

# FALLON RANGE TRAINING COMPLEX



## FALLON RANGE TRAINING COMPLEX ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT STATEMENT

JANUARY 2015  
[www.FRTCEIS.com](http://www.FRTCEIS.com)



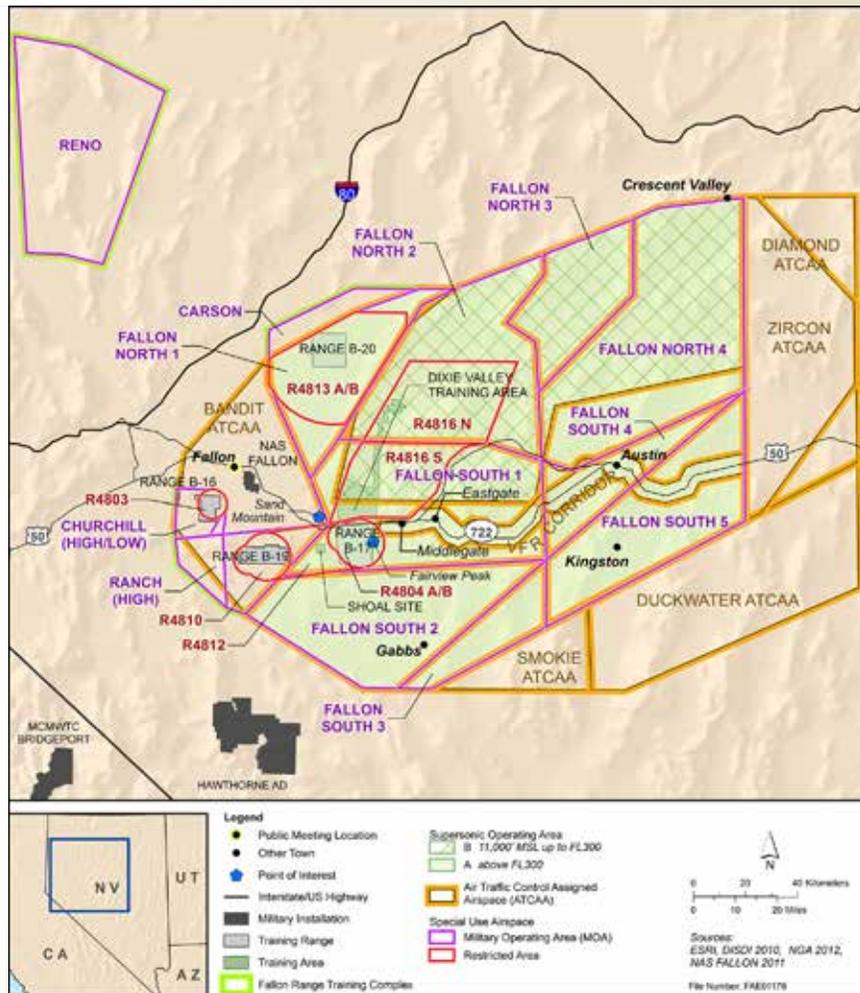


## INTRODUCTION

Throughout its 75-year history, the Fallon Range Training Complex has served as a vital and irreplaceable asset for training U.S. naval forces. Located in northern Nevada approximately 65 miles east of Reno, the U.S. Navy's Fallon Range Training Complex is comprised of well-defined airspace and land areas (see Figure 1).

To ensure the Navy is prepared for combat and mission success, the Navy occasionally needs to upgrade its facilities or modernize training and testing activities. Before the Navy can implement these changes, the potential impacts on environmental and cultural resources must be evaluated. The Navy conducts this evaluation in accordance with the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) and the National Historic Preservation Act, among other applicable federal regulations.

In May 2013, the Navy announced its intent to prepare an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) to evaluate potential impacts from proposed changes to training activities at the Fallon Range Training Complex. The Navy subsequently began preparing the EIS and involved the public in identifying the scope and issues to be addressed in the EIS. The Draft EIS is now complete and is available for public review through March 9, 2015. This brochure presents a summary of the Draft EIS and the public involvement process.



**Figure 1. Fallon Range Training Complex.** The Fallon Range Training Complex is a set of well-defined geographic training areas made up of approximately 12,256 square nautical miles of airspace and approximately 230,000 acres of Navy-managed land near Fallon, Nevada. The training complex spans multiple county jurisdictions, from Elko County to the east to Washoe County to the west. Land areas are located primarily in Churchill County and include Naval Air Station Fallon and training ranges.

Throughout its 75-year history, the Fallon Range Training Complex has served as a vital and irreplaceable asset for training U.S. naval forces.



## SUMMARY OF DRAFT EIS

The Navy's Proposed Action is to enhance training activities at the Fallon Range Training Complex to fully support military readiness activities now and in the future.

### PROPOSED ACTION AND ALTERNATIVES

The Proposed Action includes adjustments to current training levels to accommodate evolving mission requirements, including requirements resulting from advances in warfighting doctrine and procedures, new training objectives, tactics development, and the introduction of new aircraft and weapons systems into the fleet. Specifically, the Navy proposes to:

- ▶ Increase training activities
- ▶ Use new and existing unmanned aerial systems (armed and unarmed)
- ▶ Reintroduce ground laser targeting and dismounted fire and maneuver training
- ▶ Adjust Naval Special Warfare training

### Purpose and Need for the Proposed Action

The Proposed Action is a step toward ensuring the continued viability of the Fallon Range Training Complex as an essential training resource. The Proposed Action would result in critical increases in training activities to achieve and maintain a state of military readiness consistent with the Navy's national defense mission.

The Navy's mission for the Fallon Range Training Complex is to provide the most realistic combat training environment possible for Navy and Marine Corps aviation and other missions.

### THE NATIONAL ENVIRONMENTAL POLICY ACT

As required by NEPA, before U.S. federal agencies may proceed with a major action, the potential environmental impacts of proposed activities must first be identified and considered. One way federal agencies can meet NEPA requirements is to prepare a detailed analysis known as an Environmental Impact Statement.

The Navy is working with the Bureau of Land Management to develop the EIS because of the Bureau's expertise in managing land areas in and near the Fallon Range Training Complex. In this role, the Bureau of Land Management is designated as a cooperating agency, which is any federal agency other than the lead agency that has jurisdiction by law or special expertise concerning potential environmental impacts associated with a proposed action.

## Alternatives

NEPA requires federal agencies to evaluate a range of reasonable alternatives to achieve the purpose and need for the Proposed Action. After consideration of alternatives, the Navy identified two “action” alternatives (Alternatives 1 and 2) for further analysis in the Draft EIS. The Navy developed these alternatives based on the types and levels of training activities needed to meet evolving requirements. NEPA also requires the analysis of a “no action” alternative. The No Action Alternative provides a measure of the current baseline conditions against which the potential impacts of the action alternatives can be compared.

### No Action Alternative

Navy training activities currently conducted at the Fallon Range Training Complex are presented as the No Action Alternative. Because these activities have been ongoing at various levels and frequencies since the 1940s, activity levels averaged over the years of 2010 through 2012 are used as the representative baseline level for the environmental impact analysis. Under the No Action Alternative, the Navy would not increase training activities.

### Alternative 1

For Alternative 1, in addition to accommodating training activities addressed in the No Action Alternative, there would be an increase in the number of planned training activities by 6 percent over baseline (no action) conditions, accounting for new platforms,



weapons and technologies. The 6 percent increase is driven by increases in certain training activities only. The increased activities are combat search and rescue, air-to-ground gunnery and missile exercises, and high-speed anti-radiation missile exercises (which is by simulation only). In addition, two formerly conducted activities, ground laser targeting and dismounted fire and maneuver, are included as new activities. The proposed changes for Alternative 1 are required to meet the training objectives for strike warfare, dismounted fire and maneuver, ground laser targeting, and marksmanship training.

### Alternative 2 (Preferred Alternative)

Alternative 2 includes all training and range investment elements of Alternative 1. In addition, there would be an increase in the number of planned training activities by 10 percent over Alternative 1 (for a 16 percent total increase over baseline [no action] conditions), accounting for new platforms, weapons and technologies. The 10 percent increase from Alternative 1 to Alternative 2 represents available capacity at the Fallon Range Training Complex for additional training activities based on an analysis of schedule, airspace and land space. This increase would provide flexibility to accommodate additional training required in response to deployment schedules and world events. Alternative 2 is the Navy’s preferred alternative.



## WARFARE AREA

## SUMMARY OF ANNUAL TRAINING ACTIVITIES

WARFARE AREA	NO ACTION ALTERNATIVE	ALTERNATIVE 1	ALTERNATIVE 2
Anti-Air Warfare	2,582	2,582	2,841
Naval Special Warfare	79	79	86
Strike Warfare	1,882	2,050	2,255
Large Force Exercise	456	456	501
Electronic Warfare	4,025	4,025	4,428
Expeditionary Warfare	78	78	86
Other	185	592	651
<b>Total</b>	<b>9,287</b>	<b>9,862</b>	<b>10,848</b>

Table 1. Summary of Annual Training Activities by Alternative

# MILITARY TRAINING ACTIVITIES AT THE FALLON RANGE TRAINING COMPLEX

## IMPORTANCE OF MILITARY TRAINING ACTIVITIES

The Navy's mission is to organize, train and equip combat-ready naval forces capable of winning wars, deterring aggression and maintaining freedom of the seas. This mission is mandated by federal law to ensure the readiness of the United States' naval forces. To accomplish this mission, the Navy establishes and executes training and testing programs and ensures naval forces have access to military ranges, operating areas and airspace for training and testing activities.

The Fallon Range Training Complex is the premier regional training range due to its location, land area, military airspace and unique characteristics, including:

- ▶ Suitable weather for year-round training
- ▶ Proximity to other regional training ranges
- ▶ Designated airspace for supersonic training activities

A variety of other specialized training activities occur at the Fallon Range Training Complex, from Naval Special Warfare training to developing and evaluating military hardware, munitions and explosives. Warfighters who complete tactical courses at the Fallon Range Training Complex are known throughout the Navy as experts in the latest and most effective tactics.

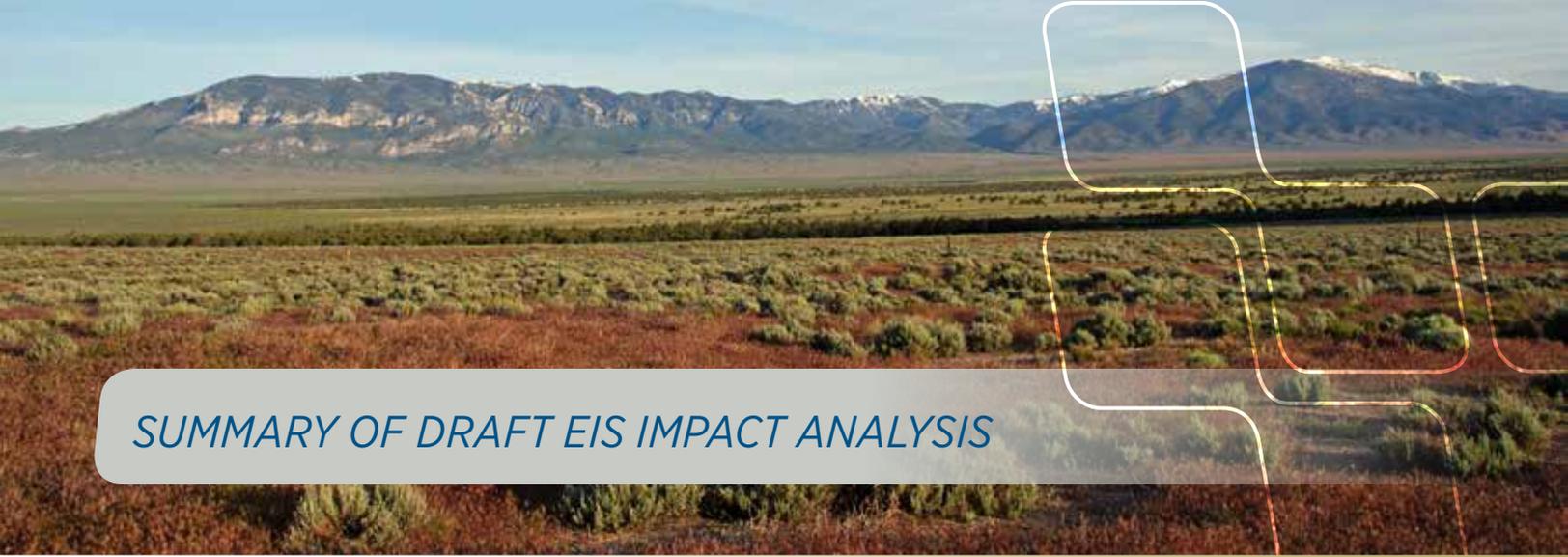
The Fallon Range Training Complex is the only Navy facility where an entire carrier air wing can train comprehensively to replicate real-life combat.

## REALISTIC TRAINING IS ESSENTIAL FOR NATIONAL DEFENSE

Defending the United States and protecting military personnel requires rigorous, real-world training. Naval forces must be ready to respond to a wide range of situations, from large-scale conflict and maritime security to humanitarian assistance and disaster relief. The skills needed to achieve military readiness are challenging to master and require constant practice. Training activities must be diverse, and as realistic as possible, to prepare U.S. service members and ensure their success and survival. While simulators provide early skill repetition and enhance teamwork, there is no substitute for live training in a realistic environment.

The Navy's mission for the Fallon Range Training Complex is to provide the most realistic combat training environment possible for Navy and Marine Corps aviation and other missions. The Fallon Range Training Complex is the only Navy facility where an entire carrier air wing can train comprehensively to replicate real-life combat. These capabilities are so unique that every carrier air wing trains at the Fallon Range Training Complex before deployment.





## SUMMARY OF DRAFT EIS IMPACT ANALYSIS

The Navy identified and analyzed potential environmental impacts from the Proposed Action and alternatives on the resource and issue areas described below. The analysis indicates there would be no significant environmental impacts from proposed training activities at the Fallon Range Training Complex. For more detailed information, please refer to the Draft EIS, available at [www.FRTCEIS.com](http://www.FRTCEIS.com).

The Draft EIS indicates there would be no significant environmental impacts from proposed training activities at the Fallon Range Training Complex.

Environmental resource and issue areas analyzed in the Draft EIS include:

- Soils
- Air quality
- Water quality
- Noise
- Biological resources
- Land use and recreation
- Socioeconomics, environmental justice and protection of children
- Transportation
- Public health and safety
- Cultural resources
- Cumulative effects

### Soils

Soils include geology, topography and the chemical and physical properties of soils. There would be no significant impacts on soils from the alternatives. Although long-term effects on soils from accumulation of munitions, metals and explosives in surface soils, and soil erosion, compaction and displacement would occur, these effects would be localized. The Navy would continue to implement best management practices, including erosion control measures.

### Air Quality

Air quality is defined by pollutant concentrations in the atmosphere. With implementation of the alternatives, there would be small increases in criteria air pollutant and hazardous air pollutant emissions relative to current conditions. Although measurable changes in air quality would be expected locally, air quality would still be within health protective standards established for the region. Long-term, minor and localized effects from dust during ground-based training would also occur; however, best management practices would minimize dust. The alternatives would not cause National Ambient Air Quality Standards to be exceeded. There would be no significant impacts on air quality from the alternatives.

### Water Quality

Water quality is defined by the chemical and physical compositions of groundwater and surface waters. There would be no significant impacts on water quality based on the following: potential contaminants from munitions would not migrate to surface waters or groundwater; there is an extremely low risk of incidental spills; there is a low risk of soil sediments migrating into surface waters or groundwater from soil disturbance; and portions of ranges where soils would be compacted by ground vehicles would be very small relative to the overall range area. Current management practices would be implemented, as well as additional proposed best management practices.

## **Noise**

Noise is characterized as unwanted sound that interferes with communication or otherwise diminishes the quality of the environment. There would be no significant impacts from noise. Aircraft overflights would create discrete, brief noise events, but the noise would contribute very little to the hourly average sound level. Additionally, sound levels from aircraft activities are compatible with community land uses such as residences, transient lodging and medical facilities. Noise from ordnance would be intermittent and would occur away from sensitive receptors, such as residences, mobile home parks, transient lodging, schools, hospitals and churches.

## **Biological Resources**

Biological resources include vegetation, mammals, birds, reptiles and amphibians. There would be no significant impacts on biological resources from the alternatives. Impacts on wildlife species from noise and use of lasers would be short-term. Impacts would be intermittent and infrequent, and individuals would be expected to recover quickly from any physiological or behavioral responses. The short-term behavioral responses are not expected to affect the fitness of individuals; therefore, population-level effects would not occur.

Aircraft strikes that might occur would have localized effects on birds and bats and are not expected to affect other mammals, amphibians or reptile populations. Munition strikes are not expected to have population-level effects on wildlife species. Other ground-disturbing activities would not result in additional loss of vegetation or direct alteration of habitat.



## **NATURAL RESOURCES AT THE FALLON RANGE TRAINING COMPLEX**

The Fallon Range Training Complex provides important habitat for many species. The Navy actively seeks to minimize impacts on the environment and evaluates its proposed projects and training and testing activities to ensure the Navy is in compliance with environmental laws and regulations.

The Navy is committed to protecting the environment while training and testing at the Fallon Range Training Complex. Maintaining the health of habitats and wildlife ensures preservation of native landscapes and allows military training in a realistic setting.

## **COLLABORATING AND PARTNERING TO PRESERVE THE ENVIRONMENT**

The Fallon Range Training Complex covers a vast area of land and airspace within the jurisdiction of multiple federal and state agencies. The Federal Aviation Administration manages the airspace, and the Bureau of Land Management manages most of the land underlying this airspace. Other major land owners and management agencies include the U.S. Forest Service, Bureau of Reclamation, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Nevada Department of Wildlife and Native American tribes. The Navy collaborates with these and other agencies to proactively identify potential impacts from training and testing activities and takes steps to minimize those impacts on the environment.



### **Land Use and Recreation**

Land use refers to the management and use of land by people. Existing land uses would remain compatible with training-related noise levels and operations. Training activities proposed would not result in changes in land use and would not affect usability of lands within the Fallon Range Training Complex.

The Navy understands it shares portions of land and airspace with civilian users who use the areas for recreation and agriculture. The Navy works closely with federal, state and local agencies to promote compatible uses, while ensuring the safety of military personnel and the public.

The Navy strives to maintain access to public areas whenever possible, but some access restrictions are necessary for public safety.

### **Socioeconomics, Environmental Justice and Protection of Children**

Socioeconomics includes regional and community economics, employment, housing and population growth, as well as disproportionately high and adverse human health or environmental effects on minority populations, low-income populations or children. The Draft EIS analysis shows beneficial effects on the local economy as a result of increased spending by additional military personnel employed by Naval Air Station Fallon and the increased military personnel participating in training activities while in the area. Economic activity such as local employment, farming or ranching operations would not be significantly impacted. There would be no significant or disproportionately high and adverse health or safety impacts on minority populations, low-income populations or children.

### **Transportation**

Transportation refers to the movement of vehicles and aircraft. Proposed training activities would be confined to established training areas on the ground and in the air; therefore, the impact on transportation would not observably differ from existing conditions. Furthermore, with continued implementation of standard operating procedures for air traffic control, there would be no anticipated impacts on existing airspace capacity.

### **Public Health and Safety**

Public health and safety refers to elements such as physical disturbance, or soil and water impacts that directly affect the health and safety of the public in areas within and adjacent to the training complex. There would be no significant impacts on public health and safety from the alternatives. The Navy would continue to implement range planning and control procedures to avoid public safety issues. The same policies and procedures that protect training participants from adverse health impacts would also protect members of the public. Strict operating procedures are already in place, including ensuring clearance of an area prior to the start of training activities.



### **Cultural Resources**

Cultural resources include buildings, structures, districts, archaeological sites, historic landscapes and traditional cultural properties of significance in history, architecture, archaeology, engineering or culture. For Alternative 1, the level of supersonic events during the busiest month would not be expected to damage caves, rockshelters or rock formations containing petroglyphs. For Alternative 2, the estimated number of supersonic events during the busiest month is slightly above the threshold parameters (defined by the Noise and Sonic Boom Impact Technology Program at Wright-Patterson Air Force Base) for creating negligible to minor damage to caves, rockshelters or rock formations containing petroglyphs. Procedures are in place for the identification, evaluation and protection of such resources. Protective measures for cultural resources that are eligible for the

National Register of Historic Places are already implemented. The Navy is consulting with the State Historic Preservation Office and Native American Tribes to ensure protection of cultural resources.



### **Cumulative Effects**

Cumulative effects are impacts on the environment when added to other past, present and reasonably foreseeable future actions, regardless of which agency (federal or non-federal) or person undertakes these actions. The analyses indicate that training activities would have negligible cumulative effects on environmental resource areas. However, the proposed alternatives would contribute incrementally to greenhouse gas emissions.

### **ENVIRONMENTAL STEWARDSHIP**

As part of the Navy's commitment to environmental stewardship and the sustainable use of resources, the Navy incorporates measures that are protective of the environment into all of its activities. Measures include employment of best management practices, standard operating procedures and adoption of conservation recommendations. Each of the alternatives analyzed in the Draft EIS includes proposed best management practices and conservation measures intended to reduce the environmental impacts of Navy activities.

## **CULTURAL RESOURCES AT THE FALLON RANGE TRAINING COMPLEX**

Cultural resources are managed in accordance with all applicable federal regulations. The term "cultural resources" includes landscapes and places, archaeological sites and objects, and historical buildings and structures that are generally more than 50 years old. As of August 2014, 823 archaeological sites have been identified within the Fallon Range Training Complex and are being evaluated. To date, 67 of the sites are eligible for the National Register of Historic Places, 258 sites are not eligible, and 498 sites are currently unevaluated.

**The Navy works with federal and state agencies and tribes to preserve sensitive resources in the training complex.**

The Navy works closely with local tribes on mutual interests and has a Memorandum of Understanding with the Fallon Paiute-Shoshone Tribe regarding Native American burials and materials found within the Fallon Range Training Complex. The Navy also has a Memorandum of Agreement with the Walker River Paiute Tribe for the safe removal of munitions found on tribal lands.



## NEPA PROCESS AND COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT

Community involvement is an important part of the NEPA process, and there are a number of opportunities for the public to participate throughout the development of the EIS. In June 2013, the Navy held open house information sessions during the scoping period to inform the public about the Proposed Action and to receive public comments on environmental resource and issue areas to be studied in the EIS.

In January 2015, the Navy released the Draft EIS for public review and comment. The Navy welcomes comments on the accuracy and adequacy of the environmental analysis. Public comments are considered in the development of the EIS, and the Navy will not proceed with the Proposed Action until the NEPA process is complete.

Public involvement is a fundamental part of developing the Fallon Range Training Complex EIS. The Navy welcomes and appreciates your comments.



Table 2. National Environmental Policy Act Process and Timeline



### Notice of Intent to Prepare an EIS

- Initiates the public involvement phase of the NEPA process

May 24, 2013

### Scoping Period\*

- Provides an early and open public process for identifying, defining and prioritizing issues to be evaluated in the EIS
- Included a 46-day public comment period

Scoping Period:  
May 24, 2013 – July 8, 2013

### Draft EIS

- Presents the analysis of potential environmental impacts for each alternative

January 23, 2015

\* Opportunities for Public Review and Comment

Complete

**Public comments must be received by March 9, 2015, to be considered in the Final EIS.**

The public is encouraged to participate and submit comments in any of the following ways:

- Submit verbal or written comments at the public meeting
- Submit comments via the project website at: **www.FRTCEIS.com**
- Mail comments to:  
 Naval Facilities Engineering Command Southwest  
 Attn: Ms. Amy Kelley, Code EV21.AK  
 1220 Pacific Highway, Building 1, 5th Floor  
 San Diego, CA 92132

For more information about the Fallon Range Training Complex EIS and how to submit comments, visit **www.FRTCEIS.com** or one of the libraries listed below.

- ▶ Austin Branch Library
- ▶ Carson City Library
- ▶ Churchill County Library Annex
- ▶ Crescent Valley Branch Library
- ▶ Eureka Branch Library
- ▶ Gabbs Community Library



**Draft EIS Public Review and Comment Period\***

- Includes a 46-day public comment period for the public to review and comment on the analysis presented in the Draft EIS

**Public Comment Period:**  
 January 23, 2015 – March 9, 2015

**Final EIS**

- Includes updates to the Draft EIS and responses to public comments received during the Draft EIS comment period

Summer/Fall 2015

**30-Day Wait Period\***

- Provides 30 days after the Final EIS is published before the Navy may take final action

Summer/Fall 2015

**Record of Decision**

- Follows the 30-day wait period and consideration of public comments
- Includes selection of an alternative by the Office of the Assistant Secretary of the Navy (Energy, Installations and Environment)

Fall 2015

*In Progress*

*Next Steps*

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