

NMFS Office of Protected Resources

Review of Two Pinniped Strandings

May 18, 2017

NMFS has completed its review of two pinniped strandings reported on NMFS's website on February 15, 2017, and April 6, 2017. Based on the information available, NMFS has determined that neither event warrants modification of the Letters of Authorization for the U.S. Navy's Hawaii Southern California Training and Testing (HSTT) under 50 CFR 218.78(c)(1) or notice and comment procedures under 50 CFR 216.106(e) or 50 CFR 218.78(c)(1)(ii).

An unidentified pinniped carcass was discovered on February 1, 2017, at the Naval Base Coronado, Breakers Beach. The carcass was heavily predated, with the head and upper torso missing. The discovery was made shortly after, and in the vicinity of, the Navy's use of permitted high-frequency active sonar and explosives.

On March 23, 2017, a harbor seal carcass was discovered at the Navy's Silver Strand Training Complex. The harbor seal carcass was fairly fresh and bloated. The discovery was made shortly after, and in the vicinity of, the Navy's use of permitted high-frequency active sonar.

There is no stranding network responder dedicated to investigating reports of dead pinnipeds in San Diego County, so neither stranding received a response from or investigation by the stranding network. In addition, there has been no new information obtained since the notification of these strandings that provide insight into their potential causes. Consequently, the available information relating to the two strandings is very limited and is insufficient to allow NMFS to determine the likely cause(s) of the strandings. Because the available information does not support a causal connection between the Navy's HSTT training or testing and these pinniped strandings, NMFS concludes that none of the reported events warrants any actions pursuant to 50 CFR 216.106(e) or 50 CFR 218.78(c).