

For Immediate Release

April 9, 2009

CONTACT: Tom Towslee (Wyden) 503-326-7525; Julie Edwards (Merkley) 202-224-8841 – Original Letter is Attached.

Oregon Senators Wyden, Merkley Cite Environmental and Economic Concerns of Expanded Warfare Training Off the Oregon Coast

Washington, DC— Echoing comments made by many Oregonians, Senators Ron Wyden and Jeff Merkley raised concerns today about the environmental and economic impacts of United States Navy's plans to expand warfare training off the Pacific coast.

"Based on a number of comments we have received from a variety of interested stakeholders and constituents, we are concerned that many of the Navy's training proposals, including underwater minefield testing, explosive ordnance use, expanded land and air-based exercises, and widespread sonar training in particular, pose substantial environmental and economic risks," the senators said in a letter to Secretary of the Navy B.J. Penn.

The comment period on the Navy's plans to expand the Northwest Training Range Complex (NWTRC) ends Saturday, April 11. The proposed expansion of training would include exercises with guided missile submarines and unmanned aerial systems. The military also would implement new air and sea surface targets, new electronic signal emitters and development of a small-scale underwater training minefield.

The senators cited four specific areas of concern, including:

- **The potential for irreparable harm to the fisheries and the many related industries along the Oregon Coast.**
- **The significant impacts of sonar on marine mammals.**
- **The potential impacts on endangered species.**
- **The potential release of a variety of hazardous materials into sensitive marine ecosystems.**

"In order to avoid needlessly risking such adverse consequences, we urge the Navy to reconsider the variety of scientific studies and methodologies used to support its environmental review process, to more fully explain potential environmental and cumulative impacts, to analyze all reasonable alternatives, and to identify measures that may actually mitigate harm," the senators wrote.