



DEPARTMENT OF THE AIR FORCE
HEADQUARTERS 96TH AIR BASE WING (AFMC)
EGLIN AIR FORCE BASE FLORIDA

NOV 28 2011

Mr. Stephen M. Seiber
Chief, Natural Resources Section
96th CEG/CEVSN
501 De Leon Street, Suite 101
Eglin AFB FL 32542-5133

James H. Lecky
Office of Protected Resources
National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS)
1315 East-West Highway
Silver Springs, MD 20190-3226

Dear Mr. Lecky,

This letter is being submitted to the NMFS to request a Letter of Authorization (LOA) under the Marine Mammal Protection Act of 1972 for training activities associated with the Naval Explosive Ordnance Disposal School (NEODS) at Eglin Air Force Base (AFB) property off Santa Rosa Island. This LOA request has been prepared with current mission scenarios, numbers of detonations per year, and marine mammal density data.

The NEODS received an Incidental Harassment Authorization on September 19, 2008 for these training operations involving detonation of mine countermeasure devices. The IHA was valid from October 5, 2008 to October 4, 2009 and included updated mission information, including 1) addition of 10-pound net explosive weight (NEW) charges (only 5-pound NEW charges were previously included), 2) a decrease in the annual number of detonations, 3) seasonal breakdown of detonation numbers, and 4) updated marine mammal density estimates. No missions occurred during this time due to issues related to moving explosives under a bridge. Eglin AFB submitted a LOA request to NMFS on November 2, 2009, in which the mission description remained unchanged. However, due to dolphin mortalities associated with similar testing at the Navy's Silver Strand Training Complex near San Diego, California, new mitigation measures are now required. The current LOA request includes these measures.

The NMFS will be notified immediately if any of the components of this proposed action are modified. Any modifications or conditions resulting from consultation or permitting with the NMFS will be implemented prior to commencement of activities.

The Natural Resources Section believes this fulfills all requirements for the permitting process to proceed. If you have any questions regarding this letter or any of the proposed activities, please do not hesitate to contact either Mr. Bob Miller (850-883-1153) or myself at (850) 882-8391.

Sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'S. M. Seiber', written in a cursive style.

STEPHEN M. SEIBER, GS-13
Chief, Natural Resources Section