

DRAFT

Ms. Heidi Nitze

New York, NY

Dear Ms. Nitze:

Thank you for sharing with me the newsletter you received from the Natural Resources Defense Council dated August 24, 1999. I have read the newsletter and shared its contents with Rear Admiral Thomas Jurkowsky, the Navy's Chief of Information.

After consulting with Rear Admiral Jurkowsky's office, I believe the concerns expressed in the newsletter are largely misplaced. The Navy is committed to working with experts in the field of marine mammals, consulting with federal and state agencies, and with environmental interest groups to ensure effective and environmentally safe use of this important national defense tool. To that end, the Navy sponsored a scientific low frequency sound research program involving both marine mammals and human divers. The scientific research program results, as outlined in the Draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS), indicate no significant impact on marine mammals will result from the operations of the system as described. Mitigation measures will ensure the system does not pose a threat to animals or humans.

The scientific research forming the basis for the analysis in the DEIS was conducted in accordance with all state and federal environmental requirements and without harmful impact on marine animals or humans. As required by Executive Order 12114, Overseas Environmental Assessments were prepared for the scientific research. In addition, the National Marine Fisheries Service issued a permit for the scientific research. Previous legal challenges in Federal District Court in Hawaii have confirmed that the requirements of applicable environmental law were met in all cases. The newsletter fails to mention that the DEIS recommends extensive sound mitigation protocols for employment of the LFA sonar system to ensure that marine mammals, as well as humans, will not be exposed to harmful levels of sound.

I hope this information is helpful. The process of research data collection, and the results of the scientific research program for the SURTASS LFA sonar system appear on the following Internet web site, <http://eisteam.home.mindspring.com>.

Sincerely,

DRAFT