

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

June 19, 2009

Dr. Jane Lubchenco
Undersecretary for Oceans and Atmosphere
Department of Commerce
1401 Constitution Avenue, NW, Room 5128
Washington, DC 20230

Dear Dr. Lubchenco:

On January 23, the National Oceanographic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) announced that it would conduct a comprehensive review of measures to reduce environmental harm from the Navy's mid-frequency sonar exercises, and then report the results to the Council on Environmental Quality. We are writing to express our strong support and encouragement of this review process.

In many regions, the Navy plans to increase the number of its exercises or expand the areas in which they may occur, and virtually every coastal state will be affected. Some exercises may occur in the nation's most biologically sensitive marine habitats, including National Marine Sanctuaries and breeding habitat for the endangered North Atlantic right whale. In all, the Navy anticipates more than 2.3 million takes (significant disruptions in marine mammal foraging, breeding, and other essential behaviors) per year, or 11.7 million takes over the course of a five-year permit.

Under these circumstances, it is essential that NOAA prescribe mitigation measures that substantially reduce impacts on marine wildlife and habitat while allowing the Navy to train effectively.

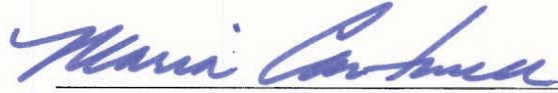
We are hopeful that NOAA's review will identify effective measures to minimize environmental impacts and improve monitoring of affected populations. Such measures include the establishment of firm seasonal or geographic sonar exclusion areas to protect vulnerable species and habitat, which scientists have identified as the most effective available means of reducing harm.

We appreciate your consideration of this important matter and your efforts to improve the health of our oceans.

Sincerely,



Barbara Boxer
United States Senator



Maria Cantwell
United States Senator



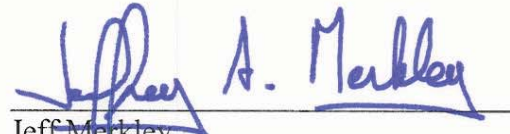
Olympia Snowe
United States Senator



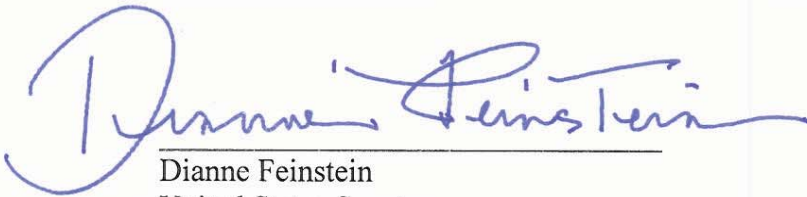
Sheldon Whitehouse
United States Senator



Ron Wyden
United States Senator



Jeff Merkley
United States Senator



Dianne Feinstein
United States Senator