



# Potential for Effects on Fishing, Fish Habitat, and Fish

## Will activities on the USWTR affect commercial or recreational fishing?

The proposed Undersea Warfare Training Range (USWTR) activities would not significantly impact commercial or recreational fishing. USWTR training will typically involve only a small number of vessels and aircraft and use only a portion of the range. For most of the year, there will be virtually no impact to fishing. There will be certain training events during which the range (or certain areas of the range) would need to be cleared of other vessel traffic for safety purposes.

Training events will have minimal effect on recreational fishing, as most recreational fishing and boating occurs within a few miles of shore and is infrequent in areas where proposed USWTR sites are located (e.g., popular fishing spots around the preferred Site A, as shown in the inset figure). Recent review of vessel traffic in the vicinity of the proposed USWTR sites indicates that commercial fishing vessel use of the proposed USWTR locations offshore of South Carolina and North Carolina is low, whereas the sites offshore of Florida and Virginia both support a higher amount of commercial fishing vessel traffic.

If a range needs to be cleared, the Navy would give advance notice by issuing Notices to Mariners 72 hours prior to the training event.

The Navy may delay or alter its operations to avoid other vessels on the range if necessary. Additionally, the Navy will make every attempt to avoid scheduling exercises during significant offshore fishing events.

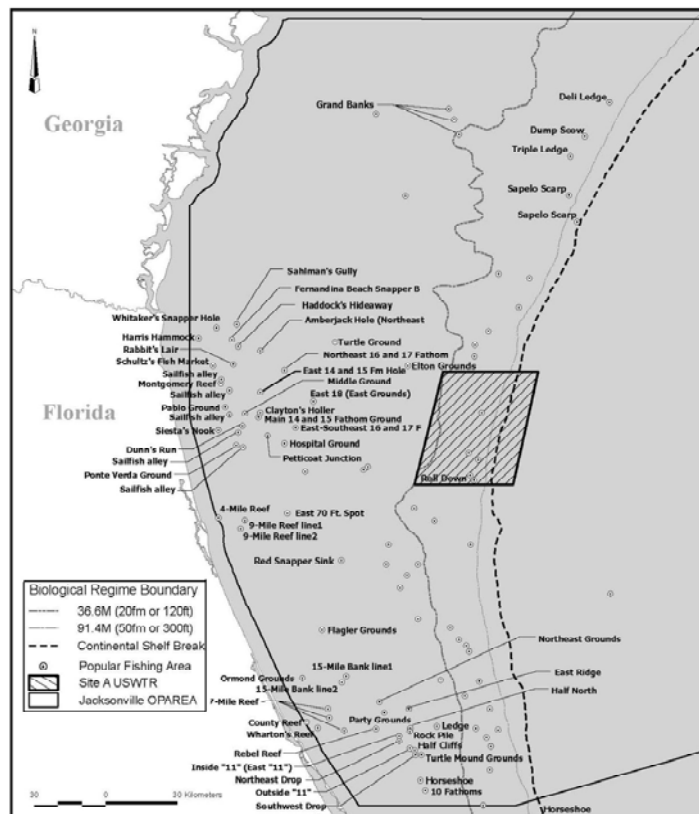
Interactions of range equipment with fishing gear are possible, but the USWTR range design minimizes impacts by burying the trunk cable from the shore to the range. In areas of high bottom-trawling activity, the nodes would be designed to be trawl-resistant and the cables between the nodes would be buried (see Fact Sheet No. 3).

## Will USWTR activities affect fish habitat?

The proposed USWTR activities would insignificantly impact fish species

and only temporarily impact fish habitat (see Fact Sheet No. 6). There is no expected impact on fishery stocks.

Habitats within the proposed USWTR areas that are considered essential fish habitat (EFH) include artificial/manmade reefs, live/hard bottom, mats of *Sargassum* [free-floating seaweed], and the associated water column. There would be minor and temporary impact to these habitats during the installation of the proposed USWTR, and insignificant impact during operation of USWTR.

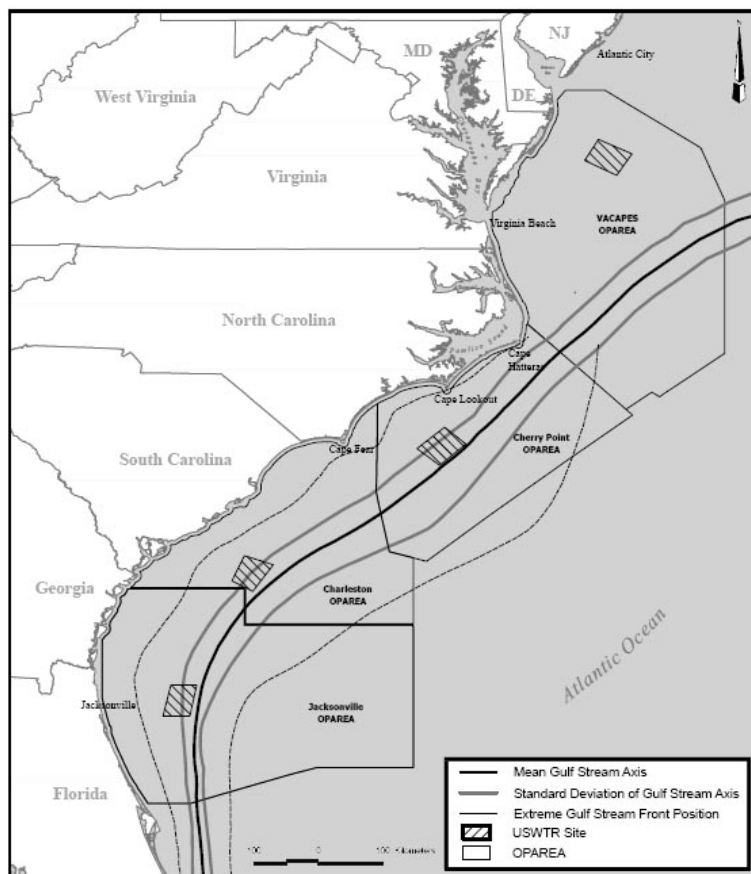


Range installation may result in insignificant and temporary disturbance of fish, benthic [bottom dwelling] organisms and habitat during placement of transducers and interconnect cables, and the burial of the trunk cable. These impacts would be insignificant and temporary, as benthic organisms tend to re-colonize rapidly. Operation of USWTR would not adversely affect fish or their habitat.

### Will activities on the USWTR affect fish?

Although it is expected that some fish species would be able to detect the lower ranges of the mid-frequency sonar used on the USWTR,

significant effects on fish are not anticipated. While experiments have shown that exposure to loud sound can result in threshold shifts in certain fish that are classified as “hearing specialists,” these threshold shifts are temporary and there is no evidence that they lead to any biologically significant long-term behavioral disruptions in those fish. Additionally, there currently is no information available suggesting that exposure to mid-frequency sonar results in any fish mortality.



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