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Navy Invests in Protecting Marine Mammals

No injuries to marine mammals have been attributed to sonar use since the Navy began taking additional steps to minimize harm to such animals.

The Navy currently employs 29 mitigation measures to assure no marine mammals are hurt when doing sonar exercises.

There's legitimate concern over sonar causing marine mammals to "beach." But, the ability to detect enemy submarines is essential to national security, and active sonar is the only existing technology capable of tracking modern diesel-electric and fuel-cell submarines.

To combat negative effects on sea life, the Navy funds research by universities and nonprofit organizations into how sonar affects marine life. During the past few years, the Navy spent between \$10 million and \$14 million annually on research.

Statistically, the number of marine-mammal "strandings" – beached whales, for example – due to sonar is extremely low compared to those caused by nature and the commercial fishing industry. Sonar was implicated in 50 strandings over 10 years.

This averages out at a rate of five sonar-related strandings per year vs. an average of 3,600 strandings per year due to natural causes and about 600,000 per year linked to the commercial fishing industry.

