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To Donna Wieting	From Sara Drake	
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Dear Ms. Wieting,

I received the following form letter via email with the request to fax it to you and add my voice to the citizens protesting SURTASS LFA. I am sure you have received many like it. Before you read it, however, I'd like to add a few facts for you to ponder while coming to a decision regarding this potentially difficult and delicate situation.

1. As a former statistician/programmer/researcher, I am very aware of how statistics can be manipulated to support just about any point of view. Most studies are funded by organizations desiring results that, understandably, will ultimately increase their financial holdings. Statisticians and researchers, being human and having financial needs of their own, are unlikely to consciously do anything that would jeopardize their job status. Even when there is no covert pressure to support the funding organization's point of view, it is simply human nature to support the "hand that feeds you".
2. The majority of people reading the reports (i.e., the decision and policy makers) have at best been exposed to only a few statistics and/or research methodology courses during their academic careers. Most of them didn't like the class(es) (it is math, after all), and for many it has been a while since they took the class, so it is likely they have forgotten much of the course work. This makes it difficult to assess the validity of research findings.
3. It is virtually impossible to eliminate all threats to internal and external validity when conducting experimental research. Thus, when utilizing research for garnering information, it is vital to carefully study the methodology used and to understand all potential inaccuracies due to invalid and/or suspect procedures. If the methodology is invalid, the results will be meaningless.
4. All research starts with examining previous, similar research. In fact, often the hypothesis of the current research is derived from the results of prior studies. If the methodologies of any of these reports are invalid, then the hypothesis of the current research is potentially invalid as well.
5. As a child, I was often told not to tap on the glass of fish tanks. Why? Because the resultant sound wave (e.g., sonar) was stressful to the fish, which in turn makes them more susceptible to disease, leading to illness and potentially death.
6. Dolphins use sonar to locate food (other fish) and stun (paralyze) their prey in order to eat them. Can the more powerful naval sonar have less impact on our ocean life than dolphin sonar?

I'm sure you're aware of the delicate inter-relationship and balance between the various ecological systems on this planet, including humanity. When one goes out of balance, the others will adjust until balance is restored. Often this re-balancing is chaotic and has been known (in historical times) to cause the elimination of various species inhabiting this planet. In the last century or so, mankind has created most, if not all, ecological imbalances.

By its very nature, SURTASS LFA will have a negative impact upon the life within our oceans. It has been implied that the Navy believes this impact to be negligible. This, of course, is point of view. How does one determine the point of negligibility? This technology is bound to contribute to the deterioration of the ecological structure within our oceans, leading to the deterioration of other systems on the planet. It may not impact us directly, but will most definitely affect the lives of our children and grandchildren.

Finally, creating bigger, stronger and better tools for waging war only begets even bigger, stronger and better tools for waging war. The cycle will end only if we put a stop to it. We teach our children to resolve conflict in non-violent ways (unsuccessfully – but then, they have learned from watching the numerous adults who use violence – such as war – to resolve conflicts.) Maybe it is time to teach ourselves alternative methods for resolving our conflicts.

I encourage you to rule against issuing a Letter of Authorization to the US Navy's SURTASS LFA program. Doing so will not only protect the ocean environment, but will also convey the message that protecting the current generation from war cannot be done at the expense of subsequent ones.

Thank you for your time.



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