
5 UNAVOIDABLE ADVERSE IMPACTS AND COMMITMENTS OF RESOURCES

5.1 Unavoidable Adverse Impacts

Unavoidable adverse impacts at sea would include temporary disturbance to the sea floor due to the trenching and cable laying operations associated with the construction of the proposed USWTR. The trunk cable connecting the range to the shore facilities would be buried and the interconnect cable between each node would be buried if deemed necessary at individual locations within a range. Range instrumentation and interconnect cable sections that are not buried would be colonized by bottom-dwelling organisms.

During ASW training on the proposed USWTR, temporary behavioral disturbance to marine mammals within close proximity to mid-frequency active sonar systems could occur. The Navy would follow mitigation measures and conservation measures outlined in Chapter 6 of this final OEIS/EIS to minimize potential acoustic effects to marine mammals.

A number of hardware items such as MK39 EMATTs, aluminum canisters, protective nose covers, air stabilizers, steel wires, and steel-jacketed lead ballast would sink to the bottom after use and be left on the range. Over time, these items would be expected to deteriorate, be covered by shifting sediments, or be colonized by organisms seeking hard substrate. Unavoidable adverse ecological impacts due to Navy training on the proposed USWTR would be minor, temporary, and not significant.

Unavoidable adverse impacts to the landside portion at the alternate USWTR locations may include minor impacts to wetlands during installation of the trunk cable. Every effort would be made to avoid wetlands through cable alignment, trenching, and directional drilling. The Navy will work with the USACE to avoid, minimize, or mitigate any potential minor wetland impacts that might be incurred during cable and CTF installation. There could be temporary impacts to federally threatened or endangered species during installation of the trunk cable; however, consultation with the USFWS would be conducted before initiating any construction activities.

5.2 Relationship Between Local Short-Term Uses of Man's Environment and the Maintenance and Enhancement of Long-Term Productivity

The purpose of the proposed construction and operation of the USWTR is to enable the Navy to train effectively in a shallow water coastal environment at a suitable location for the Atlantic Fleet. The Navy's primary mission is to maintain, train, equip, and operate combat-ready naval forces capable of resolving conflicts, deterring aggression, and maintaining freedom of the seas. ASW is a critical part of that mission. The Navy currently lacks an instrumented shallow-water

undersea warfare training range on the east coast that could replicate the environment of strategic areas, a tool that is necessary to provide real-time training and feedback on training effectiveness. Building an instrumented shallow-water undersea warfare training range offshore of the east coast of the U.S. would allow the Navy to optimize the training of our Sailors to counter the growing, clear, and present threat posed by submarines to our armed forces, the Sailors and Marines defending our homeland, logistic shipping, and United States citizens both at home and overseas.

Both short- and long-term commitments of labor and capital, along with use of non-renewable materials for power and maintenance, would result from the construction and operation of the proposed USWTR. Adherence to the proposed mitigation measures (Chapter 6) would minimize the effects of the proposed USWTR operations on both the marine and *landside* environments. Further, long-term monitoring would improve knowledge of the marine environment in the proposed range area at sea. Consequently, the majority of the effects of constructing and operating the proposed USWTR would be temporary in nature (as described in Chapter 4) and would have no significant adverse long-term impacts on the maintenance and enhancement of long-term productivity.

5.3 Irretrievable and Irreversible Commitments of Resources

Irretrievably and irreversibly committed resources are those that are consumed during the construction and implementation of a project and that cannot be reused. Because their reuse is impossible, they are considered irretrievably and irreversibly committed to the development of the proposed project. These resources would include expendable materials necessary for construction, as well as fuels and other forms of energy that are utilized during project implementation.

During construction and operation of the USWTR, non-renewable resources would be consumed. Since the reuse of these resources may not be possible, they could be considered irreversibly and irretrievably committed should the proposed construction and operation of USWTR be implemented. The non-renewable resources would include materials such as steel, concrete, and fuel used during construction of the USWTR, as well as supplies and energy resources necessary for the training exercises. Devices expended on the range during training exercise (e.g., BTs, sonobuoys, torpedo control wires, and steel-jacketed lead ballast weights) would also be considered non-renewable resources.