

## **Pacific Coast SONAR Challenged**

### **Local News**

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Posted on : January 30, 2012 at 5:05 am

SEATTLE, Wash. - A coalition of conservation and Native American groups is [challenging permits](#) issued to the U.S. Navy to expand the use of sonar in training exercises along the Pacific coastline, from Washington to northern California. The groups say the loud, high-pitched sounds undersea are more than just annoying and confusing to marine life: they can harm and even kill whales and other ocean species.

Heather Trim, policy director for the organization People for Puget Sound, says the groups aren't trying to stop the military training, but just asking that federal authorities consider the sea life, too.

"It's a huge area; it's an area the size of California. And so, what we'd like them to do is re-evaluate the permit and to schedule the trainings so they can avoid being where the sensitive species are, in those important times of the year."

The Navy uses sonar to detect objects underwater and measure depth.

The groups' attorney, Steve Mashuda with Earthjustice, says another concern is the effects of sonar on endangered orcas or Southern Resident killer whales that spend part of their year in the Puget Sound area.

"There's only 89 of these whales left. The Fisheries Service has said in other contexts that losing just one reproductive-aged member of this population would likely jeopardize its continued existence."

The lawsuit targets the National Marine Fisheries Service as the agency that issued the permits in 2010. In a five-year period, they allow 650,000 "takes" of marine life during the training exercises. A "take" is a casualty, including injury or death.

The Northwest Training Range Complex includes the Olympic Coast National Marine Sanctuary.

More information is at [www.earthjustice.org](http://www.earthjustice.org)