

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?

I am concerned not only about navy activity displacing whales and making them impossible to see but also business and communities that rely upon them for income. The ocean is an acoustic world. In the darkness of the sea, whales and dolphins depend on the ability to hear and be heard for survival. When naval training uses explosives and sonar and associated activities changes this pristine environment into a war zone, they compound the ability mammals to function for survival.

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

I remember the first time I took my kids whale watching. The sheer excitement and amazement in their faces as they encountered something as magnificent as a whale. For many people, that experience is transformative. To act in a way that I want my kids and everyone's kids to have that experience.

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

If one were to scan the calendar for the worst time for this training, May would be on the short list. This is a time when the salmon are offshore and returning, when fisheries are active. The fact is that there are times of the year when this training would be far less disruptive to communities.

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

The Navy has adopted a shoot first, ask questions later. Without obtaining reasonable baseline of information, it decided to move forward with exercises and ramp up over the next few years. The Navy seems to think that the lack information (that it should have acquired) authorizes their training in the Gulf of Alaska. The closer they are, the greater the risk of disruption to salmon, great whales, and other vulnerable species. The North Pacific Right Whales (fewer than 40) could be significantly impacted. It is incomprehensible to not avoid and take all precautions to avoid the area. Move training to deep water. Historical whaling data and recent survey data indicates that whales seasonally in the shallow waters and upper slope of the TMAA. The GOA is a very large place; the Navy should plan its exercise to be more respectful the magnificent life and adversarial areas where it is less likely to occur.

The Navy has said it that for 2017, it will conduct its exercises in the middle of TMAA rather than areas closer to shore. That is all well and good, but these vague statements raise more questions than they answer. What is the middle of TMAA? How will the Navy conduct all activities in the deep water of the abyssal plain? Or will there be exercises along the slope? Will the Navy be near seamounts that are essential for marine species? Is the Navy willing to make a legal commitment to operate in these waters? Without a commitment the Navy, it is difficult to place stock in a mere promise.

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?

Naval training and marine wildlife can coexist. That can happen only if the Navy is serious about its role as marine steward and minimize potential harm. In this case, that means moving the activity to fall and winter months, as requested. Move the activity further away from shore. As part of this, it is essential that the navy integrate this commitment to 2017 and future exercises. Right now, under scrutiny from the community, the Navy has been making some verbal concessions, which are not backed up by legal commitment and only reflected for 2017. The Navy may be hoping communities will take their eye off the ball. People who care about the Gulf of Alaska, salmon, wildlife in this extraordinary place will continue

Summer is for Salmon
Story Board: Michael Jasny

to demand that the navy be consistent with the health of the Gulf of Alaska. People in Gulf of Alaska know well how to conserve it, Navy needs to learn from them by listening to what communities are telling them.

