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US Navy's sonar shame: Agonizing death for whales, dolphins and other marine life

[San Francisco](#) : [CA](#) : [USA](#) | Jan 28, 2013 at 10:11

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By [PrairieDogPress](#)

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Scientists inspect dozens of beached pilot whales. Photo by Kim Eiszele ANON

On Friday, the National Marine Fisheries Services released proposals that would allow naval war games off the Atlantic, Hawaii and the southern California coast for five years, and such repetition would equal millions of sonar assaults on marine life. This would inevitably result in thousands of cases of hearing loss, lung injuries, brain hemorrhages; tissue damage from decompression sickness, disorientation, potential beaching and death.

The Marine Service's proposals would allow the US Navy to perform underwater detonations, sinking of ships, gunnery exercises and active sonar, which is so loud it would amount to harassment and potentially lethal results for whales, dolphins, seals and others.

For years the US Navy denied that sonar for training exercises in open water could be tied to adverse effects on whales and marine life, but as more evidence came in from scientists worldwide, NOAA and even some of the Navy's own [research](#), it could no longer avoid the fact that sonar was highly damaging to marine mammals, but they continue to avoid taking court-ordered measures to protect them, even in known feeding and breeding grounds.

The courts have repeatedly found no merit in the Navy's argument that protective measures would interfere with vital training or hamper national security.

According to a [statement](#) by the Center for Biological Diversity, in 2008, the Center and its allies won a challenge to Navy training exercises using mid-frequency sonar off the coast of Hawaii. The federal judge ordered the Navy to avoid near-shore areas where marine mammals such as beaked whales are

more likely to be harmed by the sonar. In 2012, the Center filed suit, with allies, against the National Marine Fisheries Service for failing to protect thousands of whales, dolphins, porpoises, seals and sea lions from ocean noise brought by Navy warfare training exercises along the coasts of California, Oregon and Washington.

“Many whales and other marine mammals, like Hawaiian monk seals, are already struggling for survival — now the Navy’s going to intensify war games in their habitat? We’re learning more and more about the tragic effects of sonar on whales and dolphins, yet the Navy’s being given carte blanche to blast the oceans with it and harm animals over and over again,” said Miyoko Sakashita, oceans director at the [Center for Biological Diversity](#), which works to stop marine mammal deaths and extinctions and will be submitting comments on the new proposed rule.

Naval sonar works like headlights on a car to help submarines identify large objects for up to 100 miles or more. The problem is, those sound waves are deafening to aquatic life with highly sensitive hearing. Even low-frequency sonar can be the equivalent of a human being listening to a fighter jet takeoff.

Naval sonar has been the primary suspect in numerous mass beaching of whales and deaths along the Hawaiian Islands, Bahamas, Greece, Japan, Canary Islands and coastal areas of the US Pacific Northwest.

Decades of [research](#) by whale-watching experts say that beaching of whales is only a small percentage of the body-count that results from sonar harassment and ocean noise, because most marine mammals sink to the bottom when they die and there is no way to estimate potentially thousands of deaths that aren’t seen or counted.

The National Marine Fisheries Service will publish a notice in the Federal Register on Jan. 31 and is accepting comments on the proposed regulation until March 11.




Click [here](#) for more information on ocean noise and the lethal impacts of Navy sonar.

*Jean Williams, environmental and political journalist; PrairieDogPress writer; Artistic Director, Keystone Prairie Dogs. ***PrairieDogPress is the media channel for [keystone-prairie-dogs.com](#), which is a fundraising website to support environmental groups for extraordinary efforts to protect Great Plains habitat and prairie dogs in the wild. PDP uses humorous images, social commentary and serious-minded political reports to challenge government on numerous levels, including accountability to the people, the protection of threatened species, the environment and Earth’s natural resources.*

PrairieDogPress is based in Seattle, Washington, United States of America, and is an Anchor for Allvoices.

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Posted By [Billie Greenwood](#) | about 1 year ago

This is another example of the great work you do, Jean. Thanks for alerting me to this issue. Humans need to live in harmony with the earth and all it's creatures--not run roughshod over the planet.

[Reply](#)



Reply By [PrairieDogPress](#) | about 1 year ago

Thank you, Miss Billie. This was the most edited version I could do, because there is so much in the polarized political world that makes it difficult to protect other innocent species on this planet from the footprint of man.

[Reply](#)



Posted By [spiritpen](#) | about 1 year ago

While we support our boys at sea, we do not support the heartless policy being proposed by their brass. Sonar, including the Hawaii-Southern California Training and Testing, must be fought and stopped by Americans who know that whales, dolphins and other precious marine life are part of what our Navy must endeavor to protect, not destroy.

Joey Racano, Director
 Ocean Outfall Group
 Veteran, United States Navy
 USS Hector (AR-7) 1973-1975
 On Facebook: Stop Navy Sonar Testing

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Reply By [PrairieDogPress](#) | about 1 year ago

Thank you, Mr. Racano, for adding the voice of your organization to this worthwhile protest.

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Posted By [Robert Weller](#) | about 1 year ago

This is no different than the Air Force's approach to flights that can harm wildlife, and make life hell for humans.

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Posted By [CoasttoCoast](#) | about 1 year ago

Dumb Humans just murdering more of the Earth's precious creatures that never harm us in the name of "exercise." We will one day destroy ourselves and the aliens that visit this planet are watching us closely. We are short sighted and reckless. A zoo exhibit to the galaxy.

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Reply By [PrairieDogPress](#) | about 1 year ago

Thanks for your comment, CoasttoCoast. It sure does feel like that sometimes, doesn't it?

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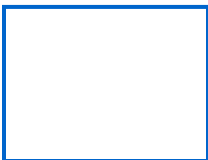
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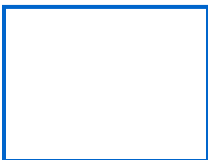
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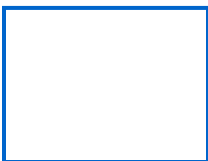
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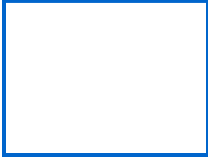
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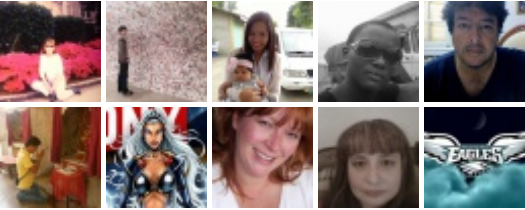
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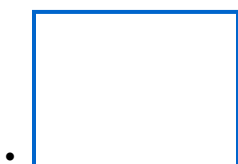
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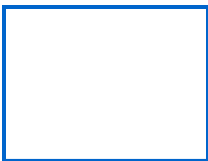
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