



InterTribal Sinkyone Wilderness Council

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InterTribal Cultural Conservation for Sinkyone Indian Lands



October 22, 2010

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Naval Facilities Engineering Command Northwest
1101 Tautog Circle, Suite 203
Silverdale, WA 98315-1101
Attn: Mrs. Kimberly Kler – NWTRC EIS/OEIS

Submitted Online on 10/24/10

Re: Proposed Expansion of the Northwest Training Range Complex

Dear Mrs. Kler:

The InterTribal Sinkyone Wilderness Council (Council) is a nonprofit 501(c)(3) cultural conservation organization comprised of ten federally recognized, sovereign California Indian Tribes that retain and maintain important cultural ties to the coastlines and the offshore waters of Mendocino and Humboldt Counties.

The Council was founded in 1986 by, and for the benefit of, its member Tribes and is charged with protecting the cultural-ecological resources that constitute the heritage of the indigenous Tribal Peoples of the historic Sinkyone Tribal territory, which is located within southern Humboldt and northern Mendocino Counties and includes adjacent marine waters and islands.

The Council's constituent Tribes are: Cahto Tribe of Laytonville Rancheria; Coyote Valley Band of Pomo Indians; Hopland Band of Pomo Indians; Pinoleville Pomo Nation; Potter Valley Tribe; Redwood Valley Band of Pomo Indians; Robinson Rancheria; Round Valley Indian Tribes (a sovereign nation of 7 confederated Tribes); Scotts Valley Band of Pomo Indians; and Sherwood Valley Band of Pomo Indians. Each of these Tribes is a sovereign nation that maintains its own government-to-government relations with the United States of America.

The Tribes' connections to the marine resources and waters of this region are ancient and well documented, and these connections are indisputably vital to the culture, sustenance, health, and continued wellbeing of the Tribal members of this region.

The U.S. Navy's proposed Northwest Training Range Complex contains numerous marine species, as well as anadromous species, that are culturally important to Tribal Peoples of both the coastal and the inland regions of Mendocino, Lake, Humboldt, and Del Norte Counties. The species that would be affected by the proposed expansion of the U.S. Navy's Northwest Training Range Complex include those that are Endangered and Vulnerable.

The U.S. Navy's Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) for the proposed expansion of the Northwest Training Range Complex and the U.S. Navy's Request to the National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) for Authorization for the Incidental Harassment of Marine Mammals, specifically include the ability to "take" dozens of species of marine mammals (i.e., whales, dolphins, and seals) that would be severely affected by the proposed expansion.

InterTribal Sinkyone Wilderness Council is a Nonprofit Consortium of California Indian Tribes

• Cultural Conservation • Native Stewardship • Watershed Rehabilitation • Cultural Ecology Education

The U.S. Navy's request to NMFS for Authorization for the Incidental Harassment of Marine Mammals may in fact result in the death of millions of sea mammals as a result of the proposed expansion. We remain unequivocally opposed to the destruction of marine mammals and other marine species, as well as the impacts on marine sanctuaries and reserves that will result from the proposed expansion as outlined in the EIS.

The Council holds fee title to and manages the 3,845-acre InterTribal Sinkyone Wilderness property, which is located adjacent to the coastal Sinkyone Wilderness State Park. The Sinkyone Wilderness area is in the extreme northern part of Mendocino County and southern portion of Humboldt County. Our InterTribal Wilderness land is located at the very southernmost extent of the proposed expansion. However, as indicated above in our discussion of Sinkyone aboriginal territory, our area of geographic concern extends much farther north than the property to which we hold title.

The U.S. Navy's proposed expansion would result in irreversible impacts to the many sensitive coastal resources along the entire coastline of the historic Sinkyone territory, including seaweeds, shellfish, rockfish, and a host of other animal and plant species that would be negatively affected by the proposed increase in training activities. These coastal resources, along with the marine resources and waters, constitute a critical part of the cultural heritage and aboriginal use rights of the Tribes of this region who continue to rely upon them for sustenance and ceremonial usage. Damage to these cultural resources without the express consent of the Tribes of this region would constitute serious violations of the Tribes' sovereignty, cultural heritage, and aboriginal and human rights.

The Tribes of this region have never ceded their aboriginal rights, including their rights to steward, protect, gather, harvest, and otherwise utilize marine and coastal resources that are necessary for the preservation and the continuation of our ways of life.

The U.S. Navy's proposed expansion of the Northwest Training Range Complex would infringe upon, threaten, and seriously degrade marine and coastal resources important to the Tribes and to the general population of this region. In addition, the Navy has failed to adequately consult with the Tribes of Northern California, as required by law, regarding its proposed expansion. Consultation with Tribes includes more than simply requesting their comments on a proposed project. It means entering into meaningful government-to-government discussions to examine issues of Tribal concern, including those listed above. We demand that the Navy enters into meaningful consultations with the Tribes affected by the project.

The EIS is replete with inadequacies, contradictions, lack of reliable data, and insufficient mitigations. Due to the shortfalls of the Navy's proposal, the expansion is certain to cause irreparable harm to the ecological, cultural, economic, recreational, and scenic values of Northcoast marine and coastal areas.

We hereby request an extension of the U.S. Navy Final Environmental NWTRC public comment period for the Northwest Training Range Complex. We request that our congressional representatives hold U.S. Congressional Hearings on this matter to ensure the Tribes and the public have the opportunity to bring their concerns to the attention of lawmakers and the Navy.

The InterTribal Sinkyone Wilderness Council is adamantly opposed to the U.S. Navy's expansion of the Northwest Training Range Complex and is advocating for the No Action Alternative as outlined in the EIS.

The Navy should entirely withdraw its plans for the proposed expansion of the Northwest Training Range Complex now and henceforth. Instead, it should develop plans for reducing its training and testing activities within the Northwest Training Range Complex, thus contributing to the healing and revitalization of our ocean waters and all the life that they contain.

Sincerely,



Priscilla Hunter
Chairperson

cc: President Barack Obama
National Marine Fisheries Service
Tribes of Mendocino, Lake, Humboldt, and Del Norte Counties
Senator Diane Feinstein
Senator Barbara Boxer
Senator Tom Harkin
Senator Byron Dorgan
Senator Carl Levin
Congressman Mike Thompson
Congresswoman Lynn Woolsey
California Department of Parks & Recreation
California Coastal Commission
California State Coastal Conservancy
California State Senator Pat Wiggins
California State Assemblymember Wes Chesbro
Mendocino County Board of Supervisors
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Natural Resources Defense Council
Ocean Conservancy
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Northcoast Environmental Center