

Ongoing Gulf Support, Participation in National Oceans Council & Planning for Training at Sea Among Top Priorities

IT'S BEEN AN eventful several months between the spring and summer issues of *Currents* magazine. I'd like to focus in this column on some great work that's been done, and some challenges that lie ahead.

Gulf Oil Spill

Over the spring and summer of 2010, we witnessed what may be the nation's greatest environmental disaster, namely the oil spill in the Gulf of Mexico. Our Navy worked hard to assist the Coast Guard Incident Commander in marshalling over 100,000 feet of boom, dozens of skimmers, personnel and other assets to protect as much of the coastline as possible. Washington DC area staffs worked intensively with the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency and the U.S. Coast Guard to facilitate issuance of an emergency regulation allowing a reduction in the required quantity of onsite spill response assets, enabling increased support to the Gulf effort. The Supervisor of Salvage, Commander, Navy Installations Command, the Regions, the Naval Facilities Engineering Command (NAVFAC) and the Fleets did a magnificent job in providing all possible resources while maintaining a prudent cleanup capability in Navy ports. In the months ahead, Navy will provide oceanographic research assets to help assess the long term effects of the spill. BZ to all concerned!

Stewardship of the Ocean, Coasts & Great Lakes

On 20 July 2010, President Obama issued a long-awaited Executive Order (EO) to promote the protection and sustainability of ocean, coastline and great lakes resources. The



EO establishes a National Oceans Council (NOC) and directs the initiation of comprehensive regionally-based Coastal and Marine Spatial Planning (CMSP). The Navy will actively participate in NOC activities, and in the regional planning groups. Our extensive ongoing environmental planning effort for sea ranges and operating areas will be very useful in helping federal, state and private stakeholders understand the nature of Navy training and testing at sea, and the significant steps we take to ensure that our actions protect and sustain the natural environment. In the months ahead, N45 will work with the Navy Secretariat, the Fleets, Navy Regions and others to flesh out the details for Navy participation in this new endeavor.

Environmental Planning for Training & Testing at Sea

With the completion of the Marianas Island Range Complex Environmental Impact Statement in July 2010, the Navy has completed environmental planning for

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I would also like to reiterate the guidance for elevated vigilance issued in June 2010 by U.S. Fleet Forces Command and Commander, Pacific Fleet. Fleet messages called for even greater care and attention to detail in Navy handling of petroleum and hazardous materials, given that much of our response equipment has been deployed in support of the Deepwater Horizon oil spill. As they so appropriately note, prevention of spills through responsible planning is by far the most efficient and effective approach.

nine of the 14 sea ranges and operating areas included in this "Phase I" Tactical Training Theater Assessment and Planning Program (TAP) effort. Our job has only begun when we complete the planning, permitting, and consultations for each area, because each area also requires substantial monitoring, reporting, and interface with the regulators to support issuance of annual renewal authorizations. The Fleets, NAVFAC and other organizations have done a terrific job in keeping up with

Rear Admiral Cullom (far left) and Vice Admiral Burke (far right, back row) hosted senior environmental and energy officials on an aircraft carrier and destroyer embarkation to demonstrate stewardship and resource conservation at sea. Here embark participants pose on the deck of the USS ENTERPRISE (CVN 65)—the world’s first nuclear-powered aircraft carrier.



this fast-rolling treadmill. At the headquarters level, the Office of the Chief of Naval Operations and Secretary of the Navy staffs have worked hard to improve our processes for interfacing with the regulators, and to build cooperative relationships that will facilitate timely processing of future regulatory actions.

Also in July 2010, the Navy kicked off TAP “Phase II” environmental planning. This effort will encompass five year overarching renewals for all Phase I areas, and also include systems command and Office of Naval Research activities at sea in the study areas. The Fleets have done a great job thus far as action proponents for these Navy-wide efforts. Even though the first renewal environmental impact statements are not due until January 2014, because of the magnitude of the effort, we are on a tight timeline already. Keeping the Phase II effort on track will be challenging but doable over the next few years.

Outreach

The American people want and deserve a Navy that protects the environment and our resources while

protecting our freedom. Many Americans would be surprised at the extent of protective measures the Navy employs during our training and testing activities, and the extent of our commitment to environmental protection ashore. Keeping the public informed of Navy environmental performance is a key component of the Navy environmental program. I encourage every echelon of command to be proactive in this regard. I recently had the honor, with Vice Admiral Bill Burke, of hosting senior environmental and energy officials on an aircraft carrier and destroyer embarkation, to demonstrate stewardship and resource conservation at sea. The Fleets have hosted several similar embarks over the past year.

Within the next few months, the Navy will launch a combined energy-environment-climate change web site, making information on these three priorities more readily available worldwide. Your input on Navy programs and achievements will be greatly appreciated. ⚓

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