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(b) [Reserved]

§218.75 Requirements for monitoring and reporting.

(a) As outlined in the HSTT Study Area Stranding Communication Plan, the Holder of the Authorization must notify NMFS immediately (or as soon as operational security considerations allow) if the specified activity identified in §218.70 is thought to have resulted in the mortality or injury of any marine mammals, or in any take of marine mammals not identified in §218.71.

(b) The Holder of the LOA must conduct all monitoring and required reporting under the LOA, including abiding by the HSTT Monitoring Plan.

(c) General Notification of Injured or Dead Marine Mammals—Navy personnel shall ensure that NMFS (regional stranding coordinator) is notified immediately (or as soon as operational security considerations allow) if an injured or dead marine mammal is found during or shortly after, and in the vicinity of, an Navy training or testing activity utilizing mid- or high-frequency active sonar, or underwater explosive detonations. The Navy shall provide NMFS with species or description of the animal(s), the condition of the animal(s) (including carcass condition if the animal is dead), location, time of first discovery, observed behaviors (if alive), and photo or video (if available). The Navy shall consult the Stranding Response Plan to obtain more specific reporting requirements for specific circumstances.

(d) Vessel Strike—In the event that a Navy vessel strikes a whale, the Navy shall do the following:

(1) Immediately report to NMFS (pursuant to the established Communication Protocol) the:

- (i) Species identification if known;
- (ii) Location (latitude/longitude) of the animal (or location of the strike if the animal has disappeared);
- (iii) Whether the animal is alive or dead (or unknown); and
- (iv) The time of the strike.

(2) As soon as feasible, the Navy shall report to or provide to NMFS, the:

(i) Size, length, and description (critical if species is not known) of animal;

(ii) An estimate of the injury status (e.g., dead, injured but alive, injured and moving, blood or tissue observed in the water, status unknown, disappeared, etc.);

(iii) Description of the behavior of the whale during event, immediately after the strike, and following the strike (until the report is made or the animal is no long sighted);

(iv) Vessel class/type and operation status;

(v) Vessel length

(vi) Vessel speed and heading; and

(vii) To the best extent possible, obtain

(3) Within 2 weeks of the strike, provide NMFS:

(i) A detailed description of the specific actions of the vessel in the 30-minute timeframe immediately preceding the strike, during the event, and immediately after the strike (e.g., the speed and changes in speed, the direction and changes in the direction, other maneuvers, sonar use, etc., if not classified); and

(ii) A narrative description of marine mammal sightings during the event and immediately after, and any information as to sightings prior to the strike, if available; and

(iii) Use established Navy shipboard procedures to make a camera available to attempt to capture photographs following a ship strike.

(e) Annual HSTT Monitoring Plan Report—(1) The Navy shall submit an annual report for the HSTT Monitoring Plan in April of each year, describing the implementation and results from the previous calendar year. Data collection methods will be standardized across range complexes and study areas to allow for comparison in different geographic locations. Although additional information will be gathered, the protected species observers collecting marine mammal data pursuant to the HSTT Monitoring Plan shall, at a minimum, provide the same marine mammal observation data required in §218.75. (2) As an alternative, the Navy may submit a multi-Range Complex annual Monitoring Plan report to fulfill this requirement. Such a report would describe progress of knowledge made with respect to monitoring plan study questions across all Navy ranges

associated with the ICMP. Similar study questions shall be treated together so that progress on each topic shall be summarized across all Navy ranges. The report need not include analyses and content that does not provide direct assessment of cumulative progress on the monitoring plan study questions.

(f) Annual HSTT Exercise and Testing Reports—The Navy shall submit preliminary reports detailing the status of authorized sound sources within 21 days after the end of the annual authorization cycle. The Navy shall submit detailed reports 3 months after the anniversary of the date of issuance of the LOA. The detailed annual reports shall contain information on Major Training Exercises (MTE), Sinking Exercise (SINKEX) events, and a summary of sound sources used, as described below. The analysis in the detailed reports will be based on the accumulation of data from the current year's report and data collected from previous reports. The detailed reports shall contain information identified in paragraphs (e)(1) through (e)(5) of this section.

(1) Major Training Exercises/SINKEX:

(i) This section shall contain the reporting requirements for Coordinated and Strike Group exercises and SINKEX. Coordinated and Strike Group Major Training Exercises include:

(A) Sustainment Exercise (SUSTAINEX).

(B) Integrated ASW Course (IAC).

(C) Composite Training Unit Exercises (COMPTUEX).

(D) Joint Task Force Exercises (JTFEX).

(E) Undersea Warfare Exercise (USWEX).

(ii) Exercise information for each MTE:

(A) Exercise designator.

(B) Date that exercise began and ended.

(C) Location (operating area).

(D) Number of items or hours (per the LOA) of each sound source bin (impulsive and non-impulsive) used in the exercise.

(E) Number and types of vessels, aircraft, etc., participating in exercise.

(F) Individual marine mammal sighting info for each sighting for each MTE:

(1) Date/time/location of sighting.

(2) Species (if not possible, indication of whale/dolphin/pinniped).

(3) Number of individuals.

(4) Initial detection sensor.

(5) Indication of specific type of platform the observation was made from (including, for example, what type of surface vessel or testing platform).

(6) Length of time observers maintained visual contact with marine mammal(s).

(7) Sea state.

(8) Visibility.

(9) Sound source in use at the time of sighting.

(10) Indication of whether animal is <200 yd, 200–500 yd, 500–1,000 yd, 1,000–2,000 yd, or >2,000 yd from sound source.

(11) Mitigation implementation—whether operation of sonar sensor was delayed, or sonar was powered or shut down, and how long the delay was; or whether navigation was changed or delayed.

(12) If source in use is a hull-mounted sonar, relative bearing of animal from ship and estimation of animal's motion relative to ship (opening, closing, parallel).

(13) Observed behavior—watchstanders shall report, in plain language and without trying to categorize in any way, the observed behavior of the animal(s) (such as closing to bow ride, paralleling course/speed, floating on surface and not swimming, etc.), and if any calves present.

(G) An evaluation (based on data gathered during all of the MTEs) of the effectiveness of mitigation measures designed to minimize the received level to which marine mammals may be exposed. This evaluation shall identify the specific observations that support any conclusions the Navy reaches about the effectiveness of the mitigation.

(iii) Exercise information for each SINKEX:

(A) List of the vessels and aircraft involved in the SINKEX.

(B) Location (operating area).

(C) Chronological list of events with times, including time of sunrise and

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sunset, start and stop time of all marine species surveys that occur before, during, and after the SINKEX, and ordnance used.

(D) Visibility and/or weather conditions, wind speed, cloud cover, etc. throughout exercise if it changes.

(E) Aircraft used in the surveys, flight altitude, and flight speed and the area covered by each of the surveys, given in coordinates, map, or square miles.

(F) Passive acoustic monitoring details (number of sonobuoys, area and depth that was heard, detections of biologic activity, etc.).

(G) Individual marine mammal sighting info for each sighting that required mitigation to be implemented:

- (1) Date/time/location of sighting.
- (2) Species (if not possible, indication of whale/dolphin/pinniped).
- (3) Number of individuals.
- (4) Initial detection sensor.
- (5) Indication of specific type of platform the observation was made from (including, for example what type of surface vessel or platform).
- (6) Length of time observers maintained visual contact with marine mammal(s).
- (7) Sea state.
- (8) Visibility.
- (9) Indication of whether animal is <200 yd, 200–500 yd, 500–1,000 yd, 1,000–2,000 yd, or >2,000 yd from the target.
- (10) Mitigation implementation—whether the SINKEX was stopped or delayed and length of delay.
- (11) Observed behavior—

watchstanders shall report, in plain language and without trying to categorize in any way, the observed behavior of the animals (such as animal closing to bow ride, paralleling course/speed, floating on surface and not swimming, etc.), and if any calves present.

(H) List of the ordnance used throughout the SINKEX and net explosive weight (NEW) of each weapon and the combined ordnance NEW.

(2) Summary of Sources Used.

(i) This section shall include the following information summarized from the authorized sound sources used in all training and testing events:

(A) Total annual hours or quantity (per the LOA) of each bin of sonar or other non-impulsive source;

(B) Total annual expended/detonated rounds (missiles, bombs, etc.) for each explosive bin;

(C) Total annual airgun use; and

(D) Improved Extended Echo-Ranging System (IEER)/sonobuoy summary, including:

(1) Total expended/detonated rounds (buoys).

(2) Total number of self-scuttled IEER rounds.

(3) Sonar Exercise Notification—The Navy shall submit to NMFS (specific contact information to be provided in LOA) either an electronic (preferably) or verbal report within fifteen calendar days after the completion of any major exercise (RIMPAC, USWEX, or Multi Strike Group) indicating:

(i) Location of the exercise.

(ii) Beginning and end dates of the exercise.

(iii) Type of exercise (e.g., RIMPAC, USWEX, or Multi Strike Group).

(4) Geographic Information Presentation—The reports shall present an annual (and seasonal, where practical) depiction of training exercises and testing bin usage geographically across the Study Area.

(5) Special Reporting Requirements—To the extent practicable, and as it applies to the specific Study Area, these reports will also include:

(i) The total hours (from 15 December through 15 April) of hull-mounted active sonar operation occurring in the dense humpback areas generally shown on the Mobley map (73 FR 35510, 35520) plus a 5-km buffer, but not including the Pacific Missile Range Facility (as illustrated in the HSTT FEIS/OEIS).

(ii) The total estimated annual hours of hull-mounted active sonar operation conducted in the Humpback Whale Cautionary Area between 15 December and 15 April.

(6) 5-year Close-out Exercise and Testing Report—This report will be included as part of the 2019 annual exercise or testing report. This report will provide the annual totals for each sound source bin with a comparison to the annual allowance and the 5-year total for each sound source bin with a comparison to the 5-year allowance.

Additionally, if there were any changes to the sound source allowance, this report will include a discussion of why the change was made and include the analysis to support how the change did or did not result in a change in the FEIS and final rule determinations. The report will be submitted 3 months after the expiration of the rule. NMFS will submit comments on the draft close-out report, if any, within 3 months of receipt. The report will be considered final after the Navy has addressed NMFS' comments, or 3 months after the submittal of the draft if NMFS does not provide comments.

§ 218.76 Applications for Letters of Authorization.

To incidentally take marine mammals pursuant to the regulations in this subpart, the U.S. citizen (as defined by § 216.106) conducting the activity identified in § 218.70(c) (the U.S. Navy) must apply for and obtain either an initial LOA in accordance with § 218.77 or a renewal under § 218.78.

§ 218.77 Letters of Authorization.

(a) An LOA, unless suspended or revoked, will be valid for a period of time not to exceed the period of validity of this subpart.

(b) Each LOA will set forth:

(1) Permissible methods of incidental taking;

(2) Means of effecting the least practicable adverse impact on the species, its habitat, and on the availability of the species for subsistence uses (i.e., mitigation); and

(3) Requirements for mitigation, monitoring and reporting.

(c) Issuance and renewal of the LOA will be based on a determination that the total number of marine mammals taken by the activity as a whole will have no more than a negligible impact on the affected species or stock of marine mammal(s).

§ 218.78 Renewals and modifications of Letters of Authorization.

(a) A Letter of Authorization issued under §§ 216.106 and 218.77 for the activity identified in § 218.70(c) will be renewed or modified upon request of the applicant, provided that:

(1) The proposed specified activity and mitigation, monitoring, and reporting measures, as well as the anticipated impacts, are the same as those described and analyzed for these regulations (excluding changes made pursuant to the adaptive management provision of this chapter), and;

(2) NMFS determines that the mitigation, monitoring, and reporting measures required by the previous LOA under these regulations were implemented.

(b) For LOA modification or renewal requests by the applicant that include changes to the activity or the mitigation, monitoring, or reporting (excluding changes made pursuant to the adaptive management provision of this chapter) that do not change the findings made for the regulations or result in no more than a minor change in the total estimated number of takes (or distribution by species or years), NMFS may publish a notice of proposed LOA in the FEDERAL REGISTER, including the associated analysis illustrating the change, and solicit public comment before issuing the LOA.

(c) A LOA issued under § 216.106 and § 218.77 of this chapter for the activity identified in § 218.70(c) of this chapter may be modified by NMFS under the following circumstances:

(1) Adaptive Management—NMFS may modify (including augment) the existing mitigation, monitoring, or reporting measures (after consulting with the Navy regarding the practicability of the modifications) if doing so creates a reasonable likelihood of more effectively accomplishing the goals of the mitigation and monitoring set forth in the preamble for these regulations.

(i) Possible sources of data that could contribute to the decision to modify the mitigation, monitoring, and reporting measures in an LOA:

(A) Results from Navy's monitoring form the previous year(s);

(B) Results from other marine mammal and/or sound research or studies; or

(C) Any information that reveals marine mammals may have been taken in a manner, extent, or number not authorized by these regulations or subsequent LOAs.