



**DEPARTMENT OF THE NAVY**

COMMANDER  
U.S. FLEET FORCES COMMAND  
1562 MITSCHER AVENUE SUITE 250  
NORFOLK, VA 23551-2487

5090  
Ser N4/N7/104  
April 23, 2009

Dr. Pace Wilber  
Atlantic Branch Chief, Charleston (F/SER47)  
National Marine Fisheries Service  
P.O. Box 12559  
Charleston, SC 29422-2559

Dear Dr. Wilber:

In accordance with the Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act (MSA), U.S. Fleet Forces (USFF) has prepared an essential fish habitat (EFH) assessment for the installation and operation of an Undersea Warfare Training Range (USWTR) offshore of Jacksonville, Florida (Enclosure (1)). USFF's assessment concludes that EFH may be adversely affected by the installation and operation of the range and requests initiation of the MSA EFH consultation process. U.S. Navy's final decision on the USWTR proposal will occur in July 2009, and therefore, we appreciate the National Marine Fisheries Service's (NMFS) response within the required timelines identified at 50 Code of Federal Regulations 600.920(h) or (i), as appropriate.

The staffs at USFF and NMFS Southeast Regional Office (SERO) have initiated coordination on the USWTR proposal and we appreciate the expertise provided by NMFS to date. SERO staff reviewed USFF's September 2008 Draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS) and USFF has used NMFS's comments and recommendations to prepare and revise the enclosed EFH assessment. Please note the required description of the USWTR project may be found in USFF's DEIS previously provided to SERO, and also located at: <http://projects.earthtech.com/uswtr/EIS/DOEIS-EIS 2008/DOEIS 2008.htm>. The U.S. Navy's preferred alternative for evaluation in this consultation is the Jacksonville alternative (Site A).

We appreciate your continued support in helping us to meet our EFH responsibilities. Please feel free to contact Mr. David MacDuffee, (757) 836-8473, E-Mail: [David.MacDuffee@navy.mil](mailto:David.MacDuffee@navy.mil); or Mr. Jene Nissen, (757) 836-5221, E-Mail: [Richard.J.Nissen@navy.mil](mailto:Richard.J.Nissen@navy.mil), at USFF on this matter.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "D. F. BAUCOM".

D. F. BAUCOM  
Assistant Deputy Chief of Staff  
for Operational Readiness  
and Training

Enclosure: 1. EFH Assessment for the Installation and Operation of USWTR

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