

Given the lack of data, level of risk and uncertainty of how the Navy's training can impact our environment, please share with us your thoughts on the following:

1. What are your socioeconomic concerns? Impacts on livelihood and subsistence resources?

May is when the salmon return to our nets. Salmon is important to us. This training is so close to Kodiak. We count on salmon. We are alarmed. This is a valuable subsistence resource. Because of our ability to fish, we buy little to zero meat in the store. Kodiak is the second largest fishing port in the nation (tonnage) and third in value. Commercial fishing support 20% of our local workforce.

2. What are your concerns of how the Navy trainings in May could impact your family, lifestyle, and community?

Our community values subsistence and recreational fishing. It's the talk of the dock: "Where are the fish?" "Is the boat ready?" "Who will we go with?"

Kodiak people are sea minded. We watch it, live it, breath it everyday. We rely on the sea. Salmon is important spiritually. We use it at all our gatherings: potlucks, funerals, traditions.

We are fearful of the unknown. We do not know, exactly, where the salmon are migrating through the Gulf of Alaska. We haven't tracked them.

The military has a long history along Aleutian chain and in Kodiak. They protected our nation but also left a legacy of pollution. There are Formally Used Defense Sites that are not yet remediated, from WWII and Cold War. It impacts our health with documented cases of high cancer rates. We do not trust the military when they say, "Don't worry about it. We have that covered." The impacts may have been unintended decades ago, but current generations are cleaning it up.

3. Regarding the timing, what do you think about the Navy saying they will train in the beginning of May?

Besides fishing, Kodiak relies on tourism. We host Whalefest in early May. With the training only 12 to 14 miles offshore, people are afraid of what could happen. We may not see the affects until later on, and especially with the whales, cumulative impacts are a concern for our community.

We propose moving it to the fall and winter when there less of an impact on migrating salmon, which is the foundation for our economy. Kodiak is one of the most diverse fisheries with 18 different species. There really is no wonderful time, but the least damaging time would be the fall and winter.

When we asked about moving the timing of the training, the U.S. Navy answered the need for staging and movement of assets and resources to participate. It made it feel like that do not pay attention to public concerns. The livelihood of Kodiak resources do not matter to them, and we are expendable in the matter of national interests.

Knowledge and understanding goes a long way. We need to protect our own people first. So many unknowns provokes fear. We want to know where are the salmon are when they are training. What is the U.S. Navy's bycatch? How many salmon will be lost to the overall fish quota? The military has no quota for salmon; they are only focused on endangered species, not subsistence species.

4. Regarding the location, what do you think about the Navy's location for these exercises (being so close to shore, within EFH)?

We understand why they want an area that large for positioning for war games. It reduces the effectiveness of their training. They have explained that well.

But, should it be out there? No, it should be further offshore where there is less impact. Whereas, the terrain and seamounts and slopes makes it ideal, there other ways to do this through virtual and simulated games without damage to critical fishery resources.

If you overlay the TMAA with all the fisheries, each are represented. There is an immense amount of resources in that area. Essential fish habitat should not be used as a training range with potentially lethal materials; it could contaminate our fish and us. Decades of toxins and sonobuoys has a cumulative impact on us. These unknowns demonstrate the need to take a hard look at alternatives to meet their training needs.

5. What do you think is an ideal outcome or solution? For the Navy to move their timing as the communities have requested? For the Navy to not train at all?

Their communication failed among local stakeholders. There needs to be more government to government consultations. Many Kodiak families come from a background of military and respect the classified information. We suggest building trust by using a camera sled during training and feature a live broadcast to trusted Tribes. This use of underwater technology improves our communication, keeps our nation secure, and aides in eliminating our fears.

We need research questions answered. The U.S. Navy needs to look it available data more closely and support researchers in the Gulf of Alaska and in Kodiak. The U.S. Navy should spend at least 1 percent of the total cost of these exercises on research. Research outcomes would help prove or disprove adverse impacts and functions of our maritime ecosystem, including sea birds, shorebirds, and large migratory mega fauna. This is intertwined in the web of life.

The U.S. Navy needs to be our partner to ensures our ecosystem stays healthy and sustains our growing populations. They should adopt the “Leave no trace” principle as we do in national parks. They need retrieve everything the expend to have the least impact on the ecosystem. Locally, in Kodiak, the U.S. Navy’s Cold Water Warfare Training already employs this value. Why not Northern Edge? The ocean does not have a dilution factor.

We teach the water cycle to our kids. But as adults, we forget it’s importance. You have to look from the top of the mountain to the bottom of the ocean to understand our nutrient base.