

CITY OF CORDOVA



March 17, 2017

The Honorable Senator Murkowski
United States Senate
522 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, DC, 20510

RE: Gulf of Alaska Naval Training Exercises, Operation "Northern Edge"

Dear Senator Murkowski:

This winter, the Cordova City Council passed Resolution, 6-16-24 (attached), opposing the location and timing of Naval exercises in the Gulf of Alaska this May 1st through 12th, 2017.

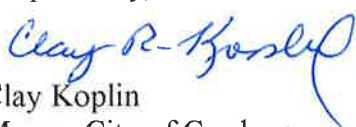
While we recognize the need for training exercises, we do not appreciate them being conducted during the peak northern migration of birds, mammals and fish. We are particularly concerned for the salmon upon which our community depends as our primary industry and subsistence food. Our secondary industry is tourism, and the Copper Delta Shorebird Festival is one of a handful of signature events scattered throughout the year. The festival attracts an international audience to Cordova the first weekend of May, right in the middle of the selected exercise timing.

The pink salmon return last year was a decades low run; declared a disaster for the region. It is unsure how the noise and contaminants released by the training exercises might affect migrations in the Gulf, but caution is prudent, particularly since the timing is discretionary. While the Navy has engaged with Cordova and explained why their training is conducted on their preferred schedule, there was little consideration of alternatives.

Cordova joins other communities in our region in asking you to forward a direct request to the Navy to postpone the on-water portion of the 2017 "Northern Edge" training exercises to occur after mid-September 2017 and not later than mid-March 2018 consistent with past training exercises.

We appreciate the time that you and your staff have dedicated to this effort in support of our concerns for the health of our coastal ecosystem and the need to balance that with the physical protection of that coast from external threats.

Respectfully,


Clay Koplin
Mayor, City of Cordova