

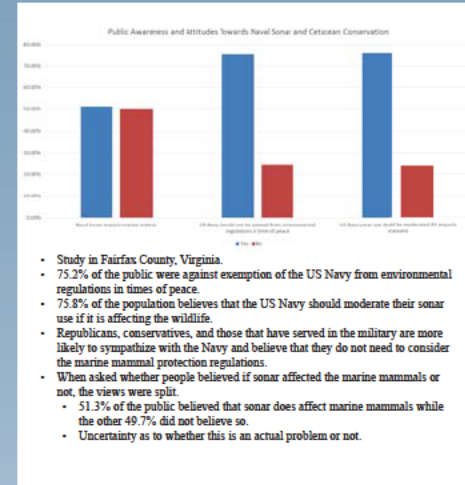
# Should the Navy be exempt from marine mammal protection regulations in times of peace?

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## Introduction

- In the past five years, the U.S. Navy has caused injuries and even death to over 2.8 million marine mammals.
- A large portion of these deaths was caused through the use of Sonar by navy vessels.
- Sonar: a sound technology used underwater by submarines to navigate, communicate, or detect other vessels or threats.
- Sonar produces a strong, empowering sound that infiltrates and damages marine mammals' ears. This may cause:
  - Permanent hearing loss
  - Stranding
  - Death
- The U.S. Navy's annual training program includes a heavy use of Sonar, hence endangering the wellbeing of wildlife mammals at peace time.
- Marine mammals, like whales and dolphins, rely on their hearing to find food, communicate, navigate, and orient themselves.



## Policy Solutions

- The NRDC filed a case in the US Supreme Court against the US Navy.
- In those hearings, the Navy did admit that their sonar training posed a threat to marine wildlife.
- The court ruled in favor of the NRDC, requiring the Navy to deploy four out of the six safety measures.
- Because these safety measures do not significantly reduce harm to marine mammals, there is a need to go back to the courts and ask for stricter measures to be taken by the Navy.
  - In order to ensure success in court, it is important to have gradual improvements of the safety measures rather than demanding strict regulations to be deployed in a short amount of time. To further support the court case, a study that meticulously explains the harms of sonar on marine mammals should be presented as evidence of the harm that Sonar inflicts on marine mammal.
- In addition to pursuing the U.S. Supreme Court, a state legislation effort can be initiated in the green coastal states of Hawaii, California, Oregon and Washington.

## Political Feasibility

### Courts:

- It has been done before, can be done again
- It is important to gradually intensify the safety measures because if the safety measures are too strict, they will not get passed
- There is a precedence: the courts have supported beforehand the need for safety measures
  - If the court is presented with facts that prove marine mammals are still at risk, it is likely the court will rule in favor of improving the current set of safety measures
- Problem: the Navy is the United States' prized possession, so it may be quite hard to get tougher regulations passed

### State-Level Initiatives:

- The west coast, including the states California, Oregon, Washington, and Hawaii, rely on tourism to drive the economy
  - All renowned worldwide for exquisite nature and wildlife
  - Whale-watching is a popular tourist attraction
  - If the Navy were to keep harming the marine mammals in those states, it could also harm the tourism there
- These specific states have a tendency to be environmental, so implementing safety measures there would seem the most feasible
  - Public opinion in those states are also likely to support environmental efforts and protection acts against the will of the Navy

## References

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