Defensie Materieel Organisatie
Ministerie van Defensie

NL Mitigation Measures

Policy background and MoD regulation

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Background

- Marine Strategy Framework Directive/NL Marine Strategy
  - MS should aim that military activities are conducted in a manner that is compatible, so far as reasonable and practicable, with the objectives of the MSFD
  - Appropriate measures are taken that do not hinder the operational options of navy vessels or Defence operations.
  - Interpretation of the requirement ‘so far as reasonable and practicable’ is formally left to the Ministry of Defence
- Habitats directive
  - Measures shall be designed to maintain species at favourable conservation status

NL Navy regulation: VCZSK 230

VCZSK DOPS MWC 230 Responsible use of active sonar

- Aim
  - Prevent/minimize effects on marine mammals
  - Prevent unnecessary restrictions of essential systems
- Application
  - Units carrying active ASW sonars/use and preparation
  - Staff using/preparing ASW operations
  - Foreign units under NL OPCON
  - World wide where no local regulation available
- Background/aim
  - Prevent hearing damage
  - Prevent response leading to stranding of beaked whales

NL Navy regulation: VCZSK 230

Steps to be taken

- Follow risk assessment process of SKMT tool
  - Standard RA steps: identification, exposure assessment, effect assessment, risk characterization
- Thresholds
  - Present formal NL Navy thresholds only based on hearing damage
  - PTS: unfavourable; TTS: marginal; otherwise favourable
- Mitigation measures described and suggested with last step
  - Assessment to be run again with mitigation after unfavourable assessment

NL Navy regulation: VCZSK 230

Measures to be taken:

- Take account of protected/special area's
  - Areas in NL waters shown in tool
- Avoid using maximum source levels if not needed
  - Use lowest level needed for exercise objective
  - May have operational benefits
- Ramp up
  - Shortened based on research, 1 or 5 minutes
  - Operator may decide to use shorter ramp-up
- Monitor using visual observers, PAM, i/r if available
  - Reduce power if observation < monitoring range
- Register observations during active sonar use

To be reconsidered if SKMT result unfavourable

Experiences /adaptations /research needs

- SAKAMATA advice: only in rare occasions risk of PTS, harbour porpoise most sensitive
  - Data on hearing sensitivity of porpoises available from SEAMARCO project (TTS onset /growth), new PTS onset thresholds implemented in tool in software update

- Results of BRS implemented in SAKAMATA
  - Determine #animals with 'possible disturbance', but no threshold/ acceptable levels available
  - Data needs
    - Confirmation of distances where avoidance occurs
    - Duration of avoidance responses
    - Implication of avoidance for populations