



PRESERVING WILD
SALMON HABITAT &
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City Council Memorandum

DATE: September 8, 2016

TO: Honorable Mayor and City Council

FROM: Emily Stolarczyk, Program Manager - Eyak Preservation Council

SUBJECT: Supplemental Information/ Overview of Resolution addressing the US Navy's 2017 trainings in the Gulf of Alaska

Thank you for the opportunity to provide context and information to support the Resolution addressing the US Navy's 2017 training plans in the Gulf of Alaska. This Resolution was passed by the communities of Cordova, Homer in both 2015 and 2016 and in Kodiak, Alaska in 2015.

On March 31st, 2016, US Navy representatives speaking at ComFish in Kodiak, AK stated that the Navy had pre-selected training dates for 2017 in the Gulf of Alaska. Their dates are May 1 – 12, 2017. These dates are problematic and pose risks to our commercial and subsistence fisheries. As coastal communities, we need to engage the Navy and support an alternative time of their 'Northern Edge' training exercises.

The Eyak Preservation Council supports a well-trained Navy and is not asking for the exercises to be discontinued. We are asking that the Navy work with local communities to find the best time and location for training that poses the least amount of risk to the valuable habitat within the Gulf of Alaska; the needs of local industries, communities and the environment must be balanced.

Some additional points for consideration:

- The Navy selected 2017 training dates before securing a Letter of Authorization (LOA) or a permit from the National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) for the 2017 trainings. Selecting dates before securing a LOA is a serious breach of protocol and legality by the US Navy.
- In the 43 years that the Navy has conducted trainings in the GOA, never once has a training occurred in May. Trainings from 1973 – 2002 happened in the winter months, 2004 – 2015 happened in June. May is one of the prime months for species migration into the GOA. The Navy has not conducted any additional research to prove that training in May will not harm or have negative effects on migrating fish and marine mammals.
- The Navy and NMFS recently lost a federal lawsuit about Naval exercises and permit processes regarding the Navy's activities in their Hawaii/Southern California ranges. As a result, the Navy is now restricted from training in Biologically Important Areas (BIA's) during certain times of the year because of the species present. The resolution asks that the same protections awarded to Hawaii/Southern California be extended to the Gulf of Alaska.



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- The Navy has previously identified that both September and October are acceptable months in which 'Northern Edge' can be conducted.
- Our environment is changing. Warm water species are being observed in our waters for the first time. The Navy has not conducted any research nor presented any information about the safety and/or long term impacts their trainings pose to our marine environments including Essential Fish Habitat. In these changing times, it is our responsibility to take every measure to safeguard the future of our fisheries. Allowing the Navy to train in May could have a number of unintended consequences and unfavorable impacts to our fisheries including:
 - Immediate decline in catch due to direct physical injury and mortality from weapons and sonar;
 - Delays in fish runs as a result of scattering effects from sonar (observed after 2015 trainings in Bristol Bay and other fisheries);
 - Exposure and contamination of fish from Navy-sourced expended materials such as cyanide, mercury and lead;
 - Failure to (or an increase in the time needed to) reach the next developmental stage of juvenile fish populations.

In summary, allowing the Navy to conduct their training exercise 'Northern Edge' in May puts our fishing industries and subsistence resources at undue risk. The Navy is already changing their activities in other Pacific ranges. The Navy needs to hear from communities now, well in advance of their trainings, in order to make the necessary changes to their schedule.

Please contact me with additional questions and/ or concerns.

Thank you,

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