

ADDENDUM
APPLICATION FOR AN INCIDENTAL HARASSMENT AUTHORIZATION
UNDER
THE MARINE MAMMAL PROTECTION ACT FOR
MARINE MAMMALS FROM TARGET AND MISSILE LAUNCH ACTIVITIES
AT SAN NICOLAS ISLAND, CALIFORNIA

Submitted to:

Office of Protected Resources
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Submitted by:

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On December 13, 2019, the United States (U.S.) Navy's (Navy) Naval Air Warfare Center Weapons Division (NAWCWD) submitted a request for an Incidental Harassment Authorization (IHA) for the incidental take of marine mammals resulting from proposed launch activities on San Nicolas Island (SNI), California. These activities are a continuation of the NAWCWD launch program for missiles and targets at SNI to support testing and training activities associated with operations on the NAWCWD Point Mugu Sea Range (PMSR).

The National Marine Fisheries Service's (NMFS) Office of Protected Resources' review of the application generated some questions for the Navy. The purpose of this addendum is to provide clarification of information submitted in the application, provide corrections to errors in the text of the application and refine take estimates for California sea lions, harbor seals and elephant seals submitted in the application.

1. Clarifications:

- a. Mitigation Measures - The application states that "Personnel cannot enter pinniped haul-outs below the predicted missile path for two hours prior to a launch." This statement is true but it is also true that Navy personnel setting up monitoring equipment (video and audio recorders) do not enter pinniped haul-outs. Monitoring equipment is set up near pinniped haul-out sites to minimize potential disturbance of animals.
- b. NMFS asked for clarification of "mission objectives or certain other factors" that may affect the timing of launches from SNI. It is vital that the Navy effectively executes readiness activities to ensure naval forces can effectively execute military operations. The ability to schedule and locate training and testing without excessively burdensome restrictions within the sea range is crucial to ensure those activities are practical, effective, and safe to execute. We will avoid or limit launches during pupping seasons and at night unless constrained by the objectives of the testing and training, safety, logistics and environmental conditions required to complete the operation.

2. Errata

- a. Page 6-10, line 4: replace 1,990 with 2,807 and 395 with 31. The sentence should read "For example between 2001 and 2017, a maximum of 2,807 sea lions and 31 harbor seals were estimated..."
- b. Page 6-10, line 7: Add Ugoretz 2015 to references for this sentence.
- c. Page 11-2: Remove mitigation number 5 – "Launches of multiple missiles in quick succession should be avoided." The launch of multiple missiles in quick succession is an activity included in this IHA. Multiple missiles are typically fired within a few seconds of each other and reactions of pinnipeds to launches of single and multiple missiles in quick succession are virtually indistinguishable.

3. Take Estimates

- a. Based on discussions with NMFS, we have revised our take estimates to use the same methodology for each species of pinniped. The total take reported for three monitoring seasons (2015-2017) was divided by the total number of launches for the same period to derive a number of takes per launch event. The number of takes per launch event was then multiplied by the number of launch events requested per year (40).

- b. Using the methodology described above,
 - i. The estimated take of California sea lions is 274.44 (275) per launch event and an annual estimated take (40 launch events) of 11,000 sea lions;
 - ii. The estimated take of harbor seals is 2.39 (3) per launch event and an annual estimated take (40 launch events) of 120 harbor seals.
- c. The Navy did not request take for elephant seals in the original IHA application but it did provide information about elephant seals for comparison purposes. Elephant seals are seasonally abundant at San Nicolas Island but they are the least reactive of the pinniped species on the island with typically little to no reaction to missile launches. Nevertheless, the Navy has reported some take of elephant seals (defined as entering the water or traveling more than 10 meters) in recent reports.

Recognizing that some take of elephant seals has been reported, the Navy is requesting take of elephant seals and estimating take using the same methodology used for sea lions and harbor seals in this IHA application. The estimated take of elephant seals is 0.61 (1) per launch event and an annual estimated take (40 launch events) of 40 elephant seals.