, resulting in new Navy research commitments. This research adds to and improves the body of knowledge of marine species, greatly benefiting the scientific community and all users of the marine environment.

3.3 Transferability

As one of the Navy's largest and most publically scrutinized EISs, the project was highly visible across the Navy and with other services and agencies. The efficient format and cost-saving practices used in the supplemental EIS are already being used in other Navy projects. Additionally, best practices are being incorporated in subsequent NEPA efforts, to include the project's extensive public and elected official engagement plan, public meeting format, Tribal communication and consultation processes, and organization of technical appendices. The technologies and programs used, such as EIMS, PMAP, and NAEMO, are now available to DoD organizations and for use by other federal agencies.

Outside of the DoD, numerous entities have benefitted from the marine scientific research funded by the Navy in support of the NWTT analysis and as part of permitting authorizations, such as offshore energy projects, commercial space launches, the fisheries industry, shipping and cruise ship industries, in-water construction projects, and Native American Tribes.

3.4 Stakeholder Interaction

The project team faced several public affairs challenges in engaging Tribes, stakeholders, and the public over such a large area with high value resources. These challenges include the controversial nature of the Navy's proposed activities, public perception regarding the potential impacts activities may have on the marine environment, an expansive and diverse Study Area, and active, energized, and educated communities. To be successful, the team needed to proactively inform, engage, and involve Native American and Alaska Native Tribes, government agencies and officials, and the interested public and provide accurate, timely information to counter misinformation or lack of understanding.

To address these challenges, the project team developed and implemented a robust and strategic engagement and involvement program. The team set forth specific outreach and communication objectives to 1) facilitate an open and transparent public participation process; 2) increase awareness and understanding of the Proposed Action and its purpose and need; 3) build trust and credibility; and 4) obtain useful and informed comments on the environmental impact analysis. To meet these objectives, the team successfully implemented the following outreach tactics.

Tribal Consultations and Engagement. The project team strove to meaningfully involve Native American and Alaska Native Tribes throughout the EIS process. The team proactively and continually engaged 55 Tribes across 4 states, providing 6 formal notification letters throughout the course of the project. Team members also communicated directly with individual Tribal officials and staff, regularly

providing informal briefings and project updates. Formal Government-to-Government consultations were held with 15 tribes, in which Navy leaders and team members addressed questions, concerns, and viable courses of action. These consultations strengthened long-term relationships between the Navy and Tribes, improved the analysis of effects on tribal and cultural resources, and refined protective mitigations.

Stakeholder Briefings, Meetings, and Site Visits. During scoping and Draft phases, the team provided more than 22 stakeholder briefings to include Tribes, Congressional members and staff, the Governor of Washington, Environmental Protection Agency, Washington State Historic Preservation Officer, Olympic Coast National Marine Sanctuary, the National Parks Service, NMFS, USFWS, and others. Other military services and Navy regional staff were engaged early to obtain information about their training and testing activities and ensure environmental coverage, as well as understand potential cumulative impacts. The team informed regional Navy personnel of the Proposed Action, the NEPA process, and opportunities for public involvement so they, as members of their communities, could act and respond as third-party spokespersons in interactions within their communities.

Federal and State Regulatory Agency Consultations. The project team consulted with federal and state regulatory agencies in multiple jurisdictions representing four states and a broad marine expanse to comply with a myriad of federal and state regulations and policies. Early engagement proved to be productive with shared goals of improving the analysis of potential impacts, developing viable mitigation measures, and protecting the environment. These consultations strengthened relationships between the Navy and other agencies and helped shape the analysis and finalization of mitigations.

Public Outreach and Involvement. The project team held eight public meetings across four states to promote two-way dialogue; provide accurate, public-friendly information; answer questions and correct misinformation; and raise awareness of Navy environmental stewardship programs, marine species research, and mitigation efforts. The public was broadly notified of the SEIS/OEIS and public meetings through multiple communication channels. In total, 340 people attended the 8 public meetings. Team members, including military leadership, were prepared to engage with the public and media by developing key messages and holding effective communication training sessions. The public was encouraged to submit substantive comments and the team extended the comment periods to ensure the public had ample time to submit comments. The Navy received 2,057 unique comments on the Draft along with several form letters and petitions, totaling 31,949 commenters. The team considered and responded to all comments and published responses in the Final SEIS/OEIS.

The vigorous Tribal, stakeholder, and public engagement process enacted during the SEIS/OEIS underlined the benefits of early and continued coordination to improve public understanding and involvement in the NEPA process, as well as fostering trust and support of the Navy's important mission in national defense.

3.5 Impact/Outcomes

The accomplishments of the NWTT SEIS/OEIS team resulted in enhanced environmental quality through adherence with NEPA and Executive Order 12114 through robust community relations efforts and implementation of protective measures and mitigations. The team's efforts significantly advanced core Navy objectives of mission readiness, range sustainment, environmental compliance, organizational efficiency, and meaningful Tribal, stakeholder, and public interaction.