

4.7 HAWAIIAN ISLANDS HUMPBACK WHALE NATIONAL MARINE SANCTUARY (HIHWNMS)

Military Activities in Hawaiian Waters

In 1995, the Navy prepared a document entitled “Report on Military Activities in Hawaiian Waters.” The National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) concluded that Navy activities were “not likely to adversely affect” these species, provided that the following modifications were made to Navy procedures:

1. All mine warfare and mine countermeasure operations involving the use of explosive charges or live munitions must include safe zones for marine mammals. These zones should be calculated for each exercise based on charge type, charge weight, depth of water, and depth of the charge in the water column. Visual surveys by divers in the vicinity of the charge(s) and surveys by small boat(s) should be conducted in order to ensure that safe range minimum distances are appropriate; acoustic monitoring for marine mammals should also be conducted.
2. Shallow water submarine training around Maui, Molokai, Lanai, Kahoolawe, Oahu, and Kauai should be conducted with great care due to the increasingly dense populations of humpback whales during the winter reproductive season.
3. A sensor array capable of detecting vocalizing marine mammals should be put in place.
4. The Navy should consider shifting Prospective Submarine Commanding Officer training outside of the humpback whale season.

Measures Applicable to Hull-Mounted Surface and Submarine Active Sonar

1. Avoid critical habitats, marine sanctuaries, and the Humpback Whale Sanctuary.
2. Surface vessels only: Use observers to visually survey for and avoid operating active sonar when sea turtles and/or marine mammals are observed. Submarines and surface units: Monitor acoustic detection devices for indications of close aboard marine mammals (high bearing rate biological contacts). When a surface combatant or a submarine conducting active sonar training detects a marine mammal close aboard, reduce maximum sonar transmission level to avoid harassment in accordance with the following specific actions.
 - a. When marine mammals are detected by any means (aircraft, observer, or aurally) within 600 feet (ft) of the sonar dome, the ship or submarine will limit active transmission levels to at least 4 decibels (dB) below their equipment maximum for sector search modes.
 - b. Ship and submarines will continue to limit maximum transmission levels by this 4-dB factor until they determine the marine mammal is no longer within 600 ft of the sonar dome.
 - c. Should the marine mammal be detected closing to inside 300 ft of the sonar dome, the principal risk to the mammal changes from acoustic harassment to

1 one of potential physical injury from collision. Accordingly, ships and submarines
2 shall maneuver to avoid collision. Standard whale strike avoidance procedures
3 apply.

- 4 d. When seals are detected by any means within 1,050 ft of the sonar dome, the
5 ship or submarine shall limit active transmission levels to at least 4 dB below
6 equipment maximum for sector search mode. Ships or submarines shall
7 continue to limit maximum ping levels by this 4-dB factor until the ships and
8 submarines determine that the seal is no longer within 1,050 ft of the sonar
9 dome.

11 **4.7.1 BIOLOGICAL RESOURCES—HIHWNMS**

12 **4.7.1.1 KAUAI—BIOLOGICAL RESOURCES—HIHWNMS**

13 Few training or research, development, test, and evaluation (RDT&E) operations occur in the
14 area north of Kauai originally included in the Sanctuary. Warning Areas W-186 and W-188
15 airspace over the Open Ocean is outside the Sanctuary boundary. The Warning Areas are
16 used for missile, bomb, and gunnery exercises. Air, surface, and underwater exercises are
17 conducted in the surface area of W-186 and W-188. Activities that occur within sanctuary
18 waters would continue to follow all applicable procedures such as using observers to visually
19 survey for and thus avoid humpbacks and other whales.

20 **4.7.1.2 OAHU—BIOLOGICAL RESOURCES—HIHWNMS**

21 No current or planned HRC activities are/would be performed within the Sanctuary's
22 boundaries. Transiting military vessels continue to follow all applicable procedures such as
23 using observers to visually survey for and thus avoid humpbacks and other whales.

24 **4.7.1.3 MAUI—BIOLOGICAL RESOURCES—HIHWNMS**

25 The waters inside the 100-fathom isobath surrounding Maui, Molokai, and Lanai, and
26 specifically the channel between these islands, would continue to be used for biennial RIMPAC
27 Exercises, including Explosive Ordnance Disposal and Mine Countermeasures exercises, as
28 well as shallow-water Anti-submarine Warfare. The training and RDT&E operations would
29 continue to follow the applicable measures listed above.

30 **4.7.1.4 HAWAII—BIOLOGICAL RESOURCES—HIHWNMS**

31 Although the Kawaihae Pier area is not included within the Hawaiian Islands Humpback Whale
32 National Marine Sanctuary located off the northwestern shore of Hawaii, Army, and Marine
33 Corps helicopter training operations regularly occur over the area within the Sanctuary
34 boundary. Navy and Army landing craft frequently offload and load supplies and equipment at
35 Kawaihae Pier in support of military training at PTA. These training operations will continue as
36 approved military actions in the HIHWNMS Environmental Impact Statement/Management Plan.