

Briefing Paper

DATE: December 1, 2007

STATE: Washington

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SUBJECT: Section 7 consultation with Navy on EXPLOSIVE ORDINANCE TRAINING

PURPOSE: Status of section 7 consultation with Navy on EOD training

ISSUES:

The FWS and NOAA Fisheries (Services) are writing a joint 5-year biological opinion on the U.S. Navy Explosive Ordnance Disposal Operation (EOD) in Puget Sound. Currently the Navy conducts training to certify divers on locating and destroying or disabling mines with explosive charges at three underwater locations in Puget Sound.

The EOD training is expected to kill or injure ESA-listed species (bull trout, marbled murrelet, Chinook salmon, and Hood canal summer chum salmon). The Services attended one training operation and observed over 1000 dead forage fish generated by the exercise. We are particularly concerned with potential effects on murrelets.

The Navy has initiated scoping for Northwest Training Range Operations and Management, including the EOD sites, but would prefer to complete consultation on the EOD training separately. Both the EOD and the larger Operations and Management plan are receiving significant public scrutiny. The Washington office of Public Employees for Environmental Responsibility has indicated they will litigate the Navy because of impacts to listed species.

The Services have been coordinating with the Navy since 2001 on measures to reduce impacts from the exercises, resulting in several modifications to the project.

MAIN DECISION OR MESSAGE: The Western Washington Fish and Wildlife Office is working with the Navy to reduce impacts of EOD training on listed species.

FWS PERSPECTIVE: We support the training requirements of the Navy and will complete section 7 consultation to authorize them. We remain concerned about significant impacts to marbled murrelets and bull trout.

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