

## Narrative

### 1 INTRODUCTION

Commander, U.S. Pacific Fleet (PACFLT) submits this nomination for the Chief of Naval Operations Environmental Planning, Team Award for the Hawaii-Southern California Training and Testing (HSTT) Environmental Impact Statement (EIS)/Overseas Environmental Impact Statement (OEIS). The previous existing Marine Mammal Protection Act (MMPA) and Endangered Species Act (ESA) authorizations covering military readiness activities expired in January 2014. Without new authorizations, which required an application and the accompanying EIS/OEIS, the U.S. Navy's ability to train and test in the critical Southern California and Hawaii Range Complexes would be at risk. The team initiated the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) process to ensure continued access to these vital training and testing areas across the eastern Pacific Ocean, from Southern California to the Hawaiian Islands, and west to the International Date Line.

The team was composed of Navy and contractor personnel with expertise in fleet operations and exercise planning; research, development, test, and evaluation of current and future Navy systems; environmental planning; marine biology; and environmental law. The team included marine biologists, acoustics modeling and analysis experts, environmental compliance specialists, Geographic Information Systems experts, ecologists, lawyers, public affairs specialists, and — to keep this multi-disciplinary team organized and successful — talented project leads and project managers. This vast array of expertise was required due to the complexity of the analyses to be completed. Analyses necessitated intensive review and incorporation of scientific literature and the development of methodologies that predict the environmental effects of military readiness activities, resulting in a scientifically accurate yet understandable EIS/OEIS.

Through strong and dedicated leadership and cooperation among this diverse team, the EIS/OEIS and associated authorizations were completed on time, ensuring that the Navy's latest requirements for training and testing would have the required NEPA coverage. The team succeeded due to skilled individuals from numerous Navy organizations and companies that came together as one team, fully dedicated to the project.

### 2 BACKGROUND

#### 2.1 Team Organization and Staffing

Table 1 provides a complete listing of the individual experts that were each critical to the successful completion of this project.

PACFLT, which oversees all training for Carrier Strike Groups, Expeditionary Strike Groups, and independent deploying units, was the action proponent and initiated this Navy project. Integral to the structure of PACFLT is the N465 division, responsible for providing environmental support to the Commander. PACFLT led the EIS/OEIS effort through the direct involvement of the N465 staff, providing operational expertise to ensure accurate representation in the environmental analyses of all Navy training requirements. In addition to the leadership and operational guidance for this project, PACFLT lawyers provided legal support at every step in the development of the EIS/OEIS, assuring legal sufficiency of the document.

Naval Facilities Engineering Command Pacific (NAVFAC PAC) and NAVFAC Southwest (NAVFAC SW) teamed with PACFLT, providing legal and technical contract support in addition to scientific expertise. To manage a fluid environment, NAVFAC PAC and NAVFAC SW personnel shaped and reshaped the contract, supporting 11 contract modifications, providing the team with the resources necessary to complete the project. NAVFAC biologists and environmental scientists ensured the veracity of the environmental analyses and provided critical technical support during consultations with regulatory agencies and other government entities. The team also enlisted support from Commanders, Navy Region Southwest and Hawaii to provide localized legal support on critical regional issues. The regions also provided public affairs support for the project, as did OPNAV N45.

To ensure the EIS/OEIS fully included all the testing requirements of the Navy’s acquisition commands, representatives from Naval Sea Systems Command (NAVSEA), Naval Air Systems Command (NAVAIR), Space & Naval Warfare Systems Command (SPAWAR), and the Office of Naval Research (ONR) contributed at every phase of the EIS/OEIS development.

**Table 1: Team Organization and Staffing**

<b>U.S. Pacific Fleet:</b> Neil Sheehan, Project Lead; Alex Stone, Project Lead; John Van Name, Environmental Planning Program Manager; Chip Johnson, Natural Resource Program Manager – Biologist; Ken MacDowell, Training/Range Operational Area Compatibility Support; Mark Matsunaga, Environmental Public Affairs Officer; CDR Rick McGuire, Environmental Counsel; LCDR Wayne (Tony) Miani, Environmental Counsel; Julie Rivers, Natural Resource Program Manager – Biologist; Roy Sokolowski, Environmental Protection Specialist – Acoustician.
<b>Naval Facilities Engineering Command, Pacific:</b> Cory Scott, Senior Environmental Planner/Project Manager; Meghan Byrne, Senior Environmental Planner/Project Manager; Meredith Fagan, Natural Resources Management Specialist, Marine Resource Coordinator.
<b>Naval Facilities Engineering Command, Southwest:</b> Christiana Boerger, Marine Resource Specialist/Marine Resource Coordinator; Jere Diersing, Environmental Counsel.
<b>Naval Undersea Warfare Center Division, Newport:</b> Amy Farak, Biologist and Environmental Planner; Joshua Frederickson, Biologist and Environmental Planner; Peter Hulton, Modeling Department Manager.
<b>Naval Sea Systems Command:</b> Susan Levitt, Environmental Planning – Environmental Engineer; Deborah Verderame, Environmental Planning – Environmental Engineer.
<b>Space &amp; Naval Warfare Systems Command:</b> Angela D’Amico, Scientist; Keith Jenkins, Marine Scientist; Jerry Olen, Environmental Readiness Program Manager.
<b>Naval Air Systems Command:</b> Jennifer Paulk, Environmental Planning – Environmental Scientist.
<b>Office of Naval Research:</b> Robert H. Headrick, Ocean Acoustics Team Leader; Robert Schnoor, Ocean Research Facilities Team Leader.
<b>ManTech International Corporation:</b> Brian Wauer, Project Manager; Marisha Apodaca, Document Publication Specialist; Dr. Elizabeth Becker, Marine Mammal Scientist; Conrad Erkelens, Senior Scientist; Matt Hahn, Military Operations Specialist; Karyn Palma, Technical Editor; Dr. Philip Thorson, Senior Research Biologist/Marine Mammal Biologist; Heather Turner, Marine Biologist; Karen Waller, Senior Program Manager; Lawrence Wolski, Marine Scientist; Ken Woo, IT/GIS Manager; Mike Zickel, Senior Technical Manager.
<b>Parsons:</b> Bruce Campbell, Lead Analyst; Jeremy Farr, Environmental Planner; Taylor Houston, Natural Resource Specialist; Donald Jolly, Principal Archaeologist.
<b>Tetra Tech, Inc.:</b> Maren Anderson, Marine Mammal Scientist; Brian Dresser, Senior Scientist; Lauren Gilpatrick, Wildlife Biologist; Paul Holthus, Natural Resource Management Specialist; Kevin Kelly, Marine Resource Specialist; Tina Kuroiwa, Marine Scientist; Kate Lomac MacNair, Marine Mammal Scientist; Mandi McElroy, Wildlife Biologist; June Mire, Subject Matter Expert; Colleena Perez, Scientist; Noelle Ronan, Wildlife Biologist; James Stribling, Director; Suzanne Villacorta, Regulatory Analyst and Environmental Scientist; Ann Zoidis, Senior Biologist; Patrick Zuloaga, Ecologist.
<b>Katz &amp; Associates:</b> Breanna Flanagan, Public Affairs Specialist; Emily Michaelson, Public Affairs Specialist; Lewis Michaelson, Public Affairs Specialist; Allison Turner, Public Affairs Specialist.
<b>Merkel &amp; Associates, Inc.:</b> Lawrence Honma, Senior Marine Scientist.

**Additional Public Meeting Support:** Tom Clements, Pacific Missile Range Facility (PMRF) Public Affairs Officer; Rebecca Hommon, Commander, Navy Region Hawaii Counsel; William Franklin, Commander, Navy Region Southwest Environmental Public Affairs Officer; and special thanks to: Lei Compoc, Char Castor, and Thomas Nizo—all from PMRF

Finally, the Navy selected a team of contractors with over six years of experience supporting similar environmental planning projects. This contractor team produced numerous review versions of the EIS/OEIS and related regulatory documents, and provided invaluable public participation support, including informational materials and the public website.

Over the 4-year project, first Mr. Sheehan, then Mr. Stone led the entire team from the kickoff meeting in December 2009 through the Record of Decision (ROD), signed in December 2013. The PACFLT leadership depended heavily on the NAVFAC Project Managers—Ms. Byrne and Ms. Scott—for the overall, day-to-day management of schedules, budgets, and deliverables. Mr. Wauer led the team of contractors and was the contractor Project Manager for all aspects of the EIS/OEIS.

## **2.2 Project Description**

The project involved meeting environmental planning (NEPA) and associated regulatory requirements (MMPA, ESA, and Coastal Zone Management Act, primarily) necessary to ensure naval forces can continue conducting critical training and testing in pierside, coastal, and open ocean areas of Southern California and Hawaii, and the transit corridor between the range complexes. The EIS/OEIS was prepared to combine three separate EIS/OEISs and associated environmental planning documents. The reassessment of these prior documents in the HSTT EIS/OEIS supported obtaining regulatory permits and authorizations to address current training and testing not previously covered under existing permits and authorizations, and to support force structure changes and evolving, future training and testing requirements.

## **2.3 Challenges and Unusual Circumstances Addressed by the Team**

The project presented a suite of unique challenges including a vast study area, the need for comprehensive coordination with the parallel Atlantic Fleet Training and Testing (AFTT) planning effort, constantly emerging science, the use of a newly Navy-developed acoustic model, evolving operational training and testing requirements, and a very attentive and often vocal public.

The geographic scope of the project—over 2.1 million square miles, including the waters of the Southern California (SOCAL) Range Complex, the Silver Strand Training Complex (SSTC), and the Hawaii Range Complex (HRC)—presents unique challenges. The Proposed Action affecting two states required coordination with state-specific local, state, and federal agencies.

With the project spanning three ranges, supporting a variety of range users in all Navy warfare areas, there were an extensive number of interested Navy operational stakeholders. While a large team was necessary to ensure representation of all the stakeholders' various and sometimes conflicting interests, the size of the team in itself was a challenge.

The large project study area also meant that a number of marine species would be included in the analysis. Analyses considered potential impacts on 72 separate stocks of cetaceans and pinnipeds. Furthermore, an array of scientists analyzed potential impacts from a variety of stressors on fish, corals, marine vegetation, seabirds, sea turtles, and the habitats of these species across a vast marine environment.

The size of the study area encompassing a number of marine species meant that a diverse segment of the public would have a keen interest in the project. The number of comments received on the Draft EIS/OEIS indicated a high level of public and agency scrutiny, including those from 17 state and federal agencies, 14 nongovernmental organizations, 2 American Indian tribes, and more than 800 individuals. In addition, the project received 76,000 form letters and a petition signed by 477,000 individuals. The project team worked together to craft responses to each comment received, ensuring that the public's concerns were acknowledged and addressed.

The team met these challenges by utilizing the critical expertise from each member of the planning team resulting in the production of the HSTT EIS/OEIS and its accompanying regulatory compliance documentation within budget and on schedule.

### **3 ENVIRONMENTAL PLANNING SUMMARY**

#### **3.1 Environmental Plans and Agreements**

The Navy's key objective in this planning effort was to produce high-quality environmental planning documents in order to obtain MMPA permits that support at-sea training and testing prior to the expiration of the permit in January 2014. Throughout this project, it was necessary for the Navy to complete—on a tightly coordinated schedule—many environmental plans and critical agreements. Central to all of the environmental plans was the EIS/OEIS, initiated with the Notice of Intent on 15 July 2010. The Draft EIS/OEIS published on 11 May 2012 and became the principal reference document used to support the various related studies and agreements. The Final EIS/OEIS was published on 30 August 2013; Mr. Roger M. Natsuhara, Principal Deputy Assistant Secretary of the Navy, (Energy, Installations, and Environment), signed the Record of Decision on 20 December 2013.

The team knew that in order to facilitate a successful MMPA permitting process, it would be necessary to team with the National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) as a cooperating agency in the development of the EIS/OEIS. This partnership helped the Navy develop an EIS/OEIS that would fully support NMFS' rulemaking process. In addition to the EIS/OEIS itself, the Navy provided NMFS with an application for 5-year incidental take authorizations on 4 April 2012. The Navy-NMFS collaboration resulted in a Final Rule on 13 December 2013 and two Letters of Authorization (LOA), one each for training and testing activities.

The Navy also fostered cooperation with both NMFS and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) pursuant to ESA compliance. Following consultation with both regulatory agencies, the Navy received Incidental Take Statements from NMFS (13 December 2013) and concurrence from USFWS (7 June 2013 for Hawaii, 25 April 2013 for SOCAL) that the Navy's activities were not likely to jeopardize any of the endangered species in the HSTT study area.

Using a similar model of building relationships and providing professionally prepared documents, the HSTT team completed compliance requirements regarding the Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act (MSA), completing consultation with the NMFS Southwest Regional Office on 3 April 2013 and the Pacific Islands Regional Office on 26 July 2013.

The Navy worked directly with the Office of National Marine Sanctuaries (ONMS) to address the Navy's activities conducted within the two national sanctuaries and the national monument inside the study area. Based on this coordination, and the information provided in the Final EIS/OEIS, the ONMS notified the Navy, in a letter dated 16 August 2013, that sanctuary

consultation pursuant to Section 304(d) of the National Marine Sanctuaries Act is not required for the Proposed Action.

The Navy determined that its proposed activities would result in a “no historic properties affected” determination in accordance with Section 106 implementing regulations under 36 Code of Federal Regulations (C.F.R.) § 800.4(d)(1). Accordingly, the Navy notified the Hawaii and California State Historic Preservation Officers of its determination. In a letter dated 5 June 2013, the California State Historic Preservation Officer concurred with the Navy’s finding of effect. No reply was issued by the Hawaii State Historic Preservation Officer and, as defined in 36 C.F.R. § 800.5(c), the Navy assumed concurrence with its finding of effect from the State of Hawaii.

To ensure compliance with the Coastal Zone Management Act, the Navy submitted Consistency Determinations on 14 January 2013 to both the Hawaii Office of Planning and California Coastal Commission. In July 2013, the Hawaii Office of Planning concurred that the Navy’s activities are consistent with the enforceable policies under the State of Hawaii Coastal Management Program. The Navy provided a letter on 8 August 2013 to the Hawaii Office of Planning documenting the completion of the federal consistency process. On 17 December 2013, following several exchanges of correspondence with the California Coastal Commission, PACFLT notified the Commission of the Navy’s decision to proceed with the proposed activities based on the Navy conclusion that the Proposed Action is fully consistent with the enforceable policies of the California Coastal Management Program.

The HSTT Environmental Planning Team exercised persistence, thoroughness, and professionalism as demonstrated by the successful completion of these significant and complex compliance processes, all on an immovable timeline. By providing the federal and state regulatory agencies with thorough analysis, using the best available science, and by including NMFS as part of the HSTT team, the Navy continued to foster professional and personal relationships with the principals from each regulatory agency.

### **3.2 Most Outstanding Program Features**

The use of the new Navy acoustic model and a new stressor-based approach provided a more thorough and effective analysis of the environmental impacts on biological resources. The new acoustic model utilizes a more accurate simulation of animal behavior than previous models, resulting in a more realistic estimation of effects from acoustic energy. The team conducted a post-model analysis that considered operational parameters of the training and testing activities, and how those activities would affect animal behavior. The result of this post-model analysis was a further refinement of the effects of sonar and explosive acoustic energy on marine mammals and sea turtles, which more fully accounts for the effectiveness of the Navy’s mitigation measures into the analysis.

Coordination between the HSTT and the AFTT EIS/OEIS teams throughout the EIS projects was on an unprecedented scale. Early on, the team developed a web-based capability to streamline the review of the hundreds of documents over the life of this and many other environmental planning projects. This new web-based Document Commenting System (DCS) made documents readily available to Navy reviewers. Within the system, reviewers could download a document available for review, make comments and suggest changes offline at their convenience, and upload their comments to the DCS website. The website would automatically update the master document, allowing subsequent reviewers to see all previous comments. When the document review period was completed, the document and a comment matrix were instantly available for

the team. The DCS allowed for a more efficient distribution of the documents for review, greatly simplifying the review process for the Navy subject matter experts, and significantly reducing the workload normally required to organize and deconflict comments. The DCS process also reduced government cost. DCS proved so valuable, that the team shared it with our cooperating agency partner, NMFS, for their use during reviews of their Proposed Rule and Final Rule.

### **3.3 Unique Aspects of Planning Effort**

The Navy team used three innovative processes that greatly enhanced the environmental planning for this project: the new Navy acoustic model and post-modeling process, the stressor-based approach to environmental analysis, and the DCS.

The new acoustic model and post-modeling process provided more realistic exposure estimates to marine mammals and sea turtles from acoustic energy from Navy activities. Past techniques grossly over-estimated exposures, resulting in a misrepresentation of effects. The new process presented data supported by scientific studies and the Navy's empirical evidence.

The stressor-based approach provided a more systematic method of analysis of the Navy's planned activities. This resulted in a more scientifically defensible analysis than previous studies.

The new DCS allowed for better team management of the entire document review process. Firm review start and stop dates programmed into the system enforced scheduling discipline. The ability to view previous reviewer's comments greatly reduced duplicative or conflicting comments submitted by subsequent reviewers. The automatically consolidated comments serving as a reliable repository of the decision-making process was invaluable for the administrative record. Finally, the DCS allowed the team to spend more time improving the documents and less time deconflicting comments.

## **4 Accomplishments**

### **4.1 Objectives Attainment**

The key objective was to produce high quality and defensible environmental planning documents using current, best available science to analyze the Navy's planned training and testing activities pursuant to NEPA, MMPA, ESA, and other applicable laws and regulations as described in Section 3.1 above.

This objective directly supported the military readiness mission. As stated in Title 10 Section 5062 of the U.S. Code, "The Navy shall be organized, *trained*, and *equipped* primarily for prompt and sustained combat incident to operations at sea" [emphasis added]. The MMPA and ESA authorizations allow the Navy to conduct training and testing that equips its forces to respond as needed. Without these authorizations, Navy training and testing on three of its most critical range complexes would come to a stop.

Meeting key objectives—to ensure the continued training of Navy personnel and the development and testing of necessary systems—through the development of the HSTT EIS/OEIS and supporting regulatory processes, and supported by evolving science, was largely due to the leadership and flexibility of the team as a whole.

The HSTT team, through applied innovative approaches, proactively countered potential roadblocks. Several of the team's innovations resulted in cost savings through reduced effort and material. For example, the DCS alone reduced printing and shipping of hundreds of documents

over the life of the project. By saving thousands of dollars on this project, the DCS is now a requirement for all subsequent projects, ensuring cost savings across multiple projects. Through the development, introduction, use, and standardization of the DCS, the team took DCS from a concept to a fully tested and refined system that future projects will rely on for years.

By combining three range complex environmental documents in the HSTT EIS/OEIS, the team took advantage of the similarities between the geographic areas and the activities that occur at these range complexes. Completing the analysis did not require three times the effort, but more close to the effort expended on a single project. The success of this effort provides a model for similar future projects, at a continued cost savings.

In order to foster public involvement to the greatest extent possible, the Navy used a public website not only as a source of information, but also as a repository of supporting documents available to any website visitor. The website provided a mechanism for the public to provide their comments during both the scoping and the Draft EIS/OEIS comment periods. Prior to the publication of the Draft EIS/OEIS, the HSTT team developed an unprecedented public participation roll-out plan in coordination with the AFTT team and OPNAV N45, including a media roundtable hosted by RADM Kevin Slates with a select group of media representatives. The Navy hosted numerous public meetings across five Hawaiian Islands and in San Diego to allow for the exchange of information and open dialogue. The Navy engaged select media in Southern California and Hawaii, responding to dozens of media queries and interview requests. The HSTT EIS/OEIS public meetings, informational materials, and responses to media presented the Navy's message and numerous examples of the Navy's environmental stewardship programs. These efforts engaged the local community and enhanced the Navy's public image.

#### **4.2 Specific Benefits to the Navy, the Public, and the Environment**

Because the HSTT team met all objectives on time and under budget, Navy readiness activities continued without interruption at SSTC, the SOCAL Range Complex, and the HRC by granting new permits when older permits expired. The three range complexes are critical for most of the Navy's Pacific air, surface, subsurface, and special forces commands.

The successful use of innovations such as post-model analysis and the DCS ensure their use on future Navy projects, furthering the improvements and cost savings realized by the HSTT team.

For the finale, the biggest winner of this team's success is—the environment. The techniques used by the HSTT team provided a more systematic, accurate assessment of impacts than in the past, ensuring that the Navy fully understands and, where necessary, mitigates potential harm to the marine environment.

#### **4.3 Most Outstanding Accomplishments**

Among the greatest accomplishments was keeping focused on the schedule, flexing where necessary, and making countless internal schedule adjustments to keep on track on all major milestones while faced with many unique challenges. The complexity of the project meant that any of the numerous perturbations in the technology, science, or in requirements had a ripple effect, affecting nearly everyone on the team and potentially putting the schedule at risk. By working as a team, communicating changes through regular, scheduled team meetings, ad hoc conference calls, and personal calls and emails, the project stayed on schedule and within the budget. Taken as a whole, the team's accomplishments had one simple bottom line; the Navy's Pacific Fleet training and testing continued uninterrupted.