



PenderWatch & Conservancy

P.O. Box 662  Hampstead, NC 28443

January 23, 2006

Mr. Keith Jenkins
Code EV21KJ
Naval Facilities Engineering Command, Atlantic
6505 Hampton Boulevard
Norfolk, VA 23508 1278

Re: October 20, 2005 Draft EIS for Proposed Onslow Bay Sonar Range

Dear Mr. Jenkins:

PenderWatch & Conservancy is a citizens-based organization having 400 members. We describe ourselves as *Responsible Advocates for the Environment*.

At our annual meeting on January 11, 2006, our members voted to express our strong concerns about the subject Draft Environmental Impact Statement.

The DEIS materially understates the detrimental environmental impact of this range, including the impact on (1) finfish that regularly inhabit the range or migrate through it, (2) sea turtles that migrate through the range and lay eggs on our beaches, (3) mammals, including the highly endangered Right Whale, that migrate through the range, probably sometimes calf within the range and certainly lead their calves through it, (4) recreational and commercial fishermen who fish the highly productive waters of this range year-around, (5) recreational divers who dive the wrecks in or near the range, (6) the pelagic birds that seasonally inhabit the range, and (7) water and beach quality by the dumping "disposable" sonar devices that contain highly toxic materials.

The perfunctory treatment of the impact on sea turtles is especially offensive to us. Section ES.5.3 of your EIS states:

A screening analysis was conducted to determine whether a given species could occur within . . . the sites, and if a given species possessed some sensory mechanism that would allow it to perceive the (Under Sea Warfare Training Range's) mid-frequency sounds. Based on this screening analysis . . . sea turtles . . . were excluded from acoustic effect analysis."

The Topsail Sea Turtle Rescue and Rehabilitation Center is located here in Pender County. It receives sick and injured sea turtles from all along the Atlantic coast.

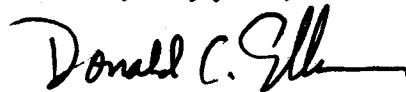
Hundreds of volunteers pour their hearts into caring for and eventually releasing (most of) these turtles. All of the species they receive are threatened and some are endangered.

In addition to the highly respected work of this hospital, there are volunteer groups on most all of our southeast NC islands who seasonally patrol our beaches for nesting turtles and try to do all they can to make their nesting, hatching and return to the ocean successful.

It is unconscionable that a branch of our US government would take such a casual attitude towards the welfare of these endangered and charismatic creatures who call our North Carolina waters and beaches their home.

We request that you hold additional public meetings, consult with North Carolina marine specialists, including at Topsail Turtle Center, and reissue a Draft Environmental Impact Statement and invite public comments on that draft. Once you perform a full and proper environmental impact analysis, it will be obvious that this proposed Onslow Bay site is unsatisfactory and poor public policy.

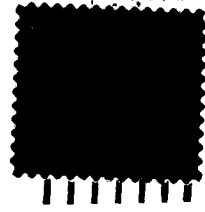
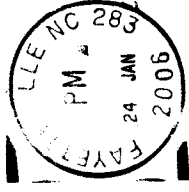
Very truly yours,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Donald C. Ellson". The signature is written in a cursive style with a long horizontal flourish at the end.

Donald C. Ellson
President



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